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The Origin of the Periphrastic Future in Old Norse

1 Introduction

Old Norse, or rather its predecessor, Early Runic,[1] as well as other old Germanic languages, originally had a binary tense system inherited from Proto-Germanic. It had a morphological past (the preterite) and a present tense, but no morphological future. In most old Germanic languages, the present tense also served for the expression of future (Blackburn 1892: 6–21). During the course of their history, the individual Germanic lan-

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  [1] I. e. the language attested in runic inscriptions from 2–5th century AD, also known as Ancient Nordic and under a variety of other terms.

Abstract: The article investigates the linguistic conditions under which future periphrasis emerged in Old Norse (or its predecessor). Old Norse holds a special position within the Germanic branch since it was the first language where a future periphrastic construction was grammaticalized and became the main means of referring to the future, while other old Germanic languages mostly used the present tense in future meaning. The principal exponent of the Old Norse periphrastic future was the auxiliary verb *munu*, attested in this function as early as the 9th century. It is argued that it expressed a remarkably non-modal future and that it had also developed an early epistemic use which is derived from the futural meaning. This, as well as the morphological development of *munu*, is indicative of an early origin of the periphrastic future. In order to account for that it is argued, through comparison with other Germanic languages, that Proto-Germanic made use of verbal prefixes (particularly **ga-*) to provide present tense forms with perfective aspect, and hence with future meaning. Since unaccented prefixes were all lost in North Germanic at an early point, future periphrasis with the verb *munu* started to develop as a reaction to the loss. It is further argued that another unique feature of the Old Norse verbal system, the use of the historical present, is also linked to this process. The early development of a future periphrastic construction is considered an important syntactic change, setting apart the North Germanic tense system from the West and East Germanic ones.

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guages developed periphrastic constructions using various auxiliary verbs to express the future, such as the English *will* and *shall*. In Old Norse, the most prominent exponent of futurity was the auxiliary verb *munu* (cf. Noreen 1923: 367, Iversen 1994: 140). Other grammatical means, as for instance the verb *skulu*, were used to a significantly lesser extent and with a greater degree of modal meaning (cf. Faarlund 2004: 129, Haugen 2002: 273, Iversen 1994: 140, Sčur 1964). Some research has been done in regard to the semantic nuances of these exponents and their interrelations (cf. Morris 1964, Nygaard 1878). In this article, the main focus is on the initial conditions under which the periphrastic construction started to develop in Nordic, an issue which has not been directly addressed by scholars. The crucial questions the article is attempting to answer are what modes of future expression had been used before periphrasis emerged, what factors led to its formation in Nordic, and when it is probable that this happened.

1.1 Sources and Method

The only previous comprehensive survey of the future in Old Norse (Morris 1964) focuses for the most part on the synchronic properties of futural expressions in one of the prominent genres of Old Norse literature, the Sagas of Icelanders. The synchronic focus of the study is understandable with regard to the selected genre, since the age and origin of the Sagas is a notoriously controversial matter. Perhaps even more debatable is the origin of Eddic poems in which the use of tenses was analyzed by Nygaard (1867). The only certain date is the 13th century when the Eddic poems, as well as most of the Sagas, were written down.

Skaldic poems, on the other hand, have the advantage that in many cases, unlike the anonymous Sagas and Eddic poems, they can be connected to a particular author. Although the authorship may sometimes be debatable, Skaldic poems represent the oldest substantial pieces of Old Norse literature that can be dated with some certainty (cf. Whaley 2012). The earliest of these were composed in the 9th century. In the present study, they are therefore used as an important piece of diachronic evidence.[2]

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[2] One must, of course, bear in mind that poetic language differs from the spoken language in some respects, but it will be shown that for the present purpose of investigating the periphrastic future there are multiple pieces of evidence that all seem to point in the same direction. The data from Skaldic poems fit the whole picture and a distortion of the results caused by the poetic nature of the language is therefore unlikely.

The overall oldest North Germanic texts, runic inscriptions, are not of much use for the present purpose because most are very brief and do not contain suitable contexts for the study of the expression of future. The verb *munu* only appears in runic inscriptions, none of which are demonstrably older than the 10th century, i. e. later than the oldest Skaldic poems.[3]

The article is organized in the following way. Section 2 first presents a synchronic overview of the semantic nuances of the Old Norse *munu*, illustrated by examples from various literary genres, and second, it is shown that the verb must have been employed as a future auxiliary for a considerable period of time before the first attestations. For this purpose, the evidence of the oldest Skaldic poems and the morphological develop-ment of the verb are particularly significant.

A discussion of earlier theories of the origin of the periphrastic future (Section 3) makes clear that another explanation is needed to account for the early use of future periphrasis in Old Norse. The main purpose of the rest of the article is to present a new theory which is connected to the perfectivizing function of Germanic verbal prefixes (cf. Streitberg 1891, 1920). Their use in future context, particularly in the Gothic corpus, is discussed in Section 4. On that basis, it is suggested that the use of pre-fixed verbs in a future meaning is of Proto-Germanic origin and that the early disappearance of prefixes in Nordic led to an early formation of the periphrastic future (Section 5). In Section 6 it is argued that the early use of the historical present in Nordic was also facilitated by prefix loss (cf. Steadman 1917). Finally, the role of the historical/futural present tense is considered vis-à-vis the preterite and periphrastic future, respectively (Section 7). The results are summed up in Section 8.

2 The Expression of Future in Old Norse

As pointed out by Morris (1964: 35), the scarce use of the present tense for future in Old Norse may come as a surprise to the Germanist. In the

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[3] For a list of occurrences of *munu* in younger futhark inscriptions, see https://skaldic. abdn.ac.uk/db.php?id=324&if=runic&table=nrd_headword&val=munu [accessed in May 2021]. In Old Danish and Classical Old Swedish (i. e. 1225–1375), *munu* is not as richly attested as in West Norse which forms the basis of this study (cf. Birkmann 1987). It seems, however, that *munu* was more common in East Norse in the earlier period, that of Runic Swedish (800–1225, cf. Birkmann 1987: 306, Noreen 1904: 468).

Table 1. Means of future expression in Old Norse genres (in round figures).

	munu	*skulu*	Present tense
Sagas	50 %	30 %	13 %
Eddic Poetry	44 %	22 %	33 %
Skaldic poetry of the 9th c.	43 %	36 %	21 %

Icelandic Sagas, for instance, only about 13 % of references to the future are expressed by the present tense, more than 30 % by periphrasis with *skulu* and over 50 % by periphrasis with *munu* (cf. Sčur 1964, 1963).[4] The ratio is roughly similar for poetry. In the Eddic poems, about one third of future references are expressed by the present tense, and two thirds by periphrasis (*munu* being twice as frequent as *skulu*, cf. Blackburn 1892: 11). Even 9th century Skaldic poems which contain the first attestations of *munu* roughly correspond to these numbers: they are comprised of 142 stanzas (according to Jónsson (ed.) 1912) in which 14 references to the future are found. Six are expressed with *munu*,[5] five with *skulu* and three with a present tense form.[6] At least some of the expressions with *skulu* have a clear modal marking, while the other means – *munu* and the present tense forms – are suggestive of pure future references. This can be summarized as in table 1.

Although there are considerable differences in the absolute numbers of the attested forms, all the genres testify to the general tendency that *munu* is the main means of future expression and the present tense is used rather sporadically in future meaning.

A purely futural use of *munu* can be illustrated by (1) and (2).

(1)   *hér* **munu** *menn koma á morgin at leita   þín*
       here **will** men   come on morning to search you
       "People will come here tomorrow to search for you."
       (Fóstbrœðra saga III: 132)[7]

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[4] Sčur (1964) does not state by what means the rest (i. e. about 7 %) of the future references are expressed.

[5] There are three more occurrences of *munu* in which the verb has a different meaning (see the modal use of *munu* below).

[6] Subordinate clauses in which the present tense is the normal expression of future (cf. below) are not taken into consideration.

[7] A list of editions of the Old Norse texts is provided in the bibliography. For prose the Roman number refers to the chapter (if provided), the Arabic number to a page in the edition. For poetry only the number of the strophe is given. Relevant words in the Old Norse examples and in the glosses (when provided) are emphasized. The texts are

(2) *"Hvat **mun** eptir koma?" segir Skarpheðinn.*
      what **will** after come   says Skarpheðinn
      "'What will come after?' Skarpheðinn says".
      (*Njáls saga* CXI: 281)

The futural present tense seems to be generally dependent on a future context, cf. the depiction of *Ragnarǫk* (3) which is the Old Norse eschatological event, and hence future by definition.

(3) *en   er   þessi tíðendi **verða,** þá **stendr** upp Heimdallr ok **blæss**
     ákafliga í*
     and when these events **become** then **stands** up   Heimdallr and **blows**
     greatly   in
     *Gjallarhorn ok **vekr** upp ǫll guðin,   ok **eiga** þau þing
     saman*
     Gjallarhorn and **wakes** up   all gods-the and **own** they assembly
     together
     "And when these events come, Heimdallr will stand up and blow
     greatly the Gjallarhorn and wake up all gods and they will hold an
     assembly together."
     (Gylfaginning: 50)

Alternatively, a future context can be established by *munu* and the present tense may then be used further (4) or alternate with *munu* (e. g. in the Eddic poems *Grípisspá* and *Vǫluspá*).

(4) *Konungr mælti: "Þá **mun** ek gefa þér nǫkkur forræði ok eigur, sem ek
     bauð þér fyrr, ok **skemmtir** þú þér við þat".
     Hann svaraði: "Ekki **uni** ek því".
     Konungr mælti: "Þá **fæ** ek þér lausafé, ok **ferr** þú kaupferðir þangat til
     landa, sem þú **vilt**".*
     "The king said, 'Then I will give you some property and its manage-
     ment as I offered you earlier and you can amuse yourself with that'.
     'I don't care for that'. The king said, 'Then I'll give you some money
     and you can travel as a merchant to whatever countries you want'."
     (*Ívars þáttr Ingimundarsonar*: 104, transl. by Judith Jesch: 386)

Munu is used only in the beginning of the passage and followed by present tense forms. Since the context of *munu* and the present tense forms is obviously identical, there does not seem to be any difference in meaning. Such alternation is probably a stylistic device, comparable to the alterna-

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rendered in standardized Old Norse orthography. Translations are mine unless specified otherwise.

tion of the historical present and the past tense. Importantly, it illustrates that the periphrasis with *munu* is semantically rather neutral.

Apart from the dependence on future context, it is difficult to find any distributional restrictions for the use of the futural present. On the other hand, periphrastic future, which seems to be the unmarked future form, considering its frequency and the fact that it does not require a contextual support, is restricted in certain contexts, namely in certain types of subordinate clauses (cf. Nygaard 1905: 333) where the present tense is used instead (5). However, such restrictions of future tenses are cross-linguistically very common (e. g. English *I will tell her if I see her*, cf. Comrie 1989: 56, Ultan 1978: 96–98, Bybee & Perkins & Pagliuca 1991: 19).

(5)　　*vita*　**mun** *ek, ef ek* **sé**
　　　　know **will** I　if　I　**see**
　　　　"I will know if I see."
　　　　(*Njáls saga* XCVIII: 250–251)

The remarkably non-modal nature of Old Norse *munu* is in contrast with its function in Modern Icelandic and Faroese where the verb is occasionally used for future expression, but usually with a particular notion of uncertainty[8] (the present tense is normally employed to express future, cf. Einarsson 1949: 139, Lockwood 2002: 130).[9]

That such uncertainty was not a part of the meaning of the *munu*-future in Old Norse, can be seen clearly from its use in prophecies. Although it is true that the future, unlike the past and the present, is always uncertain to some extent, it is hard to imagine a more definite future than one determined by fate and foreseen by a seer(ess) in a prophecy. In most prophecies, *munu* appears as the dominant means of future expression, sometimes alternating with the present tense, and only very exceptionally with *skulu*.[10] Especially those concerned with mythological matters provide firm evidence in this respect (6).

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[8] Cf. e. g. Icelandic: *skipið mun koma á morgun* "the ship will [apparently] come tomorrow" (Thráinsson 1994: 163); Faroese: *hann man ikki (fara at) koma* "he will hardly come" (Mikkelsen & í Skála 2007: 1052) In Modern Danish, Swedish and Norwegian, *munu* survived only in fragments and is confined to an archaic or poetic style, usually expressing uncertainty, doubt or nothing in particular, cf. Nygaard (1878: 260–262).

[9] In Modern Icelandic, *munu* is consequently much less frequent than in Old Norse. In Modern Icelandic, it is the 18th most frequent verb, while it is the 6th most frequent verb in the Icelandic Sagas, cf. Rögnvaldsson (2020): https://uni.hi.is/eirikur/2020/11/29/3301/ [accessed in July 2021].

[10] This is in sharp contrast with the Middle English cognate *sculan* which was particularly frequent in prophecies (cf. Fischer 2006: 264).

(6)   *fáir sjá nú fram um lengra*   "Few can now see further than when
        en Óðinn **man** *úlfi mæta*   Odin has to meet the wolf."
        (*Hyndluljóð* 44, transl. by Carolyne Larrington: 259)

The fight between Óðinn and the wolf Fenrir is a part of *Ragnarǫk* and the context in which it is here used implies that if anything certain can be claimed about the future at all, it is this particular moment.

Also other eschatological events in prophecies are referred to with *munu*, or alternatively with the present tense.[11] The use of *munu* in these contexts shows that the verb did not contain more uncertainty than is usual for future tenses in general.[12] As noted by Faarlund (2004: 129), it expressed the future "in a rather neutral or non-modal fashion".

It can be concluded that *munu* was the dominant means of future expression in terms of frequency as well as its universal range of use with little or no modal contents.

On the other hand, the verb *skulu,* which was about half as frequent as *munu* in a future context, has a distinct modal colouring connected to duty or obligation (cf. Morris 1964: 84), which derives from its etymological meaning (cf. Kroonen 2013: 450). Futural uses of *skulu* are therefore usually intertwined with modal shades, cf. (7) which refers to the future and at the same time expresses the speaker's determination.

(7)   *en   frá   þessum degi* **skal** *ek aldri þín   kona vera*
        but from this   day   **shall** I   never your wife be
        "But from this day I shall no longer be your wife."
        (*Víga-Glúms saga* XXI: 68)

The etymological meaning of *skulu* is clearest in legal codes (8) where modality is absolutely dominant (cf. Faarlund (2004: 129) who ascribes *skulu* a deontic meaning).[13]

(8)   *en ef barn lifnar,   þá   * **skal** *prestr veita því   alla reiðu*
        but if child comes.to.life then shall priest grant it.DAT all service
        "And if the baby comes to life, then the priest is to provide her with full service."
        (*Grágás*: 6–7)

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[11] E. g. *Baldrs draumar, Grípisspá.* In *Vǫluspá,* the present tense is more common than *munu*. The only instance of *skulu* in *Vǫluspá* is in strophe 64 (considered by Sieberer (1925: 30) a Christian interpolation).

[12] On the non-modal nature of *munu*-future see further Haugen (2002: 273) who argues that periphrasis with *munu* "has such a general meaning that it can be considered a pure temporal auxiliary verb".

[13] Cf. also Iversen (1994: 140) who mentions the role of *skulu* in promises and assurances.

As opposed to *skulu*, *munu* has a rather sharp distinction between the temporal and modal uses. Importantly too, its modality is not connected to its etymological meaning, as is clarified in the following section.

2.1　The Grammaticalization of munu: Future and Modality

Apart from being used as a future auxiliary, *munu* also had some non-temporal meanings. It is actually very common for future tenses to have other than strictly temporal functions, some of which may be retentions of the earlier meaning of the future exponent. Other uses may be derivatives of the futural meaning (cf. Bybee & Pagliuca 1987).

　　The only survey of the meanings of *munu* that includes an attempt to outline their diachronic relations is Nygaard (1878) which is, however, severely dated and in need of thorough revision. The discussion here is limited to the development of the modal epistemic meaning of *munu* which seems to be one of the most common non-temporal uses of the verb (based on the large number of examples in Nygaard 1878). Also, more importantly, it is attested in Skaldic poetry as early as the 9th century. It is argued here that this use is derived from the futural meaning of *munu*.

　　The grammaticalization process is sketched from the source meaning of *munu* to the futural meaning, and further, from the futural meaning to the epistemic meaning. For the sake of brevity, only the most relevant moments are touched upon.

2.1.1　From Intention to Future

The original meaning of *munu* is thought to have been "to intend, to have in mind" (cf. Iversen 1994: 141, Blöndal Magnússon 2008: 642). This has a special significance because the capacity to express *intention* has been claimed to be crucial for the grammaticalization of future tenses in general. Bybee & Perkins & Pagliuca (1994: 279–280) argue that "intention is the crucial bridge to prediction", i. e. all grammaticalization paths leading to future, whatever their original source, converge in the stage of expressing a speaker's intention. This absolute universality of intention as an inseparable stage in the grammaticalization of future tenses has been contested, for example for the Swedish *komma att* (cf. Hilpert 2008), but nonetheless Hilpert (2008: 183) concludes that "intentionality is indeed a cross-linguistically pervasive semantic component in the development of future constructions".

The verb *munu* was consequently an ideal candidate to develop a future meaning as it already expressed intention at its lexical stage. A context in which *munu* was originally used in the sense of intention would correspond to (9).

(9) *hann **mun** fara til Íslands með Ingimundi*
     he **intends** go to Iceland with Ingimundr
     "He **intends**[14] to go to Iceland with Ingimundr."
     (*Vatnsdœla saga* XIII: 37)

Key features of (9) are that the subject is an animate being and the action performed is of volitional character. These were the constraints that limited the verb at the outset, but disappeared during grammaticalization and *munu* thus became able to express general future.[15] The first step involved turning intention into prediction which occurs typically with sentences in the third person (cf. Bybee & Perkins & Pagliuca 1994: 256–264, Bybee & Dahl 1989: 92). On the basis of sentences such as (9), a sense of prediction became attached to *munu*.

Consequently, *munu* could then be used in contexts in which the action can be expected not to be intended by the subject. (10 A) represents a prototypical example, (10 B) is the earliest attestation of such a context (9th century). Interpretation in terms of intention (10 A. i/10 B. i) is still possible, but rather implausible.

(10) A. ***mun** ek deyja hér undir húsagarði þínum úti, ef ek má eigi inn komask*
     i. "I **intend** to die here under the rampart of your farm, if I may not come in."
     ii. "I **will** die here under the rampart of your farm, if I may not come in."
     (*Ljósvetninga saga* VIII: 49)

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[14] This translation stresses the original meaning of the verb, but it is debatable whether *munu* still had the meaning in Old Norse "[g]iven the difficulty of distinguishing between intention and future when the subject of a sentence is an animate agent" (Bybee & Perkins & Pagliuca 1994: 257), cf. Morris 1964: 33–34. But see Nygaard (1878) who argues that Old Norse *munu* did preserve the meaning.

[15] Cf. account of the development of English *will* in Bybee & Pagliuca 1987: 112–114, Fischer 2006: 264. Animacy plays an important role in various grammaticalization paths that start from volition (or intentionality). For a close parallel with the present case, cf. the development of the proximative in Heine (1994, 2002) and Romaine (1999) which shows in principle the same semantic shift from an animate to inanimate subject coupled with a shift to a new, grammatical meaning of the construction.

B. *fár **mun** enn verri*
i. "Few **intend** [to be] even worse."
ii. "Few **will** [be] even worse."
(Bragi Boddason, lausavísa, text according to Jónsson (ed.) 1912: 5)

The next stage involves an inanimate subject, incapable of intending, whereby the old meaning is ruled out. (11 A) is a prototypical example, (11 B) is the earliest attestation.

(11) A. *þetta sverð **mun** bíta Molda*
       this   sword **will**   bite Moldi
       "This sword will hit Moldi."
       (*Svarfdœla saga* VIII: 146)
     B. *eigi **mun** * við ekkju austmanna   før   sannask*
       not **will**   by widow Easterners.GEN journey turn.out
       "The journey of the Easterners to the widow will not come to pass."
       (Þorbjǫrn hornklofi, *lausavísa*, text and transl. according to Whaley (ed.) 2012: 118)

(11 B) is the only 9[16]th century instance of *munu* involving an inanimate subject. It is a verse from a single stanza by Þorbjǫrn hornklofi, preserved in the *Hauksbók* manuscript. The reading of the stanza is uncertain because of the poor state of the manuscript, but fortunately, the last, crucial verse seems rather straightforward and the interpretation is reasonable with regard to the context of the strophe.[16]

Considering the rather small number of preserved 9th century Skaldic poems and consequently the low number of attestations of *munu* from that period (9, out of which 6 denote future), one inanimate subject is not as insignificant as it might seem at first sight. And that it is not a mere coincidence or an excess of the poet's creativity is evidenced by Skaldic poems from the 10th century where the trend continues. There is a total of 90 instances of *munu* out of which 15 have an inanimate subject and an additional 6 are impersonal constructions where no animate agent can be identified.

These attestations indicate that *munu* was already at an advanced stage of grammaticalization at the time of the earliest sources. The occurrence of an epistemic use of *munu* in the same period, however, shows an even more advanced stage of grammaticalization.

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[16] "Þorbjǫrn and two other poets, Auðunn illskælda and Ǫlvir hnúfa, have been tricked out of a night's sexual enjoyment with a handsome widow, and have been forced to spend the night outdoors in a yard surrounded by a paling fence, whose gate has been locked. Each man composes a stanza about his plight". (Whaley 2012: 118)

2.1.2   *Munu as an Epistemic Modal*

One of the more common non-temporal uses of *munu* was to express probability or doubt (12) (cf. Nygaard 1878: 285–298).

(12)   A. *þetta **man** vera mikit land, er   vér hǫfum fundit*
          this   **will** be   large land that we have   found
          "This is probably a large land that we have found."
          (*Landnámabók*: 39)

      B. *At skalda reiðu vil ek þik spyrja,   alls þykkisk skil vita;*
          *greppa ferðir   **þú munt gǫrla kunna**,*
          þeira es með Haraldi hafask.
          "I want to ask you about the equipment of skalds, since you seem to have knowledge; **you must know** all about the companies of poets who reside with Haraldr."
          (Þorbjǫrn hornklofi, *Haraldskvæði* 18, text and transl. according to Whaley (ed.) 2012: 112)[17]

(12 B) is the oldest (9th century) instance of this use of *munu*. The poem *Haraldskvæði* is composed as a conversation between a valkyrie and a raven. The valkyrie asks the raven about the equipment of the skalds at the court of Harald Fairhair, assuming that the raven is well informed on this matter. This assumption on the part of the valkyrie is expressed by the phrase *þú munt gǫrla kunna*, literally "you will thoroughly know". *Munu* cannot refer to the future here because the valkyrie expects the raven to have the knowledge at the present moment. It expresses that the valkyrie is convinced that the raven knows.

   Such use of a future auxiliary exists also in English (13).

(13)   *This will be your luggage, I suppose.*
       (Visser 1969: 1701)

In fact, it is a widespread phenomenon found in a number of languages, e. g. in Bulgarian, Czech, Lithuanian, Dutch, English, German, French, Italian, Spanish, as well as outside Indo-European, such as Basque, Haka, Swahili, Korean and Quechua (see Bybee & Perkins & Pagliuca 1994: 202–203, Bybee & Pagliuca 1987: 118–119, Comrie 1989: 62–63, Heine & Kuteva 2004: 142–143, Štícha et al. 2013: 440, Ulvydas et al. 1971: § 180, Visser 1969: 1700).

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[17] There is some uncertainty as to whether all the preserved 23 stanzas of the poem actually constitute a single composition; also the authorship of some of the stanzas is debatable. However, this stanza (18) is explicitly attributed to Þorbjǫrn hornklofi in the sources. See the discussion in Whaley (ed.) 2012: 91–93.

Futures in these languages are of various origins, e. g. volitional like the English *will*, obligational like in Italian, aspectual like the German *werden* etc. That suggests that the epistemic meaning is not connected to the etymological meanings of those futures, but rather that it is a derivative of the futural meaning. It is indeed a broadly shared view that this use of futures emerges from prediction through an inference that the truth of the statement (about the present) will be revealed in the future (cf. Heine & Kuteva 2004: 142–143, Bybee & Perkins & Pagliuca 1994: 202–203, Bybee & Dahl 1989: 93, Comrie 1989: 62–63, Visser 1969: 1700).

Languages with a long documented history provide especially important evidence for this process. The Romance future, for instance, originated from Latin *habēre* which initially carried a sense of obligation or destiny and became a standard way of expressing future. Epistemic meaning appeared later and in Modern Spanish and Italian the development has progressed so far that the epistemic meaning has actually become the most common use of the future tense (cf. Bybee & Perkins & Pagliuca 1994: 202, Comrie 1989: 63).

It seems that the development of *munu* in Modern Icelandic shows a similar tendency (cf. Þráinsson 2005: 477, Thráinsson 2007: 16, Kress 1958–1959). This corresponds to the hypothesis suggested by Traugott (1989: 31) that "meanings tend to become increasingly situated in the speaker's subjective belief state" and that all epistemics are derived (cf. also Bybee & Pagliuca 1985).

If the epistemic meaning is derived from future, which seems highly plausible with regard to the presented discussion,[18] then the fact that it can already be found in the 9th century provides an important piece of evidence that *munu* as a future auxiliary was by no means a recent development by that time. The emergence of a new meaning requires a specific kind of context being used frequently enough so that it has the force to trigger semantic change. That implies that *munu* as a future auxiliary must already have been used intensively for quite a long time in the preceding period. Strong additional support for this theory is found in the curious morphological development of the verb.

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[18] Faarlund's view (2004: 129) who considers the probability meaning of *munu* as primary and the futural meaning as its extension is unsubstantiated and untenable in the light of comparative evidence (as is Nygaard's view (1878: 285–286) that the futural and probability meaning are parallel developments from the proximative).

2.2 The Morphological Development of *munu*

The verb *munu* is etymologically connected to thinking. It comes from a well-attested Proto-Indo-European root **men-* with the meaning "to think, to be mentally active" (cf. Seebold 1970: 346). From the synchronic Old Norse perspective, *munu* belongs to a small Germanic class of verbs known as the preterite-presents whose present tense is formally and historically identical with the preterite of strong verbs (Birkmann (1987) lists 14 verbs belonging to this class in Proto-Germanic). The origin of this phenomenon lies in the Proto-Indo-European past. The preterite of Germanic strong verbs developed from the PIE perfect, but in some verbs the PIE perfect yielded the present tense. These verbs then came to constitute the Germanic preterite-present class.

However, *munu* is not an old Proto-Germanic preterite-present verb, but rather a verb that originally belonged to the regular weak verbs. According to Seebold (1970: 346), it is a derivative of an actual preterite-present verb **munan* "to think, remember" whose direct continuations are Gothic *munan* "to consider, believe" (and prefixed *gamunan* "to remember"), Old English *munan* "to remember" and Old Norse *muna* "to remember".

We thus have two closely related verbs in Old Norse: the future auxiliary *munu* with the etymological meaning "to intend", and *muna* "to remember". What is crucial is that *muna* is historically a preterite-present verb corresponding to the Gothic preterite-present *munan* "to consider, believe", while *munu* was originally a weak verb corresponding both semantically and morphologically to the Gothic weak verb *munan*[19] "to intend" (which is distinct from the above-mentioned preterite-present *munan* "to consider, believe").

If one looks at the standard Old Norse paradigms of *muna* and *munu*, it can be noticed that their morpho(phono)logical shape does not fully correspond either to their supposed origin, or to their synchronic category. *Munu* looks overall like a preterite-present, having all the endings characteristic of this class, but the absence of vowel alternation (sg. *mun*, pl. *munum*), which is otherwise a constant feature of preterite-presents

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[19] In Gothic, it is occasionally used to translate the Greek *μέλλειν* "to intend", but unlike Old Norse, its use did not spread beyond its lexical meaning as it is always used with animate subjects in the sense of intending (cf. Nygaard 1878: 267–268, Coleman 1996: 19–20).

(cf. sg. *skal*, pl. *skulum*), reveals the fact that *munu* did not originally belong to this class[20] (cf. Birkmann 1987: 243).

On the other hand, *muna* shows vowel alternation between sg. and pl. forms (*man, munum*), but its plural indicative endings (*-um, -ið, -a*), for instance, do not agree with the standard endings of other preterite-presents (*-um, -uð, -u*). This means that *muna*, originally a preterite-present, acquired some features that are characteristic of regular verbs (non-preterite-presents), while *munu*, originally a weak verb, gradually aligned itself with the class of preterite-presents.

Birkmann (1987) claims that the morphologically hybrid nature of these two verbs can be explained by an "asymmetry between form and function" that they inherited from Proto-Germanic. He argues that the preterite-present verbs constitute a class whose morphological properties are irregular from the perspective of the Germanic verbal system. A part of these verbs already functioned as modal verbs in Gothic, and throughout the history of Germanic languages there was a growing tendency to match the morphological oddities of preterite-presents with the feature "modality", i. e. non-modal verbs had the tendency to leave the class of preterite-presents, and vice versa, modal verbs were inclined to align themselves with the morphological pattern of preterite-presents (see Birkman (1987: 53–60) for details). The history of Old Norse *muna* and *munu* is to be viewed as one case in this larger perspective.

We can see from this brief discussion that throughout its history, *munu* went through a dramatic morphological reshaping which can be explained in terms of its increasing modal/auxiliary nature. The essential change (that of adopting preterite-present endings instead of the weak ones, both in the singular and plural present indicative) occurred already in the pre-literary period and is indicative of a highly frequent use of *munu* as a grammatical word from early on. This trend continued in written medieval sources where the verb is clearly the main exponent of future.

In the next section, it is argued that none of previous theories of the emergence of periphrastic future in Germanic is applicable to Old Norse.

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[20] However, *munu* is also attested with vowel-alternating forms (sg. *man*, pl. *munum*) as early as the 12th century in Norwegian where they later became dominant. They also gained the upper hand in Faroese. In Icelandic, they occur from the 14th to 16th century, but were eventually eliminated (cf. Birkmann 1987: 287–288). The emergence of these forms completed the morphonological transformation of *munu* and provided the verb with a perfect preterite-present look.

3 Earlier Theories of the Origin of the Periphrastic Future

Scholarly attention given to the emergence of the periphrastic future in Germanic has been focused on English and German (cf. Mutti 2010, Sieberer 1925, Blackburn 1892). However, too much generalization has been made in regard to the other Germanic languages, the usual presumption being that they developed along somewhat similar lines. Such generalization is unfounded, at least when it comes to Old Norse.

When discussing the origins of periphrastic future in Germanic, one usually finds arguments connected to the cultural and linguistic influence brought about by Christianity which put Germanic translators to the challenge of how to translate Greek and Latin future tense forms.[21] As a reaction to this foreign religiously/culturally conditioned influence, periphrastic futures began to emerge at different times in Germanic languages during the Middle Ages.[22] This kind of reasoning is often believed to be valid for the Germanic branch as a whole.

In her study of the role of religion in language change, Mutti (2010: 210) claims that an examination of the grammaticalization of Old English modals "will serve to exemplify the changes that occurred in the various Germanic languages". She supports this claim by arguing that Old English was a mix of Germanic dialects with close connections to Old Frisian and even Old Norse. It is true that Old English dialects were rather diverse and there are certainly various sorts of Old Norse and Old English parallels, but that does not entitle one to conclude that the two languages will behave identically in *all* respects. This is especially the case when it comes to periphrastic future constructions, since the Old/Middle English outcome is rather different from the Old Norse one.

The idea that the Germanic future emerged due to a foreign/Christian influence, advanced most recently by Mutti, is not new. Sieberer (1925: 10) argued that the German construction *werden* + infinitive arose because "the educated thinking, being completely in the shackles of Latin, longed for a future tense in German". Another proponent of this line of thought was Paul Bauschatz (1982) who argued that periphrastic future in all Germanic languages arose as a consequence of Christianization and on the base of Latin tense structure.

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[21] Sieberer (1925: 34) even claims that there is nothing in language that would be more dependent on religion than the future, since the future is the main domain of religion.

[22] See Mutti (2010: 178), and the literature cited therein – none of it concerns Old Norse.

The theory that Germanic periphrastic futures appeared, essentially, due to the adoption of Christianity is untenable. Old Norse evidence alone is enough to disprove it. As we have seen, the periphrastic future had been grammaticalized by the 9th century and is probably even of a much earlier origin. It is thus more than a century before Norway and Iceland *formally* became Christian and one must bear in mind that cultural changes do not usually happen overnight. It took much longer, perhaps a couple of centuries, before Christian beliefs actually became the norm among people and could have, potentially, exerted influence on the grammatical structure of the language. If Christianity had been the conceptual source for the Old Norse periphrastic future, considering that language change does not happen overnight either, we could expect to find periphrasis no earlier than perhaps the 13th century, and secondary uses derived from the future perhaps even a century later.

It would, moreover, be utterly unreasonable in view of the fact that the periphrastic future appears *later* in English and German when the Christianization of these areas actually happened much *earlier* than in Scandinavia. Use of (quasi)future periphrastic constructions only appeared in the Middle period of both English and German and the present tense was still a very common way of expressing the future. In Middle English, the two verbs relatively most often employed in these constructions were **sculan* and *willan*, but it was only towards the end of the period that they were becoming free of their modal meaning (cf. Fischer 2006: 264). In Middle High German, the verbs used were *soln*, *wellen*, *müezen*, but usually they expressed both a modal and a temporal meaning at the same time, with the present tense remaining the main means of future reference (cf. Schmidt 2013: 317–318, Paul 1929: 175). The non-modal *werden* became common as a future auxiliary only in Early Modern German (cf. Schmidt 2013: 318). It can also be noted that other languages, like the Finno-Ugric Finnish, Sami or Estonian, did not develop a distinct future tense after Christianization and continue to use the present tense in future meaning.

Linking the emergence of the periphrastic future to a religious change as advocated by Mutti (2010) and others is, therefore, at least in the case of Old Norse, not a viable option.[23]

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[23] And although the present argumentation does not directly disprove the possibility that Christianity had some influence on English and German futures, it does at least question it. On the other hand, the Latin/Romance influence on the development of periphrastic perfect in Germanic seems conceivable because the perfect in the continental Germanic languages resembles the Romance one more closely than Scandinavian perfects do (cf. Drinka 2017: 220–254).

A different view regarding the emergence of the periphrastic future in Germanic was advocated by Sčur (1963, 1964). He was aware of the fact that Old Norse had developed a periphrastic future by the 9th century as the first among Germanic languages, and he made an important contribution through his statistical analysis of Icelandic sagas with regard to the expression of future. Sčur also noticed a correlation between periphrastic future and periphrastic subjunctive in Germanic languages (ON *munu,* English *will,* German *werden,* Norwegian *ville* etc.) and claimed that the emergence of periphrastic future was conditioned by periphrastic subjunctive. A certain correlation between these categories is undeniable and can even be expected, given their mutual semantic proximity (cf. Ultan 1978: 94–95). There are also clear cases of futures that developed from a subjunctive, particularly in Latin (cf. Ultan 1978: 113).

However, Sčur did not present any substantial arguments in support of his hypothesis and his observation is therefore of little value. More importantly, since there exists a direct grammaticalization path from the original meaning of *munu* ("to intend") to future (cf. above), assuming a development from the subjunctive is not reasonable.

Since these previous accounts do not offer a satisfactory explanation of the emergence of the periphrastic future in Old Norse, another theory is presented in the following sections.

4 The Expression of Future in Early Germanic

With regard to the role of the present tense in the expression of future in early Germanic, the present tense is sometimes referred to as the *non-past* (Faarlund 1994: 51, Harbert 2007: 6). Blackburn's (1892: 6–21) analysis of the expression of future in old Germanic languages is based on renderings of Latin and Greek (in the case of Gothic) future forms in Germanic translations.

According to this analysis, Gothic uses the present indicative to translate the Greek future in 95 % of instances. In the remaining 5 % it is the present subjunctive[24] with very few instances of periphrasis.[25]

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[24] Blackburn uses the term *optative* throughout his text.

[25] Or in numbers, 562 instances of present indicative, 26 of present subjunctive and 6 of periphrasis. Only renderings of the Greek morphological future (used in an actual futural sense, i. e. its modal uses like imperative etc. are not taken into account) are included in these statistics.

For Old High German the ratio is similar. The overwhelming majority of Latin futures are rendered into Old High German by the present indicative, and a few instances by the present subjunctive and periphrasis with the verb *scal.*[26]

In Old English, the present indicative is again absolutely dominant, with a few cases of the subjunctive and no instances of periphrasis.[27]

For Old Saxon, Blackburn claims that the future is most commonly expressed by a periphrasis with *sculan*, rarely present indicative and perhaps subjunctive in a few instances. According to van der Wal & Quak (1994: 104), both periphrasis and the present tense were used in Old Saxon.

As can be seen from these data, Old Norse holds rather a special position within the Germanic branch (with a possible exception of Old Saxon) with respect to the expression of the future. It also used the present tense in future meaning, but as mentioned above, it did so to a considerably lesser extent than its sister languages because it was equipped with a periphrastic future from early on. A crucial question that has not been satisfactorily answered is why the periphrastic future emerged so early in Old Norse compared to (Middle) English and (Middle) High German.

4.1 Germanic Verbal Prefixes and Future

The majority of old Germanic texts clearly demonstrate that the present tense served as the principle exponent of future, but there is an additional factor that has been given some attention in this connection, namely the link between Germanic verbal prefixes, aspect and future.

The theory of Germanic aspect was developed largely by Streitberg (1891, 1920) who compared the Gothic prefixed and simple verbs with the Slavic aspectual system.[28] The Slavic system (which is essentially similar in the modern West and East Slavic languages and Old Church Slavonic)

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[26] Tested on the material of Old High German translations of *Tatian* (present indicative 288 times, present subjunctive 7 times, periphrasis with *scal* twice) and Notker's paraphrase of 25 psalms (present indicative 172 times, periphrasis with *sol* 3 times).

[27] The texts used were the Vespasian Psalter and Hymns (present indicative 1100 times, another 14 instances are rendered either by present subjunctive or are probably corrupt) and Anglo-Saxon Glosses (present indicative 133 times, subjunctive twice).

[28] Aspectual parallels between Slavic and Germanic had already been observed by Jacob Grimm in his translation of Wuk Stephanowitch's Serbian Grammar of 1824 (for an overview of the research history see Młynarczyk 2004: 38–44.) The issue was more thoroughly discussed particularly by Schleicher (1855) who concluded that the Slavic and Gothic systems of the expression of future are essentially the same, but the distinction between perfectives and imperfectives is less strict in Gothic than Old Church Slavonic.

works in the following way. Imperfective verbs form the future through periphrasis, while perfective verbs express future by their present tense (cf. Cubberley & Sussex 2006: 288–290). Perfective verbs can thus refer to past or to future, but they are incapable of expressing presence. An imperfective verb can be made perfective, among other means, by a prefix, as for example in Czech *jde* "s/he goes/is going", *přijde* "s/he will come".

Streitberg tried to apply the Slavic system to Gothic, arguing for systematic aspectual distinctions. He distinguished the imperfective future expressed by periphrasis on the one hand, and perfective future expressed by the presence of a prefix on the other hand (most often the prefix *ga-*). This theory sparked a debate that has not been resolved until the present day.[29] The view that the prefix *ga-* has a prefectivizing force has nevertheless become a norm in Gothic handbooks and grammars (cf. e. g. Kieckers 1960: 270–272, Wright 1966: § 413, Lambdin 2006: 15–17) and the theory has also been applied to other Germanic languages, chiefly English and German.

Even some proponents of Streitberg's theory admit, however, that to postulate a Slavic-like system of strict aspectual oppositions for Gothic is untenable due to the many inconsistencies in the material. And it is not the aim of this article to insist on the unassailability of Streitberg's theory for Gothic either; instead, the intention is to look into the origin of such a system and examine whether it could ever have existed in Proto-Germanic. The idea has indeed been suggested by Coleman (1996: 6) and this line of reasoning is pursued further here. If it could be demonstrated that the perfectivizing function of prefixes and their use with present tense forms in future meaning is not a Gothic-specific feature and that it can also be found (at least residually) in other Germanic languages, it would increase the possibility that it existed in Proto-Germanic. Having made this detour, we will then return to Old Norse to approach the origin of the periphrastic future from a new perspective.

4.1.1 *Verbal Prefixes and Future in Gothic*
The imperfective future, as defined by Streitberg, is attested rather scarcely in Gothic. According to Streitberg (1920: § 301), it was expressed by the following auxiliary verbs: *duginnan* "to begin" (14), *haban* "to have" (15), *skulan* "to owe, must" (16), or alternatively, by the subjunctive (17).

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[29] See references in Broz (2013: 238–39) for the various views.

(14) *jah in þamma fagino,   akei jah **faginon**   **duginna***
      and in that   rejoice.PRS but and **rejoice.INF begin**
      *καὶ ἐν τούτῳ χαίρω: ἀλλὰ καὶ **χαρήσομαι**,*
      "And I therein do rejoice, yea, and **will rejoice**."
      (Phil. 1,18)[30]

(15) *þatei **tauja**   jah **taujan haba***
      what do.PRS and **do.INF have**
      *δὲ ποιῶ καὶ **ποιήσω***
      "What I do, that I **will do**."
      (2 Cor. 11,12)

(16) *hva **skuli**   þata barn **wairþan?***
      what shall.SBJV that child **become.INF**
      *τί ἄρα τὸ παιδίον τοῦτο **ἔσται***
      "What manner of child **shall** this **be**."
      (Luk. 1,66)

(17) *hvaiwa **sijai**   þata*
      how   **be.SBJV** this
      *πῶς **ἔσται** τοῦτο*
      "How shall this be."
      (Luk. 1,34)

All of the periphrastic constructions occur only a few times in the Gothic corpus and it has been claimed by Kleyner (2015) that only *haban* (occurring three times in a futural meaning with the infinitive) may be considered futural. Coleman (1996) considers the periphrastic futures a foreign (Latin) influence. He argues that they occur so seldom in the Gothic corpus because they postdate Wulfila's translation and were implemented into the text by his revisers at a later point which seems to be a plausible explanation. The subjunctive is slightly more common but together with periphrasis only accounts for 5 % of renderings of the Greek future.

   Instances of perfective future are more frequent. According to Wood (2002: 176), prefixed presents are used in a futural meaning 65 times.[31] The overall number of attested prefixed present forms is 120 which means that slightly more than a half of the prefixed forms have a futural meaning.

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[30] The Gothic and Greek texts along with the English translation are cited according to http://www.wulfila.be. The relevant verb forms in all the three languages and in the glosses are emphasized.
[31] 30 times they translate the Greek future, 35 times the aorist subjunctive with a futural meaning.

The prefix *ga-* is typically used for that purpose, cf. (18 A) and (19 A). Examples (18 B) and (19 B) illustrate present meaning of corresponding unprefixed verbs.

(18)   A. *jah ains ize   ni **ga-driusiþ** ana airþa*
         and one they.GEN not **PFV-falls** on earth
         καὶ ἓν ἐξ αὐτῶν οὐ **πεσεῖται** ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν
         "And one of them **shall** not **fall** on the ground."
         (Mt. 10,29)
      B. *seinamma fraujin   standiþ aiþþau **driusiþ***
         his   master.DAT stands or   **[IPFV]falls**
         τῷ ἰδίῳ κυρίῳ στήκει ἢ **πίπτει**
         "To his own master he standeth or **falleth**."
         (Rom. 14,4)

(19)   A. *ik **ga-taira**   alh   þo handuwaurhton jah bi þrins dagans anþara*
         I   **PFV-destroy** temple this hand.made   and by three days other
         *unhanduwaurhta **ga-timrja***
         not.hand.made   **PFV-build**
         ἐγὼ **καταλύσω** τὸν ναὸν τοῦτον τὸν χειροποίητον καὶ διὰ τριῶν ἡμερῶν
         ἄλλον ἀχειροποίητον **οἰκοδομήσω**
         "I **will destroy** this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I **will build** another made without hands."
         (Mk. 14,58)
      B. *all mis binauht ist, akei ni   all **timreiþ***
         all me lawful is but not   all **[IPFV]builds**
         πάντα ἔξεστιν, ἀλλ' οὐ πάντα **οἰκοδομεῖ**
         "All things are lawful for me, but all things **edify** not."
         (1 Cor. 10,23)

The prefix *ga-* is also used with present participles in a futural meaning (20).

(20)   *ni   **ga-aiwiskonda***
      not **PFV-being.ashamed**
      οὐκ **αἰσχυνθήσομαι**
      "I **will** not **be ashamed**."
      (2 Cor. 10,8)

Other suffixes seem to be used in a similar manner, though less often, e. g. *uf-* (21), *us-*, *at-* (22), and in addition to perfectivity they may also

contribute to the lexical meaning of the verb (for instance, *at-* expresses direction toward, cf. Lambdin 2008: 42).

(21) *audagai jus gretandans nu, unte* **uf-hlohjanda**
blessed you crying now because **PFV-laugh**
*μακάριοι οἱ κλαίοντες νῦν, ὅτι **γελάσετε***
"Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye **shall laugh**."
(Luk. 6,21)

(22) *jah ik jabai* **us-hauhjada** *af airþai, alla* **at-þinsa** *du mis*
and I if **PFV-be.lifted** of earth all **PFV-attract** to me
*κἀγὼ ἐὰν **ὑψωθῶ** ἐκ τῆς γῆς, πάντας **ἑλκύσω** πρὸς ἐμαυτόν*
"And I, if I **be lifted** up from the earth, **will draw** all men unto me."
(Jn. 12,32)

The use of prefixes to express a future meaning is, however, not quite consistent in Gothic. Coleman (1996: 7) observes, following West (1981), that aspectual marking in Gothic is mostly concentrated in contrastive pairs, i. e. in contexts where one finds a prefixed form expressing future and a parallel unprefixed form expressing presence. Such contrasts reveal the futural function of prefixes rather clearly (23).

(23) A. *andbahtei mis, unte* **matja** *jah* **drigka,** *jah biþe* **ga-matjis**
jah **ga-drigkais** *þu*
serve me until **[IPFV]eat** and **[IPFV]drink** and then **PFV-eat**
and **PFV-drink** you
*διακόνει μοι ἕως **φάγω** καὶ **πίω**, καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα **φάγεσαι** καὶ **πίεσαι** σύ*
"Serve me, till I **have eaten** and **drunken**; and afterward thou **shalt eat** and **drink**."
(Luk. 17,8)

   B. *unte* *ƕazuh saei* **hauheiþ** *sik silba,* **ga-hnaiwjada,** *jah saei* **hnaiweiþ**
because everyone that **[IPFV]raises** him self **PFV-be.abased** and that **[IPFV]abases**
sik silban, **us-hauhjada**
him self **PFV-be.raised**
*ὅτι πᾶς ὁ **ὑψῶν** ἑαυτὸν **ταπεινωθήσεται** καὶ ὁ **ταπεινῶν** ἑαυτὸν **ὑψωθήσεται***
"For whosoever **exalteth** himself **shall be abased**; and he that **humbleth** himself **shall be exalted**."
(Luk. 14,11)

C. *ga-arma*　　*þanei*　*arma,*　　　*jah* *ga-bleiþja*
   PFV-have.pity whom **[IPFV]have.pity** and **PFV-be.merciful**
   þanei　*bleiþja*
   whom **[IPFV]be.merciful**
   ἐλεήσω ὃν ἂν ἐλεῶ, καὶ *οἰκτιρήσω* *ὃν ἂν* *οἰκτίρω*
   "I **will have mercy** on whom I **have mercy**, and I **will have com-
   passion** on whom I **have compassion**."
   (Rom. 9,15)

It is true that inconsistencies are common, especially in cases where a contrast between prefixed and unprefixed forms is absent (see (25)).

Interestingly, the aspectual system is more consistent in the past tense. The Gothic prefixed preterite often corresponds to the Greek aorist (24 A) and the Greek imperfect is usually rendered by an unprefixed preterite (24 B) (cf. Coleman 1996: 5, Lambdin 2006: 16).

(24)　A. [*so*]　*ga-swalt*
　　　　[she] **PFV-died**
　　　　ἀπέθανεν
　　　　"She **died**."
　　　　(Luk. 8,53)
　　B. *so*　*swalt*
　　　　she **[IPFV]died**
　　　　ἀπέθνῃσκεν
　　　　"She **was dying**."
　　　　(Luk. 8,42)

A lesser degree of consistency in the Gothic present as compared to the preterite is probably caused by greater ambiguity of the present tense forms. According to Coleman (1996: 9), a prefixed present could express not only future (usually perfective[32]) but also a perfective presence (25 A). Also, an unprefixed present form could express presence as well as future, imperfective or unmarked for aspect (25 B).

(25)　A. *iþ*　*sa*　*ubila bagms akrana ubila* *ga-taujiþ*
　　　　but that evil　tree　fruits　evil **PFV-makes**
　　　　τὸ δὲ σαπρὸν δένδρον καρποὺς πονηροὺς *ποιεῖ*
　　　　"But a corrupt tree **bringeth** forth evil fruit."
　　　　(Mt. 7,17)

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[32] Harbert (2007: 297) claims that Gothic prefixed forms used in future meaning always carry a sense of perfectivity.

> B. jabai hvis   bidjiþ   mik in namin meinamma, ik **tauja**
> if   anything ask.2PL me   in name my   I   **[IPFV]do**
> ἐάν τι αἰτήσητέ με ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου ἐγὼ **ποιήσω**
> "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I **will do** it."
> (Jn. 14,14)

Coleman (1996: 7) therefore claims that "Streitberg's view of a systematic opposition of perfective and imperfective was strongly overstated". But Streitberg (1920: § 302) was actually aware of the ambiguity of perfective presents and related it to the absence of a special class of iterative verbs. Germanic, as opposed to Slavic, had no formal means to form iterative verbs of the type like, for instance, the Czech *pře-skak-ov-at* "to be jumping over repeatedly", formed with an iterative suffix from the perfective verb *pře-skák-at* "to jump over". The Germanic perfective (prefixed) present, therefore, sometimes had to express an (iterative) present as in (25 A),[33] alongside with its normal use (i. e. future).

In other words, in the preterite, prefixes only served to distinguish between the perfective and imperfective aspect, while in the present there was a dimension of time (present vs. future) *in addition* to aspect. Prefixes used with the present tense forms were therefore not only aspectual markers but simultaneously, at least to some extent (and actually as a by-product of the aspectual function), also tense markers. According to Coleman (1996), the ambiguity of the perfective present tense forms was ultimately the reason their use to express futurity was not more widespread in Gothic.

On the other hand, the Gothic data do indicate that perfectivity was indeed the primary function of verbal prefixes. Wood (2002: 221) found that "a strong majority of prefixed verbs in Gothic serve to translate the Greek perfective forms (Aorist and Future)". According to him (2002: 225), there is a 60–70 % correspondence between perfectivity and the presence of a prefix. Also, as has been noted, a prefixed present form expresses the future more often than not.

As to the origin of the aspectual system in Gothic, two theories have been suggested. On the one hand, West (1981) and Wood (2002: 226) seem to imply that it developed within Gothic and thus consider it a Gothic innovation. Wood offers a possible explanation for this hypoth-

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[33] An iterative meaning is mentioned as one of the functions of *ge-* in Middle High German (cf. Mausser 1932–1933: 990).

esis, namely that it appeared as an areal characteristic in direct relation to Balto-Slavic.[34] On the other hand, Coleman (1996: 6) claims that

> it can plausibly be argued that what we have in the Gothic documents may be the residue of an older system in decline rather than one that has not yet (and perhaps never would have) become fully developed.

Regrettably, Coleman does not elaborate his position, but an examination of the situation in (Old) English and (Old) High German could shed some light on the problem.

4.1.2 *Verbal Prefixes and Future in English and German*

The Proto-Germanic prefix **ga-*, that played a main role in the aspectual distinctions in Gothic, is frequently attested in most Germanic dialects – in Old English as *ge-/gi-* (Middle English *y-*), Old High German *ga-* and *gi-*, and Old Saxon *ge-*, both in verbal and nominal composites. Etymologically, it is a cognate with the Latin prefix *co(m)-* (cf. Lehmann 1986: 133).[35]

Perfectivization is mentioned as a primary meaning of the prefix in Old/ Middle High German and Old English (cf. e. g. Paul 1929: § 305, Schmidt 2013: 317–318, Mitchell & Robinson 2003: 58). The perfectivizing force is still reflected in modern Dutch and German where the prefix developed a function of an obligatory grammatical marker of past participles, e. g. *geschrieben* "written". This meaning can also be observed in lexical pairs like the Old English *winnan* "to fight" and *gewinnan* "to win", German *horchen* "to listen" and *gehorchen* "to obey", Gothic *beidan* "to wait" and *gabeidan* "to endure" (cf. Coleman 1996: 5).

The range of meanings of the prefix in historical stages of German was rather wide (for an exhaustive list of meanings for Middle High German, see Mausser 1932–1933: 989–994). In OHG, it was typically used for preterites and past participles (cf. Wailes 2015: 341), and its role as a perfectivizing future marker has also been considered (see especially Lawson 1965, 1968). Senn (1949: 408) came to the conclusion that "Gothic and Old High German represent very much the same picture as Old Church Slavic, especially in the use of the perfective present to express future action".[36]

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[34] He would thus consider the Gothic system a loan from Slavic/Baltic, as opposed to Senn (1949: 409) who is inclined to believe "that the Slavs received the aspect system from the Goths and passed it on to the Baltic people".

[35] For different views, see Lindemann 1965 and Trobevšek-Drobnak 1994.

[36] In support of his view, Senn (1949: 407) cites Old High German translations of Latin *Isidor* in which prefixed presents correspond to Latin future: "*(Ih) chidhuuingu dhir aer-*

Instances of prefixed presents denoting the future can indeed be found in various Old High German texts. Lawson (1965: 91) notes that in the OHG translation of *Tatian*, the present tense of the Latin verb *congrego* is always translated with an unprefixed form, and the future tense with a prefixed form (26).

(26)　　Lat. *congrego* – OHG *samanon* ("I gather")
　　　　Lat. *congregabo* – OHG *gisamanon* ("I will gather")
　　　　Lat. *congregat* – OHG *samanot* ("he gathers")
　　　　Lat. *congregabit* – OHG *gisamanot* ("he will gather")

However, a closer look at the evidence reveals that Senn's claim is clearly overstated, as such degree of consistency is rather exceptional in the material. For instance, both the Latin present *perhibet* ("he says") and the future *perhibebit* ("he will say") are rendered with unprefixed *saget* in *Tatian* (Lawson 1965: 92). Such inconsistencies are, in fact, so numerous that Lawson (1965: 97) claims that "irregularities are in greater evidence than the system". The perfective – imperfective contrast is according to him (Lawson 1968: 280) "applicable only on an individual basis and not on a systematic basis". However, he (1965: 97) implies that the best interpretation of the occasional use of *gi-* to express future is to consider it a vestige of an earlier system.

Interestingly, for Middle High German, Schmidt (2013: 317–318) notes that perfective verbs (by which he means most of the prefixed ones) can be used in the present tense with future meaning. According to him, especially *ge-* is used for making imperfective verbs perfective, e. g. *ligen* "lie" – *geligen* "to come to lie".[37] Imperfective verbs, on the other hand, need to be supported by context.

As in the case of Streitberg's claim about Gothic, positing a Slavic-like aspectual system for OHG turned out to be untenable, but at the same time it is obvious that futural use of prefixed presents existed in OHG, though a precise degree of this phenomenon is hard to assess at the present state of research.

Old English represents perhaps the most complicated case as to the history and meaning of the prefix *ge-/gi-*. It has been a subject of a great number of articles and a discussion of the literature available on this

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driihhes hruomege = Lat. gloriosos terre humiliabo; ih chifestinon = firmabo; ih aruuehhu = suscitabo; ih chistiftu = statuam, stabiliam; ih firchnussu = conteram".
　[37] Though Paul (1929: § 305–306) points out that the perfectivizing force of *ge-* was already in decline in Middle High German, and a more common meaning of the prefix was that of generalization.

topic is well beyond the scope of this paper (summaries of the various views can be found in Lindemann 1965 and Trobevšek-Drobnak 1994). The notion that it primarily had a perfectivizing meaning has, however, become the mainstream view, as in the other Germanic languages (cf. e. g. Kastovsky 2005: 380).

Blackburn (1892: 21) who follows Streitberg's theory and posits an aspectual prefix system at least for Proto-Germanic and to some extent for Gothic, argues that Old English did not preserve any traces of the system. Steadman (1917: 35) came to quite a different conclusion, namely that the contrast between perfectives and imperfectives was still present in Old English and that the present forms of perfective verbs were used to denote future more often than those of imperfective verbs.

His conclusion is based on an analysis of several Old English texts. In *Appolonius of Tyre* the number of perfective verbs that use their present tense for the future is 15, as opposed to 4 imperfectives. For *Beowulf* this ratio is 24:10. In the *Elene* the present form of a perfective verb has a present meaning in 2 cases and a future meaning in 20 cases, while the present form of an imperfective verb has a present meaning in 11 cases and future in 14 cases*.* In the first ten chapters of the Old English translation of *The Gospel of Saint Matthew*, 75 % of futures are translated with a perfective present (see Steadman 1917: 35–39 for detailed results). It should be noted that apart from prefixed verbs (with *ge-* like in *ge-wyrcan* "to work" (27) or other prefixes like *for-* in *for-sweorcan* "to darken" (28)), Steadman includes some verbs that are "perfective" by means of their lexical aspect (aktionsart), such as *niman* "to take" (27).

(27)   *ic me mid Hruntinge dom **ge-wyrce** |oþðe mec deað **nimeð***
       I me with Hrunting glory **PFV-make** or   me death **[PFV]takes**
       "I myself with Hrunting **will win** distinction or death **will take** me off".
       (Beowulf 1492–1493)[38]

(28)   *oððe eagena bearhtm   **for-siteð** ond **for-sworceð***
       or   of.eyes brightness **PFV-fails** and **PFV-darkens**
       "Or your eyes' brightness **will become faded** and **fail**".
       (Beowulf 1769–1770)

As in Gothic, some prefixes may also contribute to the lexical meaning of the verb (cf. *for-sittan* "to diminish" and *sittan* "to sit", on the other

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[38] The Old English text and the translations are cited according to Electronic Beowulf. Fourth Edition: http://ebeowulf.uky.edu/ebeo4.0/CD/main.html [accessed in June 2021]. The relevant words are emphasized.

hand, in *for-sweorcan* "to darken", the lexical meaning is preserved, cf. *sweorcan* "to darken").

It is worth noting that prefixed verbs in a futural meaning can also occur in conditional clauses as in (29), where future tenses are often restricted, cf. (5).

(29)   A. Gif ic þæt **ge-|fricge**   ofer floda   begang
          if   I   that **PFV-learn** over of.waters expanse
          "If I **learn** that over the length of the sea".
          (Beowulf 1829)
     B. *gif mec se   mansceaða of eorðsele   ut   **ge-seceð***
          if   me that evil.scather of earth.hall out **PFV-fights**
          "If me the evil-scather from out of its earth hall comes to attack".
          (Beowulf 2515–2516)

Steadman's results, albeit derived from a limited amount of texts, indicate that Old English favoured perfective verbs in a futural context.

Interestingly, the preference to use verbs with a (lexically) perfective aspect in a futural context has also been noticed in Modern English and German (cf. Hilpert 2008: Chapter 6). In Modern English, futural use of the present tense is rather common for scheduled future events, and there is, according to Hilpert, a preference for inceptive and telic verbs (i. e. inherently perfective verbs), such as *start, begin, open, leave, continue, arrive, meet, finish* etc. Moreover, Hilpert (2008: 168) argues that imperfectives, such as activity verbs (e. g. *play, fly, go*) and stative verbs (e. g. *have, be*) acquire a perfective meaning in a futural context (30).

(30)   *England's women play the Soviet Union tomorrow.*

In German, the present tense is also preferred for scheduled future event, but it is generally used more often than in English. It can actually be considered the main means of future expression in German as it covers about 70 % of future references (Hilpert 2008: 170–172). Similarly to English, German shows a general preference for perfective verbs in future context, i. e. both telic verbs (e. g. *kommen, treffen, erhalten, finden*) and inceptive verbs (e. g. *beginnen, öffnen, anfangen*).[39] Hilpert (2008: 175) claims that imperfective verbs can also be coerced into a perfective reading in a futural context in German (31).

(31)   *Im nächsten Jahr feiert das Unternehmen sein 25jähriges Bestehen.*

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[39] Abraham (1989: 351) stresses the role of prefixes for the aspectual expression of future in German.

On the other hand, the German future periphrastic construction with *werden* has been found to be most common with imperfective verbs (Hilpert 2008: Chapter 5). This correlation of imperfective verbs with periphrasis on the one hand, and perfective verbs with the present tense on the other, corresponds remarkably to the system suggested by Streitberg (1891, 1920) for Gothic.

It has also been noted that telicity plays an important role in the use of present tense for future in Danish and Swedish (for references, see Hilpert 2008: 178), which Hilpert interprets as a part of a more general tendency, namely the preference for the use of perfective verbs in a future context.

That there is indeed such a general tendency can be illustrated by the fact that it is not limited to Slavic or Germanic languages. It plays a role, for instance, in Japanese. Progressive aspect of Japanese non-past forms will usually be interpreted as present, while non-progressive aspect of such forms commonly expresses the future (cf. Comrie 1989: 57–58).

Hilpert (2008) does not interpret the English and German data in historical terms (and does not mention the Gothic aspectual theory). It is therefore not clear whether this tendency in modern languages should be considered a continuation of the older system. With regard to the fact that a similar inclination to correlate perfective/non-progressive aspect with future can be found in an unrelated language such as Japanese, it seems more plausible that the Modern English, German and Scandinavian data are, at least in part, a reflection of a more general, cross-linguistic tendency as assumed by Hilpert (2008). These data from modern/unrelated languages therefore provide an additional piece of evidence that even languages that do not have a "Slavic-like" system of strict aspectual distinctions may show preference for perfective verbs in a futural context.

4.1.3 Germanic Verbal Prefixes and Future: Conclusion

The preceding discussion may be summarized as follows. The use of **ga-* and other verbal prefixes is not identical across Germanic languages, but a perfective meaning can be found in Gothic, as well as in Old English and Old High German. It is particularly clear in the Gothic preterite, but also prefixed present tense forms tend to have a perfective meaning and thereby predominantly, though not always, serve to denote a future action. This use can also be found in Old/Middle High German and Old English, but probably with a lesser degree of consistency.

Based on this survey, it seems justified to claim that the perfectivizing function of prefixes is not a Gothic innovation or an areal feature related to Balto-Slavic as suggested by Wood (2002), but rather a feature that

Gothic inherited from Proto-Germanic. It has indeed been suggested "that the preverb *ga-* of Germanic fills in for the perfective form of the verb after the IE aspectual system was dropped in favor of a temporal system in this branch" (Giannakis 1993: 494, endnote 9). The Gothic use of the prefix to render the Greek aorist (whether in a past or future meaning) particularly supports this view. Lehmann (1986: 133) even argued that the

> aspectual application [of *ga-*] may be pre-Gmc, as in **þahan*: Lat *tacēre* be silent versus **ga-þahan* become silent: Lat *con-ticēre* become silent, cease speaking. In view of the absence of verbal prefixes in PIE the aspectual application was a West European innovation.

It is not to be assumed that verbal prefixes were ever used systematically in Proto-Germanic as a fully-fledged marker of a future tense, because one would then expect to find more traces of such a system in the daughter languages. More likely, prefixes were used as a supportive means to express the future in contexts where a more explicit reference to the future was needed, for instance, to distinguish two present tense forms used in parallel, one referring to the present, the other to future, as in (23). Since verbal prefixes were not confined to the present tense forms, but were also employed in the preterite and past participles, they cannot be characterized as proper (future) tense markers. It shows that their primary function was that of signalling aspect and that the futural meaning arose as a by-product of perfectivity. As illustrated by modern Germanic languages and Japanese, preference for perfective verbs in a futural context is a more general tendency, and as such it provides further support for the existence of such a system in Proto-Germanic.

5 Prefixes in Nordic and the Emergence of the Periphrastic Future

As the reader has undoubtedly understood, Old Norse has been left out from this discussion for the very reason that it virtually lacks (unstressed) verbal prefixes. Comparative evidence, as well as some syntactic and morphological reflexes in Old Norse (cf. Christiansen 1960, Lehmann 1978) suggest, however, that it once had a similar prefix system as the other Germanic languages, which at some point almost entirely vanished. It has been suggested by Kuhn (1929) and Dal (1930) that the "expletive particles" *of* and *um* found in Old Norse poetry are reflexes of the lost

prefixes. This view was recently advocated by Olsen (2019: 74–81) who claims that the use of the expletive particles largely corresponds to the use of prefixes in other Germanic languages. On the other hand, Schulte (2003) claims it is unlikely that the Old Norse expletive particles are a direct continuation of the lost prefixes since he believes that the prefix loss occurred as early as the Early Runic period (see below).

A few direct, albeit rather tiny remnants of Proto-Germanic prefixes can be identified in Old Norse. Particularly the prefix **ga-* was preserved in a reduced form in several words beginning in *gl-*, *gr-* and *gn-*.[40] Hence, one may ask when it disappeared from the system. The Nordic prefix loss is generally considered to have occurred no earlier than during the Transitional Period, i. e. 6–7th century, due to phonological reasons (cf. Syrett 2002: 726, Strid 2002: 736, Haugen 1976: 159, Voyles 1992: 113–115).[41] According to this view, the prefix loss is thus essentially the same phenomenon as the syncopy and apocopy which also occurred during that period. The Early Runic language of the 2–5th century would thus have still possessed most of the Germanic preverbs, according to this dating.

In the Older Runic inscriptions there is only one generally accepted attestation of a prefix, namely in the Norwegian Reistad inscription (KJ 74 Reistad) containing the word *unnam*. This form is interpreted by Schulte (2003: 396) in the following way:

> **und-nam* 'I undertook', contains the prefix Gmc. **unþ-/unð-* as do Go *und-greipan* 'take, seize' and *und-rinnan* 'fall-to (by inheritance)'

The word *unnam* occurs together with *wraita* and Schulte interprets the collocation as "I undertook writing".[42] Eyþórsson (1999: 195), on the other hand, bases his translation of *unnam* on the view that the prefix has a purely aspectual function, believing that the meaning is "to take hold of, grasp".

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[40] See Christiansen (1960: 342–343): e. g. *granni* "neighbour" (cf. Goth. *garazna*), *greiða* "to furnish" (cf. Goth. *garaidjan*) etc. She further mentions two words that, according to her, contain the prefix *bi-*: *breiða* "to get something ready", **bnúa* "to rub" (attested only in the preterite form *bnéri* with the same meaning as *gnúa* (cf. Goth. *bnauan*)), and one lexeme with the PG prefix *at-*: *teygja* "to stretch out" (cf. Goth. *ataugjan*). In Eddic poems, several verbs can be found with the prefix **furi-*: *fyrbanna, fyrbjóða, fyrgørva, fyrmuna, fyrtelja.* Fulk (2018: 96) further mentions *frýja* "to defy" as containing the suffix *fra-* (cf. Goth. *fra-wrōhjan*). Apart from these verbal prefixes, several others have been reconstructed for North Germanic, see Vonhof (1905).

[41] Apart from phonological reasons, scholars sometimes mention additional factors that facilitated the loss (cf. Syrett 2002: 726, Christiansen 1960: 352–354, Whaley 2012: lii).

[42] The missing *d-* of the prefix disappeared due to its position between two alveolar nasals (see Christiansen 1960: 351).

Syrett (2002: 726) concedes that *und-* is the only "moderately clear example" of an Early Runic prefix, but claims that it is certain that verbal prefixes still existed in Early Runic. However, there are some contexts in the early inscriptions for which one would, on semantical and grammatical grounds, assume a prefixed form if it were written in a Germanic idiom that generally makes use of prefixes, cf. Schulte (2005: 241):

> One might thus ponder whether **tawido** and **worahto** in the Scandinavian runic inscriptions of Gallehus (KJ 43) and Tune (KJ 72) reflect earlier Gmc */ga-tawiðɔːn/ and */ga-wurhtɔːn/; cf. Runic OE **gewarahtæ** on the Mortain casket and Runic WGmc. **gasokun** on the belt-buckle of Pforzen.

The implication of this observation is in direct contrast to the traditional dating, and another theory has been suggested that offers a better account of the prefix loss.

5.1 The Early Loss Theory

According to Schulte (2003, 2005), the chronology of the "left-hand" and "right-hand" reduction in Nordic (that is respectively, at the beginning of a word and at the end of a word or medially) falls into different periods. He dates "right-hand" reduction, i. e. syncopy and apocopy, to the transitional period (500–650 AD) and thus in accordance with the traditional dating. As for the prefix loss, Schulte argues that it had already occurred by the time of Early Runic (150/200 AD). He (2003) suggests that there was a tripartite stress distinction of prefixes (stressed, weakly or secondarily stressed and unstressed) as opposed to the traditional bipartite view (stressed, unstressed). According to Schulte (2003), it was only the completely unstressed prefixes that were dropped at an early date (i. e. before Early Runic). Any prefixes that are actually attested in the Older Runic inscriptions (i. e. **und-* in Reistad *unnam*) must, consequently, bear primary or secondary stress.

As evidence for this hypothesis, he presents the ON prefixes *fyr-*, *for-* which are only attested in Eddic poetry and are thought to be unstressed since they do not alliterate. However, as he aptly notes, the ON vowel system of unstressed syllables contained only three vowels: /a/ /i/ /u/. The prefix *fyr-* cannot, therefore, be completely unstressed. It demands a secondary stress level. Additional evidence for the existence of a weak

stress is, according to Schulte (2003: 395), the prefix *ó-, ú-*, occurring in two variants.[43]

However, Schulte (2005: 244) argues further that "prefixes' lack of stress alone cannot be a sufficient motivation for losing them entirely". He puts two arguments forward in support of this view. First, there is no indication of the gradual weakening of pre-tonic ("left-hand") vowels in older Scandinavian runic inscriptions (such as has been observed in Old English runic inscriptions e. g. prefixes *bi- gi- > be-, ge-*), while the weakening of vowels in post-tonic ("right-hand") syllables is clearly noticeable in inscriptions of the Transitional Period. And second, reduction in pre-tonic syllables (i. e. prefixes) is greater when compared to post-tonic syllables (suffixes, endings).[44]

Schulte thus considers the lack of stress a *conditio sine qua non* and suggests that rhythmic-metrical conditions (called "Prosodic Repair Strategies") were involved as a further factor. According to this theory, languages favour certain foot structures and use various strategies (shortening, lengthening, deletion) to attain them (see Schulte 2005 for examples from Latin, Modern Norwegian and German). Schulte (2003: 398) assumes that Early Runic was inclined to favour quantity-sensitive trochee as the basic metrical unit, "both at word level and at sentence level".[45] Due to language-specific properties (cf. Schulte 2005: 249–250) the language cannot use lengthening strategy, and deletion processes are thus employed as a central Prosodic Repair Strategy. Unaccented pre-tonic syllables were therefore dropped. By contrast, if the prefix **und-* in Reistad *unnam* bore a primary stress, it would form a perfect trochee which was the favoured foot structure.[46]

The chronological implication is that the loss of unstressed prefixes in North Germanic occurred much earlier than previously believed, even

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[43] Schulte (2003: 395–396) finds a typological parallel in modern German to support his view. There are completely unstressed inseparable prefixes (e. g. *geschwunden*) in which the vowel is reducible to schwa or can even be dropped. Second, he mentions the existence of adverbial and prepositional morphemes like *über-, unter-, hinter-, durch-, um-* which can occur with weak or full stress, depending on the meaning and whose vowels are not reducible and thus opposed to the unstressed prefixes, e. g. 'umfahren "run down" vs. um'fahren "drive round", 'übersetzen "pass over" vs. über'setzen "translate".

[44] In the "left-hand" position, reduction involves two moras, e. g. **[unθ.'nam] > ON *nam* "took, undertook" (1 st and 3rd sing. pret.), while in the "right-hand" position, it involves only one mora, e. g. ['fer.ðunz] > ON *fiǫrðu* "fjords" (acc.plur.), cf. Schulte (2005: 245).

[45] Interestingly, Schulte (2003: 398) argues that the Ellestad inscription (KJ 59) even contains some hypercorrect forms that were implemented in order to form a perfect trochee.

[46] Schulte (2003: 397) further compares *unnam* to ON formations containing the stressed prefix *um-* and *undir-* (e. g. *umgefinn, umbera, undirstanda*).

before the Early Runic period. Schulte (2003: 399) considers it "one of the earliest distinct traits of North Germanic which signals its split from West Germanic".

As mentioned above, it is assumed that the prefix loss led to some syntactic changes. Apart from the theory of the "expletive particle" of Kuhn (1929) and Dal (1930) which is, however, not in harmony with the early loss theory according to Schulte (2003), there is Lehmann's (1978) idea that the lack of suffixes in early North Germanic is suggestive of an OV language, and the rise of phrasal verbs may also be connected to the prefix loss (cf. Denison 1981, Harbert 2007: 39–40). Based on the previous discussion of the function of prefixes, another syntactic change can be connected to the Nordic prefix loss, namely the emergence of the periphrastic future.

5.2 The Emergence of the Periphrastic Future in North Germanic

As noted above, periphrastic future appeared rather late in (Middle) English and (Middle) High German, actually during the recorded period of their history, as opposed to Old Norse. Steadman (1917) attempted to connect the emergence of periphrastic future in English and German to the aspectual function of Germanic prefixes. He (1917: 40) argued that no Germanic language developed a periphrastic future until after aspectual distinctions became weakened. The chronology seems indeed to correspond to this view. The perfectivizing meaning of *ge-* was in decline in Middle High German (cf. Paul 1929: § 305), and in English, *ge-* began to drop "as early as the tenth century, especially in Northumbrian (possibly connected with the Scandinavian tendency to lose prefixes)" (Lass 2006: 147). In most dialects it disappeared by the Middle English period.

Steadman's claim has a special significance for Old Norse (of which Steadman was probably unaware since Old Norse is barely mentioned by him). Considering the aforementioned perfectivizing/futural function of Germanic prefixes, one can draw a line between the prefix loss/ weakening of aspectual distinctions in Old Norse and the subsequent rise of future periphrastic construction in which the verb *munu* played a prominent role.[47]

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[47] This idea was actually hinted at by Sieberer (1925: 96) who, however, concludes that the periphrastic future appeared earlier in Nordic than in West Germanic undoubtedly due to "a more advanced culture of the North Germanic people".

Munu was initially restricted by the two constraints mentioned earlier (the animacy of the agent and volitional character of the action), but it is likely that its use as an unequivocal exponent of futurity was increasing relatively rapidly. First, it lacked the ambiguities which, ultimately, prevented the prefixed verbal forms from becoming a consistent, "Slavic-like" system. And second, the source meaning of *munu* (i. e. "to intend") was so close to a futural meaning that it was, so to speak, just one step away from becoming a future auxiliary. Considering the abrupt disappearance of prefixes in North Germanic, the narrow link between intention and future might have been a reason why *munu*, and not another verb, was employed as future auxiliary. Its meaning made it readily available to fill in the gap in the expression of future. The high degree of grammaticalization seen in *munu* (its frequency, early attested secondary uses, the dynamic morphological development) is indicative of a long history of the verb as a grammatical item. Schulte's theory of the early prefix loss provides an appropriate explanation for this, and besides, it seems to offer a more plausible interpretation of the runic data in general.

Interestingly, the loss of verbal prefixes and the emergence of the periphrastic future can be linked to another unique feature of the Old Norse tense system, not shared by the other old Germanic languages – the use of the historical present.

6   The Emergence of the Historical Present

Historical present means the use of the present tense to refer to a past action. It is one of the most notable characteristics of Old Norse prose, particularly the saga style, where verbs frequently switch between the present and the preterite, even within a single sentence (cf. Haugen 2002: 272). In some sagas, the use of the historical present is so widespread that it actually becomes the predominant narrative tense (cf. Steblin-Kamenskij 1955: § 130). In poetry, its use is rather exceptional although it does occur in some Eddic poems (Nygaard 1867: 5–6).

The linguistic and literary functions of Old Norse historical present have been debated rather extensively (for an overview, see Zeevaert 2018: 152–157). It has usually been considered a literary device used to highlight important or dramatic episodes (cf. Nygaard 1905: 181, Lehmann 1939, Sprenger 1950, Zeevaert 2018). Other scholars analyzed the use of

the historical present in Old Norse using linguistic rather than literary criteria (Torgilstveit 2007, Wood 1965).

Some attention has also been given to the origin of this phenomenon in Old Norse. Rokkjær (1963) made a chronological and genre-related comparison of a number of Old Norse literary works with regard to the use of the historical present. He found that the earliest prose works, *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók*, do not contain any instances of the historical present. They are written purely in the preterite. However, as early as the second half of the 12th century, the historical present is used in some works quite extensively (e. g. *Breta sǫgur, Trójumanna saga*, both works are translations from about 1190). Rokkjær's conclusion is that the use of historical present is mostly genre-bound. On one hand, there are sober, historical, scholarly works with no or little occurrence of historical present, and on the other hand there are texts of a popular and entertaining nature, and pseudo-historical works. The function of the historical present in Old Norse prose is thus, according to Rokkjær, to give the text an oral flavour. In other words, he claims that it was originally a feature characteristic of colloquial language, but was adopted by authors to make the text more lively or to give it a fake oral look.[48]

By contrast, Kunz (1994: 105) suggests a possible Latin influence, considering the frequent use of the historical present in early Old Norse translations from Latin. There are, however, original, non-translated works from the same period in which the historical present is used copiously, e. g. *The Oldest Saga of Saint Óláfr* from ca. 1170–1180.[49]

There are thus two radically different views concerning the origin of Old Norse historical present. First, it is a feature of the Old Norse vernacular. Second, it entered Old Norse as a foreign element – from Latin, or perhaps as suggested by Sweet, from Old Irish.[50]

A brief comparison with English and German may help shed some light on the problem.[51] In Old English, the historical present was not used and was also consistently avoided in translations from Latin into Old English, on the other hand it was used in the Latin writings of Englishmen of that period. In the English vernacular, it only appeared in the 13th century and became more common during the 14th century.

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[48] Zeevaert (2018: 165) expresses a similar view.
[49] Preserved only in fragments, but even those contain a high amount of cases of historical present (cf. Rokkjær 1963: 200).
[50] This opinion of Henry Sweet is mentioned by Steadman (1917: 23–24), yet without any reference.
[51] The following summary is taken from Steadman (1917: 44).

Various theories have been proposed to account for the rise of historical present in Middle English.[52] It has often been attributed to foreign influence, Old French in particular. But this can hardly be true since it was apparently known to Anglo-Saxons even before the Norman Conquest – it appears in their Latin writings. A lack of "the warmth which gives scope for the subjective view" in Old English, as advanced by Maetzner (1874: 68 ff.),[53] is not a valid explanation either, for the same reason.

In Old High German, the historical present is also absent and even in the Middle High German period it occurs "exceedingly seldom" (Schmidt 2013: 318). The explanations advanced to account for that have been along similar lines (cf. Steadman 1917: 1–2.)

The crucial problem here that any viable theory must tackle is, as aptly summarized by Steadman (1917: 25),

> not the appearance of the historical present in Middle English, or in Middle High German, but the absence of this use of the present in the older stages of these languages and the conscious avoidance of it in translating Latin into Old English.

Another theory that was proposed for both German and English relates the rise of the historical present to the emergence of the periphrastic future (for references, see Steadman 1917: 1–3): Since the present tense already served to express the present and the future, it would cause confusion if it were also used for past reference. This explanation was also mentioned by Nygaard (1867: 6) in relation to the relatively few cases of historical present in the Poetic Edda. According to him, instances of historical present are very limited in Old Norse poetry, as opposed to prose, because Old Norse poetic language represents a more archaic stage, on a par with Gothic and Old High German.

Steadman (1917) elaborates on this theory, following Behaghel (1899). He connects the rise of the historical present to the aspectual distinction which he argues still existed to some extent in Old English (as already discussed above). He (1917: 43–44) claims that as long as the present tense of perfective verbs was predominantly used to express the future, it could not be widely used in the form of the historical present for the past. The breakdown of the aspectual oppositions thus had a twofold effect, according to Steadman. It induced the emergence of the periphrastic future constructions and enabled the present tense forms to take on a past meaning.

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[52] For a summary see the discussion in Steadman (1917: 2–3), also Fischer (2006: 242–245).

[53] Quoted in Steadman 1917: 2.

He thus argues that both the emergence of periphrastic future (which decreased the functional load of the present tense) and the weakening of aspectual distinctions facilitated the use of historical present. This theory corresponds chronologically to the data because "both in English and in German the origin of the periphrastic future antedates the use of the historical present as a linguistic phenomenon" (Steadman 1917: 43).

Old Norse has been practically ignored in the discussion on aspect, but it fits the whole picture rather nicely, providing Steadman's theory with additional support. Old Norse is the first Germanic language that lost its perfectivizing prefixes, the first one that developed a periphrastic future and the first one that employed the use of historical present, practically since the earliest extant writings.[54]

The presented account of the origin of the historical present does not actually exclude a foreign influence because the prefix loss only prepared the ground for it. In any case, it seems likely that the historical present was put into use at some point *before* the literary era since it occurs in the oldest texts in which one would expect it to occur. This is in harmony with the assumed early breakdown of aspectual distinctions in North Germanic and the subsequent emergence of the periphrastic future. It can be deduced that the earlier one dates the origin of the historical present, the greater the probability that it was not taken from Latin. Considering this along with the view that the purpose of the historical present in Old Norse texts is, arguably, to give the text an oral look, it seems more plausible that the historical present is an original Nordic phenomenon.

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[54] As argued by Rokkjær (1963), the absence of the historical present in the two oldest prose works, *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók*, is more likely to be genre-related. The same claim can be made about the limited use of the historical present in poetry. Nygaard (1867: 6) connects that to the general characteristic that Old Norse poetry preserves a more archaic form of the language, but it is possible that there was simply no great need for the historical present in poetry. Assuming that the historical present was used to foreground or highlight certain moments, it becomes obvious that such a stylistic device would be rather superfluous for Old Norse poetry in most cases. Old Norse poems typically describe events not through a continuous narration, but rather through highlighting certain salient moments, using highly ornamented poetic language. An additional foregrounding through the use of the historical present would have been unnecessary.

7 The Status of the Old Norse (Historical/Futural) Present

As a consequence of the widespread use of the historical present in Old Norse prose, the present tense became applicable, to various extents, to all time levels. Haugen (2002: 96) characterizes it as "an unmarked tense that can be defined as non-preterite. The preterite, on the other hand, is clearly localized in the past".

The fact that the present tense can be used for past, present and future (as well as for non-temporal conditions) does not, however, mean that it can be equated with the preterite or the future tense, respectively. The use of the present tense in its secondary domains (i. e. the future and particularly in the past) is governed by certain restrictions.

Historical present is not used, for instance, in direct speech as well as "descriptions that are still valid at the time of the composition of the narrative" (Zeevaert 2018: 152), such as geographical descriptions, descriptions of customs etc. (cf. Wood 1965: 107–108) The use of historical present as a stylistic narrative device is, according to Zeevaert (2018: 169), enabled by

> a mutual agreement between reader and narrator that the narration takes place in a temporal and spatial frame outside of the narrative situation or the act of reading or listening.

Direct speech, by contrast, can refer to all time levels without restrictions. The use of the present tense in a past meaning in direct speech could, therefore, cause a serious misunderstanding.

Since a considerable part of Old Norse literature involves narrative content, the historical present is attested rather abundantly, but it should be kept in mind that it is a stylistic device with a restricted sphere of use. Its frequency in daily language was probably much lower.

The special status of historical presents in general led Ultan (1978) to exclude them (along with gnomic tenses) from making general statements on tense systems. According to him (1978: 87), "[h]istorical tenses are probably best regarded as special stylistic uses of the basic MOS [moment of speech] tenses". While this is a reasonable claim, it does not seem justified to completely ignore the historical present in comparing various tense systems. The fact that it is so commonly attested in Old Norse sources and almost non-existent in Old English should be taken into consideration, especially if there may be a connection with the expression of future.

As for the use of the futural present, it is dependent on future context in a similar way that the historical present is dependent on a past context, but in contrast to the historical present, it does not seem to be further restricted by a particular genre or discourse. At the same time, it is significantly less frequent than the periphrastic expression of future (disregarding subordinate clauses, cf. (5)) which implies that periphrasis is the unmarked way of future expression in Old Norse.

In this light, Haugen's characterization of the Old Norse present tense as *non-preterite* seems a more suitable designation[55] than *non-past* as its use in a past meaning is rather common (keeping in mind the above-mentioned restrictions). Consequently, the designation *non-past* should rather be reserved for the Old English, Old High German and Gothic present tense where it quite accurately characterizes its most common uses (i. e. present and future reference), while it is not as appropriate for the Old Norse present which refers to the past frequently enough, and relatively seldom to the future.[56] In short, one can say that the Old Norse present is *non-past* to a much lesser extent than, say, the Old English one.

8   Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to investigate the conditions that led to the emergence of the future periphrastic construction in North Germanic. A foreign language (Latin) influence concomitant to the introduction of Christianity which is often mentioned as a cause for the origin of future periphrasis in Germanic is not an appropriate explanation for Old Norse, taking into consideration the early attestation of future periphrasis dating back to the 9th century, a period before Christianization. The epistemic use of the future auxiliary verb *munu* which is derived from the future, and especially the morphological transition of the verb from the weak

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[55] Albeit a bit vague since it only states what the present tense is not from the grammatical/morphological point of view. But a certain vagueness is an inevitability if one wants to characterize a tense with as broad a time range as the Old Norse present encompasses.

[56] Whether it is the past or the future use of the present tense which is more common is hard to say, since no statistical analysis has been carried out in this regard. It would probably differ considerably not only between genres but also between individual texts: the percentage of past references expressed by historical present in Sagas of Icelanders range from 3.2 % to 78 % (Zeevaert 2018: 155–156). The proportion of future references expressed by the present tense in the Sagas is about 13 % (Sčur 1964), but these numbers are not quite comparable.

class to the preterite-present class, pushes the date of the origin of periphrastic future even considerably further back.

The early emergence of future periphrasis in North Germanic can be linked to the loss of Proto-Germanic verbal prefixes (particularly the prefix **ga-*) which had a perfectivizing function and expressed the future when used with present tense forms, essentially in a similar way (though by no means as systematically) as in the Slavic languages. This is based particularly on the evidence from Gothic and indications of a similar nature in Old English and Old/Middle High German.

After the disappearance of prefixes in Nordic which may have occurred much earlier than traditionally assumed (cf. Schulte 2003, 2005) the function of a more explicit future marker was taken over by a periphrastic construction with the verb *munu* whose original meaning "to intend" provided for a smooth transition to the future.

Weakened aspectual distinctions as well as the decreased semantic load of the present tense forms then opened a way for the rise of the historical present which became the hallmark of the Old Norse saga style whereas it was virtually non-existent in the contemporary Germanic languages.

These findings show that the emergence of the periphrastic future in Nordic can be perceived as a major part of extensive syntactic change triggered by the abrupt loss of verbal prefixes. As such, the Nordic periphrastic future represents an early, striking innovation in the tense system that sets North Germanic apart from the contemporary West (and East) Germanic.

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Runic dictionary: https://skaldic.abdn.ac.uk/db.php?id=324&if=runic&table=nrd_headword&val=munu

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