

GRAMMATICAL CHANGE IN OLD ENGLISH STRONG VERBS:
EARLY TRACES OF ELIMINATION

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ABSTRACT

The original Proto-Germanic consonantal alternations of voiceless and voiced fricatives, generated by the operation of Verner's Law, though slightly modified, were relatively well attested in Old English. They were most regularly preserved in the strong verb paradigm where they emerged as: *p ~ d, h ~ g/w, h ~ ng, s ~ r*, as in *snīpan: snāþ: snidon: sniden, cēosan: cēas: curon: coren, tēon: tēah: tugon: togen*. The focus of the present paper is the process of gradual elimination of the effects of Vernerian voicing from the Old English strong verb system. While a wholesale process of elimination must be dated no earlier than the (Early) Middle English period, available data indicate clearly that the tendencies towards the decay of Vernerian alternations can be traced back to Old English. A close examination of the Old English textual evidence is intended to capture and reveal peculiarities and tendencies which characterised this very early stage of elimination.

1. Introductory remarks

The original Proto-Germanic consonantal alternations of voiceless and voiced fricatives, induced by the operation of Verner's Law, had been considerably obliterated by the time of the earliest attestations of Old English, yet their modified reflexes were relatively well preserved and systematically displayed in the Old English strong verb paradigm.¹ The modifications, taking place on the way from Proto-Germanic to Old English, involved various phonological developments pertinent to different stages within this period. They included rhotacism,

¹ The original formulation of the law, as posited by its author, is as follows: "Indogermanische *k, t, p* gingen erst überal in *h, þ, f* über; die so entstanden tonlosen fricativa nebst der vom indogermanischen ererbten tonlosen fricativa *s* wurden weiter inlautend bei tönender nachbarschaft selbst tönend, erhielten sich aber als tonlose im nachlaute betonter silben" (Verner 1876: 114).

characteristic of the whole Northwest Germanic subbranch, the West Germanic voicing of the dental fricative **θ* and its subsequent occlusion in clusters with a nasal and a liquid (*lθ > ld*, *nθ > nd*), as well as voicing of medial voiceless fricatives (*f*, *θ*, *s*), and finally, loss of the voiceless velar fricative **χ* in medial position. All of these processes occasioned the emergence of a new pattern of alternations in Old English with the following alternating pairs: *þ ~ d*, *h/ø ~ g*, *h/ø ~ g/w*, *h/ø ~ ng* and *s ~ r*. The ensuing pattern, viewed against the original Germanic proto-alternants, is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Vernerian alternations in PGmc. and their OE reflexes

PROTO-GERMANIC	OLD ENGLISH
<i>*f ~ *β</i>	—
<i>*þ ~ *ð</i>	<i>þ, ð ~ d</i>
<i>*χ ~ *γ</i>	<i>h/ø ~ g</i>
<i>*ηχ ~ *ηγ</i>	<i>ø (+ vowel length) ~ ng</i>
<i>*χw ~ *γw</i>	<i>h/ø ~ g/w</i>
<i>*s ~ *z</i>	<i>s ~ r</i>

The emergence of these alternations in the shape in which they surface in Old English entailed the following phonological developments:

a) *þ, ð ~ d*

The change **ð > d* took place already in the West Germanic stage and was unconditioned; the fricative in the cluster **lθ* was very early occluded (West Germanic) and the sequence appeared as *ld* in the very early stage, e.g., PGmc. **falþan-* (Go. *falþan*) > OE *faldan*, *fealdan* 'fold', OE *wilde* 'wild' (Go. *wilþeis*). Probably the earliest shift, dated as early as the Proto-Germanic period, was the occlusion of **ð* in the neighbourhood of a nasal **nð > nd*, a process which affected also other voiced fricatives (*β*, *γ*, *γ^w*) in medial position after the corresponding nasal, e.g., OE *findan* vs. Go. *finþan*, OE (Go., OS) *bindan* 'bind' vs. Skt. *bāndhanam* 'a binding' (< **bhendh-*). The voiceless **θ* remained a fricative and, just like the other voiceless fricatives in Old English was subject to voicing in voiced environment */θ/ > [ð]*. Finally, in word-final position the voiced fricative underwent devoicing.

b) *h/ø ~ g*

Although the reflex of the original Proto-Germanic voiced fricative **γ* was Old English <g>, it was used to represent either a fricative *γ*, continuing the Proto-Germanic value (e.g., *slogun*, *flogon*, *belagen*, *getogen*) or a palatal fricative, occasionally made distinct in spelling and marked as <ġ> (e.g., *betigen*, *biġen*, *þweġen*, *forsleġinum*). The voiceless velar fricative */χ/* was lost in a few contexts, among others, in the intervocalic position, relevant here, which yielded the alternation with zero (e.g., **fleaxan > flean* 'flay').² This velar alternation is present in all *verba contracta* where the infinitive no longer preserves the voiceless fricative, e.g., *slēan* < **/sλαχan/*, *þēon* < **/θīχan/*, *þwēan* < **/θwayχan/*.

c) *h/ø ~ ng*

The nasal (phonetically [ŋ]) preceding the voiceless spirant in the original alternation which surfaced as Proto-Germanic **nχ ~ *nγ* was lost probably still in Proto-Germanic stage and is no longer evident in Old English. The voiced velar fricative */γ/*, when following a nasal, was occluded already in Proto-Germanic, hence OE *ng* in place of PGmc. **nγ*. Traces of the original alternation are preserved in a few Old English contracted verbs, e.g., *þēon* (< **/θīχan/* < **/θīŋχan/*) : *þungon* : *þungen*, *befōn* : *befēngon* : *befangen/befēngen*.

d) *h/ø ~ g/w*

The voiceless labiovelar fricative **χw* lost its rounding in root final position at some point, probably as early as the Northwest Germanic stage, and appeared in Old English as *h* or was eventually dropped. The voiced labial alternant was reflected as labial approximant *w* or as unrounded velar fricative *γ*, depending on the following vowel: *γ* before PGmc. *ū* and *w* before *ī*, which yielded two new alternating sequences: *h ~ γ* and *h ~ w* respectively. The only (strong) verb in Old English which preserved traces of the labiovelar alternation is *sēon* (< **seχ^wan*) and its related prefixed verbs with the forms *siwen*, *sigen* (< *sey^w-ana-*).³

² The voiceless fricative could also disappear in some other contexts: when doubled, when between a liquid and a following vowel (OE *fēolan* 'hide' vs. Go. *filhan*), when between a vowel and a following liquid or nasal (*/l, m, n, r/*) as well as before *s* followed by another consonant. It was preserved in some consonantal clusters (before voiceless consonants) resulting from vowel syncope, and also in final position (Wright 1925: 171-2).

³ In Old English medial and final **γ* remained spirants and initial *γ* is viewed as a spirant in the early West Saxon texts. In the later period initial velar fricative became a stop before consonants and back vowels (where its articulation was velar), and was pronounced as a palatal spirant [j] before front vowels (only original front vowels: *æ*, *ē*, *i* and *j*). The fricative is assumed to have gone through an intermediate stage of being a voiced palatal fricative, prior to losing friction.

e) *s, z ~ r*

The Proto-Germanic alternation **s ~ *z* was very early (NWGmc.) subject to rhotacism whereby **z* became *r* medially (but was dropped in word-final position) and was preserved in Old English as the alternation of *s ~ r*.⁴ Affected by voicing in medial position, OE *s* surfaced as [z] in voiced environment, which yielded, in a sense, a triple alternation between *s/z* and *r*.

f) **f ~ *b*

The labial series **f ~ *b* became very early obliterated and was no longer distinct in the Old English strong verb paradigm. Given the evidence provided by the other Germanic dialects (cf. OS (*af*)*heffian* : *hōf* : *hōβun* : *gihaβan*, OHG *heffen*, *hevan* : *huob* : *huobum* : (*ir-*)*haban*), the alternation is to be expected at least in *hebban* 'heave' (PGmc. **χaβiō* > OE *hebbu*, *hebbe*). Old English *hebban*, however, is preserved with the reversed distribution of alternants: the voiceless consonant generalised in the preterite and the voiced one in the present system, consequently without a trace of the original alternation: *hebban* : *hōf* : *hōfon* : *hafen*, *hæfen*. Further development of the sequence involved voicing of PGmc. **f* (< PIE **-p-*) in voiced environment, yielding a voiced labial fricative β which did not develop into a stop but remained a fricative and as such was soon to merge with PGmc. **β* in this position. At the same time PGmc. **β* (< PIE **bh* or *-p-*) was subject to devoicing in word-final position and appeared as *f*. When the voiced labiovelar fricative [v], produced by medial voicing, merged with **[β]* (as [v]), a new phonemic contrast arose, namely /f/ vs. /v/.

To some extent, the opposition was preserved in the early Mercian material, in *Epinal* and *Erfurt Glossaries* (dated no later than 700) and *Corpus Glossary* (late 8th century)⁵ where the voiceless and voiced variants were made distinct in spelling: <f> was used to represent [v] (in voiced environment) and represented [β], the former – a labiodental allophone of /f/, the latter – an allophone of /b/ which only later developed into a labiodental fricative [v], e.g., *fifadae* 'but-

⁴ The development has traditionally been assumed to have consisted in two almost independent processes: voicing (**s > *z*) and rhotacism proper (*z > ř*). Rhotacism entailed a series of separate developments: /z/ > /ž/, /ž/ > /ř/, /ř/ > /r/, which can be reduced to /z/ > /ř/ > /r/. The initial stage, i.e., the change from /z/ > /ř/ presupposes the diminution of friction and increase in the degree of sonority. The second stage is the shift from /ř/ > /r/, resulting eventually in the merger of old /z/ with /r/ (Smirnikij 1990: 197).

⁵ The spellings with can also be found in early Kentish documents coming from the first part of the 9th century (831-832), as in *giban* 'give' (WS *giefan*), *gib* (WS *gif*) 'if', *geræbum* (WS *gerēfa*) 'earl' (dat. pl). Individual instances have been identified in *CP næbre* 'never' (for *næfre*), *wēobud* 'altar' (later *wēofod*); in poetry: *Genesis* and *Exodus*: *tiber* (dat. sg. *tibre*, later *tifor*, *tifre*, -um) 'victim' (Brunner 1962: 153).

terfly', *geroefa(n)* 'reeve', *uulfes* 'wolf' vs. *bebr*, later *beofor* 'beaver' (< PGmc. **bebru-* [beβru-]), *obaer* (later *ofer*) 'over' (< PGmc. **uberi* [uβeri]), *fibulae* (Li. *fibula* > *fifele*) 'handle', *gebuli* (*geabuli*) 'tribute', *halbae* 'halves', *gibaen* 'given'. Already at that time a tendency to use <f> in all positions became steady. Levelling in favour of took place only sporadically, e.g., *glō(o)b* 'glove', *raebsid* 'reproved' (Hogg 1992: 283).

The differentiation between PGmc. **f* (< **-p-*) and **β* (< **-p-*, **bh*) is evident in consonantal clusters in Old English where **β* developed into a stop *b* already in PGmc. or West Germanic period, bringing about alternations of PGmc. **-mf-* : **-mb-* > WGmc. **-mf-* : **-mb-* > OE *-Vf-* : *-mb-* (*fif* vs. *climban*); and similarly, PGmc. **-f(i)j-* > **-β(i)j-* > WGmc. **-fff-* : **-bbj-* > OE *-ff-* : *-bb-* where geminated *ff* derives from PGmc. **f* (< **-p-*) and geminated *bb* from PGmc. **β* (< **bh*) (Go. *haffjan* vs. OE *hebban* 'heave')⁶ (Brunner 1942: 156, 160).

2. Verner's Law and the Old English strong verb paradigm

The distribution of the vestiges of the original Vernerian voiceless and voiced alternants in Old English strong verb paradigm entailed the presence of the old voiceless fricative in the infinitive and 1, 3sg. preterite ind. and the reflex of the voiced fricative in the rest of the preterite system, i.e. 2sg. preterite ind., preterite ind. plural, preterite subjunctive singular and plural, and past participle. Such pattern of distribution of Vernerian alternants emerged as a result of the accentual conditions characteristic of Proto-Germanic, whereby forms of the infinitive and preterite singular displayed root accentuation, whereas forms of the preterite plural, past participle and subjunctive preterite received suffixal accent. Noteworthy is the presence of the vestiges of Verner's Law in forms of the 2sg. preterite ind. which, apparently, alongside the root vowel of the preterite pl., adopted its consonantism. A similar situation obtains for subjunctive preterite which was formed by employing the stem of preterite plural. Hence, the voiced alternants induced by Verner's Law may be expected in both subjunctive pret.

⁶ The fact that this alternation is underrepresented in Old English as well as in some other Germanic dialects is difficult to account for. The absence of this labial set as an alternating sequence in Old English may be attributed to the individual phonological development of this alternation, involving merger of the voiceless and voiced variants and consequent total obliteration of the original alternants, unparalleled in any other alternating set. Of some importance may be the chronological gap present in the development of the five sequences: the occlusion of bilabial stop must have been a later process since the bilabial stop was relatively rare when compared to other stops resulting from parallel occlusions (the medial and final β remained a spirant for a relatively long time in other Germanic dialects as well (cf. van der Rhee 1995: 46)).

singular and plural.⁷

The infinitive of all strong verbs containing an originally (Proto-Germanic) voiceless fricative reflects the early Old English process of voicing of intervocalic fricative following a stressed vowel, whereby medial /f, θ, s/ developed into [v, ð, z] in voiced environment. The change did not affect the velar fricative /x/ which by that time was no longer preserved in this position. The relevant examples are: *līpan, snīpan, seoþan* [ð], *drēosan, hrēosan* [z], etc.

In terms of class division, grammatical change is present in all classes of Old English strong verbs, with the exception of class IV where none of the verbs contained stem-final fricative which could potentially undergo voicing by Verner's Law. It is worth noticing that the first three classes are characterised by remarkable regularity and discipline with respect to grammatical change. This marked consistency detected in these classes is attributed to accentual pattern which must have been stable at the time of the operation of Verner's Law (D'Alquen 1988: 90). In the remaining classes (i.e. V, VI and VII) grammatical change is not accent-dependent but can be viewed as a result of "analogical transfer" from the other classes, hence is less regular and sporadic (Prokosch 1939: 64). Accordingly, forms such as *wæron, cwædon, slōgon, fengon*, etc. can be viewed as analogical rather than originally induced by the accentuation pattern.⁸

3. Elimination of the effects of Verner's Law

3.1. The nature of the process

The original consonantal alternations tended to be obliterated through the influence of analogical levelling – a process of morphological simplification, which worked towards introduction of one single root consonant in all forms within the strong verb paradigm. As a result of such generalisation, the allomorphy ren-

⁷ An alternative view assumes that the 2sg. preterite ind. was formed directly from preterite subjunctive rather than preterite ind. plural (Wright 1925: 263). As far as the origin of this form is concerned, it has been viewed as an augmentless aorist (rather than an original perfect) with the -es ending (s voiced to z and lost in Proto-Germanic) and ablaut alternations according to the pattern of preterite ind. plural.

⁸ The inherited mobility of accent was preserved in the early stage of Proto-Germanic and was still present at the time of the operation of Verner's Law. The period of mobile accent in Germanic is estimated to have lasted between several centuries and a millennium. The assumption is that the Germanic accent was still mobile at the time when Verner's Law was operating; otherwise the process would not have operated at all. In the later stage of Proto-Germanic the accentual pattern changed and accent became confined to the root or stem syllable (Bennett 1968: 220, 1972: 100).

dered by the operation of Verner's Law was being gradually removed.⁹

The interpretation of the data does, in fact, depend to a large extent on how the term is understood. In the present analysis it is used in line with the above definition to mean restoration of the original Proto-Germanic voiceless variant and consequent generalisation of this variant to all forms which displayed the effects of the operation of Verner's Law. The definition of elimination can be extended however to include some less regular cases to the effect that forms such as Anglian past participles in classes VI and VII (such as *befoen, gesēen*) can be interpreted as instances where Vernerian alternations were lost. Such interpretation is justified on the assumption that the mere absence of the voiced alternant in these forms is enough to view it as a case of elimination. In the present analysis these cases will be treated separately and will not be counted as instances of elimination.

3.2. The database and data analysis

The data for the analysis of the material come from *The dictionary of Old English electronic corpus* (known as *Toronto Corpus*), a collection spanning the period between 600 and 1150, considered to be a complete record of surviving Old English, with the exception of a few manuscripts of individual texts. *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* by Bosworth and Toller (1898) served as the main source for identifying the principal parts of strong verbs liable to voicing by Verner's Law. Forms of the prefixed verbs were drawn from the *Dictionary* as well and, if not specified there, were systematically built on the pattern of the simplex

⁹ One of alternative theories, intended to account for the absence of Vernerian alternants in some forms, takes recourse to the existence of intervocalic laryngeal sounds in Proto-Germanic: "It is, of course, possible but unsatisfactory to invoke levelling to explain these forms, for it is difficult to see why these verbs should have been subjected to such early and widespread levelling, while other verbs occur principally or exclusively with regular GW [grammatischer Wechsel] until well past the time of the first attestations" (Conolly 1980: 97). Conolly's hypothesis involves the assumption that disyllabic roots of the structure *CVXR̥C* (with a medial non-syllabic laryngeal) would never exhibit grammatical change since the accent could never fall on the syllable preceding the medial voiceless fricative, irrespective of the type of accent (root or suffix) a given form carried (*CVXR̥C* and *C(V)XR̥C-*). The author has it that at the time when Verner's Law operated the original disyllabic roots must have been distinct from the diphthongal roots of the structure *CVRC*, where *R* represents a non-syllabic resonant. The conclusion is that the original diphthongal roots tend to have regular GW, whereas the disyllabic roots have either irregular GW or no change at all (the pattern refers to all classes with the exception of Class VII). Conolly attributes the irregularity in Class VII to the fact that the past participle form in this class had full grade vocalism, rather than the zero grade or reduced grade found in most other strong verb participles. The full grade was not original but "of considerable antiquity". Levelling then in such circumstances could be triggered by the fact that the present and past participle displayed the same vocalism. The preterite forms, which were not of IE origin but had instead analogical *e*-grade vocalism, adopted the consonantism from the past participle (Conolly 1980: 115, cf. Lehmann 1971).

verbs. In this way a list of 211 verbs which could potentially display Vernerian alternations was compiled. In the effect of search procedure, the list was narrowed down to 149 verbs since some of the prefixed verbs were not attested in the corpus in forms which could testify to the earlier operation of Verner's Law.¹⁰ The etymological dictionary of Germanic strong verbs by Seebold (1970) (*Vergleichendes und etymologisches Wörterbuch der germanischen starken Verben*) was consulted to verify the Proto-Germanic root forms which were susceptible to the operation of Verner's Law and could be reflected in Old English.

3.2.1. Strong verbs Class I

In verbs belonging to Class I the alternations induced by Verner's Law are well preserved and very regular. All alternating pairs are represented, including the sequence *h/θ ~ ng*, preserved in forms of *wrēon* and *þēon* (*wrunge*, *þunge*), modelled after SV₂. In a number of Old English strong verbs elimination of the effects of Verner's Law took place very early, before the date of their earliest attestation. They form a separate group of verbs in the sense that they never showed the morphophonemic alternations induced by Verner's Law. All of these generalised the old voiceless fricative, extending it to all forms which would have otherwise displayed effects of voicing. They are scattered across various classes but are most numerous in Class I, including: *mīþan*, *bemīþan* 'conceal, avoid', *rīsan* 'rise', *arīsan* 'arise', *wriþan*, *gewriþan* 'twist' and *ætclīþan* 'adhere'. The principal parts of these verbs in Old English as well as examples of contexts in which they were used are presented below:

(*æt*-)*clīþan* : — : — : —
mīþan : *māþ* : *mīþon* : *mīþen*
bemīþan : *bemāþ* : *bemīþon* : *bemīþen*
rīsan : *rās* : *rison* : *risen*
arīsan : *arās* : *arison* : *arisen*
gerīsan : *gerās* : *gerison* : *gerisen*
wriþan : *wrāþ* : *wriþon* : *wriþen*
gewriþan : *gewrāþ* : *gewriþon* : *gewriþen*

¹⁰ The tool used for the systematic search of the collection was *Toronto Old English Database Search Form*, designed specifically for data retrieval from the *Toronto Corpus*, available online at <http://ets.lib.uchicago.edu/Databases/OldEnglish/>. The software (Search Form) permitted a wide range of queries, including searches within particular Old English dialects, particular texts, phrase and co-occurrence searches, etc. For the present purpose the word search was used for retrieving frequencies of occurrences for particular forms and for identifying texts in which these forms appeared. Pattern matching options allowed for retrieving various inflectional endings or spelling variants.

The following sentences illustrate the use of these levelled forms in Old English:

1) *bemīþan*

Ic his word oncneow, þeh he his mægwlite *bemiðen* hæfde. (And: 855)

2) *mīþan*

Ða hie þa us gesawon hie selfe sona in heora husum deagollice hie *mīþan* ða wilnade ic þara monna onsyne to geseonne, þæt hie us fersc wæter & swete getæhton. (Alex: 15.5)

3) *arīsan*

et quando exortus est sol exaestuauit eo quod non haberet radicem exaruit & ða *arisen* wæs 7 ða uppeode wæs sunna gedrugade 7 forbernde forðon næfde wyrtruma gedrugade. (MkG1 (Li): 4.6)

and þær lægen swylce we deade wæren, and we geherdan þone ængel cweðen to þan wifen þæt Godes sune wære of deaðe *arisen*. (Nic (C): 46)

þu gedydest me underþeodde þa þe wið me upp *arison*, and minra feonda bæc þu onwendest to me, and me hine gesealdest, and þu tostenctest þa þe me hatedon. (PPs (prose): 17.38)

4) *gerīsan*

þa wæs he semninga from deofle *gerisen*, & ongon cleopian & hlydan & mid his toðum gristbitian, & þa faam of his muðe ut eode, & he missenlecum styrennessum ongon his leomu þræstan. (Bede 3: 9.184.24)

5) *rīsan*

On þis kinges time wes al unfrið & yfel & ræflac. for agenes him *risen* sona þa rice men þe wæron swikes. (ChronE (Plummer): 1135.18)

6) *gewriþon*

þa deoflu ða gecyrdon ongean to ðam drye. and *gewriðon* his handa to his hricge. and swa læddon to ðam apostole þus cweðende; (ÆCHom II, 31-32: 243.55)

7) *wriþan*

Wæter hine ond eorþe feddan fægre, oppæt he frod dagum on oþrum wearð aglachade deope gedolgod, dumb in bendum, *wriþen* ofer wunda, wonnum hyrstum foran gefrætwed. (Rid 53: 3)

Discernible traces of elimination of Vernerian alternations appear in five verbs: *forliþan*, *liþan*, *scriþan*, *snīþan* and *ofsnīþan*, where levelling affected primarily

preterite plural and past participle forms, extending the voiced fricative /ð/, reminiscent of the original voiceless fricative, to these forms. In all mentioned verbs the process affected the dental alternation $\delta \sim d$ which is definitely the most frequent alternating set in this class. Other present alternations remained intact, staying resistant to the encroaching working of levelling processes.

Interestingly, a few verbs belonging to this class in some forms eliminated the effects of Verner's Law completely. These are: *forlīpan*, *līpan* and *scriþan*. The only attested preterite forms of *līpan* are *lipion* (possibly *liþeon*), appearing in place of the expected *lidon*. A similar situation obtains for *forlīpan* which is attested without traces of Verner's Law not only in preterite plural but also in subjunctive plural (in both cases the attested form is *forlīpan*, instead of the expected *forliden*). Another case is the past participle form of *scriþan*, attested only as *scriþen* in place of the expected *scriden*. All of these forms indicate straightforwardly that the levelling process must have been in progress. The expected past participle form of *līpan*, **liwen*, with traces of the labiovelar alternation, is not attested in the investigated material; neither are any of the related prefixed forms such as *beliwen*, *forliwen*, the expected past participle forms of *belīpan*, *forlīpan*.

Table 2 (facing page) demonstrates distribution of the effects of Verner's Law in verbs belonging to Class I. The symbols *P* and *L* stand for *preserved* and *levelled* and refer to the number of occurrences and percentage of forms in which Verner's Law was preserved and eliminated respectively.

Instances of forms which eliminated the effects of Verner's Law in Class I were found in the following contexts in the investigated material.

8) *līpan*

Ða æt nehstan se foresprecena cyning self, & se halga biscop Trumwine mid him & monige oþre æfeste weras & rice *liðon* on ðæt ealond. (Bede 4: 29.368.9)

ða we ða wæron on midre ðære sæ, ða wæs somninga hiofones smyltnes tosliten, ðære ðe we ær *liðon* uut; ond swæ micel winter us onhreas.¹¹ (Bede 5: 1.384.18)

Þa eodon hi ealle gesunde of þam scipe, þa þe *lipon* & foron mid þam forecwedenan Maximiane þam arwyrðan were. (GDPref and 3 (C): 36.249.13)

¹¹ In the *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* by Bosworth and Toller (1898) the form of *leopon* with the diphthong *eo* is cited: "Þa wæs heofones smyltnes tosliten, þær þe we ær ūton *leopon* (*lipon*, v. l.) interrupta est serenitas, qua uehebatur" (Bd. 5, 1).

Table 2. Distribution of the effects of Verner's Law in Class I

CATEGORY	PRET. SG.		PRET. PL.		PAST PTCP.		SUBJ. PRET. SG.		SUBJ. PRET. PL.	
	P	L	P	L	P	L	P	L	P	L
INFINITIVE	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
onlēon	0		0		1	0%	0		0	
līpan	0		3	100%	3	0%	0		0	
belīpan	0		0		3	0%	0		0	
forlīpan	0		2	100%	14	6.67%	0		0	100%
gelīpan	0		1	0%	5	0%	0		0	
scriþan	0		2	0%	0	100%	0		0	
sðon	5	0%	13	0%	8	0%	1	0%	1	0%
asðon	0		1	0%	18	0%	0		0	
gesðon	1	0%	0		23	0%	3	0%	0	
snīpan	0		5	16.67%	1	0%	1	0%	0	
āsnīpan	0		0		2	0%	0		0	
gesnīpan	0		0		4	0%	0		0	
ofsnīpan	0		1	50%	1	0%	0		0	
tōsnīpan	0		0		2	0%	0		0	
ymsnīpan	0		0		8	0%	0		0	
þēon	0		3	0%	45	0%	2	0%	0	
geþēon	1	0%	8	0%	93	0%	2	0%	0	
oferþēon	0		0		5	0%	3	0%	0	
tēon	0		5	0%	0		2	0%	0	
betēon	0		0		12	0%	0		0	
wrēon	3	0%	6	0%	1	0%	0		0	
āwrēon	1	0%	3	0%	11	0%	0		0	
bewrēon	6	0%	4	0%	53	0%	2	0%	0	
gewrēon	0		0		6	0%	0		0	
oferwrēon	10	0%	5	0%	59	0%	0		1	0%
unwrēon	0		2	0%	11	0%	0		0	
onwrēon	2	0%	2	0%	27	0%	4	0%	0	
TOTAL	29		61	10.29%	415	0.48%	20	0%	2	50%

9) *oferlīpan*

Ac þylæs ic lengc þone þanc hefige þara leomendra mid gesegenum þara fremdra tælnysse, swa swa <ic> strange sæ and mycele *oferliðe*, and nu becume to þære smyltestan hyðe Guðlaces lifes. (LS 10.1 (Guth): 0.31)

10) *forlīpan*

And se ilce Nathan wæs *forliðen*, þæt he wæs gefaren fram ælcen lande to oðren and fram sæ to sæ, swa þæt he hæfde ealle eorðe gemæren þurhfaren. (VSaI 2 (Ass 17): 9)

naufrauerunt *forlīpan* 7 forferdan. (AldV 1 (Goossens): 4368)
naufrauerant *forlīpan* 7 forferdan. (AldV 1 (Goossens): 4501)

naufrauerant *forlīpan*, forferdon. (AldV 13.1 (Nap): 4490)
naufrauerant *forlīpan*, forferdan. (AldV 13.1 (Nap): 4621)

11) *ofsnīpan*

þa namon hig an ticcen & *ofsnīðon* hit & bedipton his tunecan on þam blode. (Gen (Ker): 37.31)

& willað mid ðy gedon ðæt hie mon hlige wisdomes, mid ðy ðe hie *ofsnīðen* mid ðy seaxe hefiglices gedwolan ða unborenan beam, ðe ðonne furðum beoð mid wordum geeacnode on geleaffullra mode; (CP: 48.367.14)

12) *scriþan*

þonne dogor beoð on moldwege min forð *scriþen*, sorg <gesweðrad>, ond ic sippan mot fore meotudes cneowum meorda hleotan, gingra geafena, ond godes lomber in sindreamum sippan awo forð folgian; (Guthlac: 1038)

13) *snīpan*

And hundeahtatig þusenda hine *snīðon*, & feidon. (Notes 12.1 (Nap): 14)

Figures in Table 3 show overall distribution of forms which preserved and eliminated grammatical change in Class I with respect to particular inflectional categories.

Table 3. The percentage of forms which eliminated the alternations by Verner's Law in Class I with respect to particular categories

CATEGORY	PRESERVED		ELIMINATED	
	#	%	#	%
PRETERITE SG.	29	100%	0	0%
PRETERITE PLURAL	61	89.71%	7	10.29%
PAST PARTICIPLE	415	99.5%	2	0.5%
SUBJUNCTIVE PRET. SG.	20	100%	0	0%
SUBJUNCTIVE PRET. PL.	2	50%	2	50%

The figures indicate that the tendency towards levelling of the Vernerian alternations is most pronounced in forms of subjunctive pret. pl. and preterite ind. pl. Slight hesitancy can be detected in past participle forms attested in two verbs without the voiced alternant. Most conservative, accordingly, are the forms of preterite sg. and subjunctive pret. sg., where none of the verbs shows signs of levelling.

The forms identified as displaying traces of elimination are scattered across various texts belonging to West Saxon dialect. Most of them come from texts dated to the 10th c. and 11th c., especially *Glosses on works by Aldhelm*, *Vindicta Salvatoris* (11th c.), and earlier traces in *Guthlac*, *Pastoral Care* and Bede's *History of the English Church and nation*.

3.2.2. Strong verbs Class II

In Class II, as could be expected, grammatical change was characterised by a considerable degree of regularity. The effects of Verner's Law are no longer seen in *brēoþan* 'ruin, destroy' and *ābrēoþan* 'ruin, perish' which generalised the voiceless fricative in all forms:

brēoðan : *brēað* : *bruðon* : *broðen*
ābrēoþan : *ābrūþon* : *ābroþen*

The sentences below illustrate the use of forms in which the effects of Verner's Law had been eliminated before the attestation date.

14) *ābrēoþan*

An her ys OMNIS GENERIS, þæt is ælces cynnes: hic et haec et hoc nugas, þæt is *abroðen* on englisc and ungebigendlic on declinunge. (ÆGram: 51.4)

Eac hwilon byð geset NOMINATIVVS for VOCATIVVM, swaswa LVCANVS cwæð: <degener> o populus eala ðu *abroðene* folc. (ÆGram: 32.8)

þa Ulfkytel þæt undergeat, þa sende he þæt mon sceolde þa scipo toheawan, ac hi *abruðon* þe ðe he to þohte, and he ða gaderede his fyrde digolice swa he swyðost mihte. (ChronD (Classen-Harm): 1004.8)

15) *brēoþan*

þa efston latþeowas & fromrincas gegrap hy fyrhto *bruðun* ealle eardigende Tunc festinauerunt duces edom et principes mohabitarum adprehendit eos tremor, Tabuerunt omnes inhabitantes chanaan. (PsCaD: 5(4).15)

No occurrences of forms which could testify to the earlier operation of Verner's Law in the non-prefixed *frēosan* 'freeze' were found in the analysed material. The same situation obtains for the forms of *begrēosan*, attested only in the present. The single past participle form of this verb, found in Table 4, was provided by Bosworth and Toller's *Dictionary* (1898) in the following context:

16)

Atole gastas sfisle *begro-rene* [MS. *begrorenne*] the horrid spirits fearfully overwhelmed with torment. (Cd. 214; Th.268: 9)

The single occurrence of *onahruron*¹² was counted together with *onhrēosan* 'assail, attack' and the doubly attested *inhruron* together with *hrēosan* 'fall'. The past participle forms with the prefix *i-*: *icoren*, *icorene* and *icorenæ* were analysed and treated together with the past participle forms of *cēosan*. The two past participle forms *ofroren* and *ofrorene*, attested in AldV, were eventually recognised as belonging to *ofhrēosan* 'overwhelm'.¹³

Instances of elimination of Vernerian alternations are limited to three verbs only: *cēosan*, *gecēosan*, *besēoþan* and appear in all forms in which they could be expected except for subjunctive pret. sg. The verb *besēoþan* is attested once without traces of Verner's Law in past participle, next to the regular *besoden*. In *cēosan* elimination affected forms of preterite plural and past participle, where, along with the expected *curon* and *coren*, *cuson* and *cosan* are attested. Apparent traces of levelling are present also in *gecēosan* in Northumbrian texts (*Lindisfarne Gospels*) where the preterite plural form *gecēason* and pret. subjunctive singular *gecēase* (occurring along with *gecuron*, *gecure*) are attested. Characteristic of these forms is also extension of the vowel proper to 1, 3 sg. pret. in *ēo-*

¹² "Forþan þe efne hig ongunnon hig begripon mine sawle *onahruron* on me þa strangan Quia ecce coeperunt animam meam irruerunt in me fortes". (Psalms: 4137).

¹³ The past participle forms of *ofhrēosan*, which resulted from loss of /h/ in *hr-* cluster, are attested in the following sentences with regular reflexes of Verner's Law:

"obruti contriti tobrytte *ofrorene*". (AldV 1: 4137)

"obrutos ofsette *ofroren*". AldV 1 (2992)

and *ū-* presents which in this particular case may have been partly responsible for the extension of consonantism as well. It may have been the case that the loss of Vernerian alternations in these forms was to some extent triggered by the developments in the vocalic system of this verb, i.e., once the vowel from the 1, 3 sg. preterite indicative was extended, the voiceless consonant followed suit. Table 4 (next two pages) presents distribution of the effects of Verner's Law in verbs belonging to Class II.

The following sentences illustrate the use of forms which levelled the effects of Verner's Law in Old English:

17) *cēosan*

Ða *cusen* þa munecas to abbot Brand prouost. forðan þæt he wæs swiðe god man & swiðe wis. & senden him þa to Ædgar æðeling. (ChronE: 1066.35)

& ðes oðer dæies æfter Sancti Iohannes messedæi. *cusen* þa muneces abbot of hem self and brohten him into cyrce mid processionem. sunge Te Deum Laudamus. ringden þa belle. (ChronE: 1131.20)

Ða *cusen* hi an clerc Willelm of Curboil wæs gehaten. he was canonie of an mynstre Cicc hatte. (ChronE: 1123.32)

& te muneke innen dæis *cusen* oþer of heom sælf. (ChronE: 1154.12)

& swa swa hi hæfden *cosen* ærcebiscop æror in here capitele æfter. (ChronE: 1123.41)

18) *gecēosan*

non uos me elegistis sed ego elegi uos et posui uos ut eatis et fructum adferatis ne gie mec *geceaso* ah ic geceas iuh & ic gesette iuih þætte gie geongæ & wæstem gie gebrenga. (JnGl (Li): 15.16)

Dicebat autem et ad inuitatos parabolam intendens quomodo primos accubitos eligerent dicens ad illos cuoeð ða & to ðæm laðendum † þæt bisen beheald huu ða formo hræsto hia *geceason* cuoeð to him. (LkGl (Li): 14.7)

19) *besēoþan*

and hi him þa to comon ærest mid medemum fultume, ac siððan hy wiston hu hit þær *besuðan* wæs. (ChronD: 1052.1.25)

Figures in Table 5 show overall distribution of forms which preserved and eliminated grammatical change in Class II with respect to particular inflectional categories.

Table 4. Distribution of the effects of Verner's Law in strong verbs Class II

CATEGORY	PRET. SG.			PRET. PL.			PAST PTCP.			SUBJ. PRET. SG.			SUBJ. PRET. PL.		
	P	#	%	P	#	%	P	#	%	P	#	%	P	#	%
INFINITIVE															
cēosan	2	2	50%	10	4	28.6%	12	2	14.29%	3	0	0%	5	0	0%
ācēosan	0	0		1	0	0%	10	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
gecēosan	14	0	0%	54	2	3.6%	722	0	0%	9	1	10%	2	0	0%
wipercēosan	0	0		9	0	0%	5	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
wipercōsan	0	0		0	0	0%	18	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
drēosan	0	0		2	0	0%	0	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
adrēosan	0	0		0	0		1	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
bedrēosan	0	0		0	0		9	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
gedrēosan	0	0		1	0	0%	4	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
tōdrēosan	0	0		0	0		1	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
flēon	14	0	0%	120	0	0%	0	0	0%	7	0	0%	8	0	0%
āflēon	0	0		1	0	0%	4	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
æflēon	0	0		13	0	0%	0	0	0%	0	0		2	0	0%
beflēon	0	0		1	0	0%	3	0	0%	1	0	0%	1	0	0%
forflēon	0	0		1	0	0%	1	0	0%	1	0	0%	0	0	
geflēon	0	0		7	0	0%	2	0	0%	1	0	0%	0	0	
ōpflēon	0	0		14	0	0%	2	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
tōflēon	0	0		0	0		1	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
ūtflēon	0	0		1	0	0%	0	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
lēosan	0	0		0	0		2	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
belēosan	0	0		0	0		5	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
forlēosan	20	0	0%	9	0	0%	96	0	0%	20	0	0%	2	0	0%
gefrēosan	0	0		4	0	0%	2	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
oferfrēosan	0	0		0	0		2	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
begrēosan	0	0		0	0		1	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
hrēosan	1	0	0%	20	0	0%	2	0	0%	5	0	0%	0	0	
ährēosan	0	0		3	0	0%	0	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
behrēosan	0	0		0	0		2	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
gehrēosan	0	0		5	0	0%	6	0	0%	1	0	0%	0	0	
ofhrēosan	0	0		0	0		12	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
onhrēosan	0	0		8	0	0%	0	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
tōhrēosan	0	0		9	0	0%	0	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
sēoban	1	0	0%	2	0	0%	14	0	0%	0	0		0	0	

āsēoban	1	0	0%	0	0		14	0	0%	1	0	0%	0	0	
besēoban	0	0		0	0		3	1	25%	0	0		0	0	
gesēoban	0	0		0	0		115	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
tōsēoban	0	0		0	0		1	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
tēon	1	0	0%	50	0	0%	58	0	0%	3	0	0%	2	0	0%
ātēon	12	0	0%	16	0	0%	47	0	0%	8	0	0%	0	0	
betēon	0	0		0	0		4	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
forbātēon	1	0	0%	0	0		2	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
fortēon	0	0		0	0		4	0	0%	2	0	0%	0	0	
getēon	3	0	0%	29	0	0%	64	0	0%	2	0	0%	0	0	
tōtēon	0	0		1	0	0%	4	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
ontēon	0	0		0	0		0	0	0%	1	0	0%	0	0	
oftēon	2	0	0%	3	0	0%	11	0	0%	1	0	0%	0	0	
ofertēon	0	0		0	0		3	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
ōptēon	0	0		0	0		1	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
burhtēon	1	0	0%	10	0	0%	50	0	0%	6	0	0%	0	0	
wiptēon	0	0		2	0	0%	5	0	0%	0	0		0	0	
upātēon	0	0		0	0		1	0	0%	1	0	0%	0	0	
forwēosan							4	0	0%						
TOTAL	73	2	2.67%	406	6	1.46%	1330	3	0.23%	73	1	1.35%	22	0	0%

Table 5. The percentage of forms which eliminated the alternations by Verner's Law in Class II with respect to particular inflectional categories

CATEGORY	PRESERVED		ELIMINATED	
	#	%	#	%
PRETERITE SG.	73	97.33%	2	2.67%
PRETERITE PLURAL	406	98.54%	6	1.46%
PAST PARTICIPLE	1330	99.77%	3	0.23%
SUBJUNCTIVE PRET. SG.	73	98.65%	1	1.35%
SUBJUNCTIVE PRET. PL.	22	100%	0	0%

The figures indicate that the process of analogical levelling affected a handful of forms. In terms of individual tokens, the tendency is most pronounced in preterite plural where six occurrences have been recognised as forms which dispensed with the voiced alternant. In terms of percentage value however, preterite. sg. seems to be most susceptible to the influence of analogy, though only two occurrences were attested without Verner's Law. Unaffected by the working of levelling remains subjunctive preterite plural where no levelled forms have been found.

All the forms which testify to the operation of analogical levelling in Class II derive from Late West-Saxon texts (most of them appear in late manuscripts of *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Chron E), dated to the first half of the 12th century, but also late Northumbrian (*Lindisfarne Gospels*), from the latter half of the 10th century.

3.2.3 Strong verbs Class III

Although the effects of Verner's Law were displayed with remarkable rigour and systemacity in Class III, they can be identified in very few verbs: the scarcely attested *fēolan* and its prefixed forms, and the very well attested *weorþan* with its derivatives where grammatical change was abundantly preserved.

The effects of Verner's Law were levelled very early in *findan* (**finθ-a-n*), i.e. before the time of its attestation. The expected regular forms would have been *fīþan* : *fōþ* : *fundon* : *funden*, yet the present and preterite sing. (*fand*) were created by analogy with verbs like *bindan* and the cluster *nd* of the preterite pl. and past participle was extended to the present and preterite singular.

The earliest traces of the demise of grammatical change in Class III appear in *weorþan*, *geweorþan* and *forweorþan*, primarily in past participle but also preterite plural. *Weorþan* is one of the few verbs where elimination of the effects of Verner's Law is relatively advanced and can be clearly identified.

The distribution of the effects of Verner's Law in verbs belonging to Class III is presented in Table 6 (next page). The presentation of contexts illustrating early traces of elimination in this class follows.

20) *weorþan*

Hit segð þæt hi *wurðon* rædlice afyrhte þa ure drihten com on þas niht to bære hellegatum & þa locu toburston. (Nic (E): 11)

þa twegen kyngas Willelm & Swægn *wurðon* sæhtlod. (ChronE: 1070.45)

þa wundreden heo ealle and *wurðen* afyrhte. (Nic (C): 43)

þa *wurðen* heo ealle swyðe sarige and afyrhte. (Nic (C): 93)

And on þine deaðe ealle tunglen and *gesceafte wurðen* gestyrede. (Nic (C): 318)

Ða *wurðen* þa twegen cnapan sona on slæpe, & se þridda wacode <swiðor> for ege þonne for his gebedum. (Leof: 45)

Ond <þus> hit is iwrten on holie wisdome, Fiat, et facta sunt omnia, he seide, <Iwurþe>, <ond> alle þing *iwurþen*. (HomU 5.6 (Buch F): 43)

þus mid one worde al hit was *iwurþen*. HomU 5.6 (Buch F): 46)

þa hi ne leng ne muhten þolen þa stali hi ut & flugen. & hi *wurthen* war widuten & folecheden heom. (ChronE: 1140.31)

& se eorl com mid him. & *wurðon* þa alswa gode freond swa hi wæron æror feond. (ChronE (Plummer): 1129.5)

21) *forweorþan*

We wisceað ðæt we on Egypta lande wæron ær deade & na on ðisum westene, & we wisceað swyðor þæt we *forwurðon* her & us Drihten ne læde in to ðam lande, þæt we ðær licgon ofslagene & ure wif & cyld *wurðon* gehergode; (Num: 14.1)

Sethes sunes yherden adames wytegunge be twam domon & þæt þa yfudonne creftes ne *forwurþon* witen hi on twam columban; (HeptNotes: 15)

Hu gewordene beoð on forletnesse ferlice hie terogoden & *forwurðon* fore unrihtwisnesse here Quomodo facti sunt in desolationem subito defecerunt et perierunt propter iniquitates suas. (PsGlE: 72.19)

Table 6. Distribution of the effects of Verner's Law in Class III

CATEGORY	PRET. SG.		PRET. PL.		PAST PTCP.		SUBJ. PRET. SG.		SUBJ. PRET. PL.	
	P	L	P	L	P	L	P	L	P	L
INFINITIVE	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
fēolan	0	0	4	0%	0	0	0	0%	0	0%
ætfeolan	0	0	2	50%	0	0	0	0	0	0
befeolan	0	0	3	0%	0	100%	0	0	0	0
weorþan	22	0	729	3.32%	53	8.62%	197	1.01%	28	0%
āweorþan	0	0	1	0%	188	0%	0	0	0	0
forweorþan	1	0	71	4.05%	17	0%	26	3.70%	0	0
geweorþan	3	0	56	0%	1402	0.99%	66	10.81%	17	0%
TOTAL	26	0	866	3.35%	1660	1.43%	290	3.65%	46	0%

22) *geweorþan*

Ne ondred ðu ðonne weolig *geworðen* bið mon & ðonne gemonigfaldad bið wuldur huses his Ne timueris cum diues factus fuerit homo et cum multiplicata fuerit gloria domus eius. (PsGIA: 48.16)

& na ic ondræde forþon strengð min & lof min drihten & *geworðen* is me on hælo et non timebo quia fortitudo mea et laus mea dominus et factus est mihi in salutem. (PsCaF: 2(1).2)

Ealla onhyldon somed unnytte *geworðene* syndon ne his se þe deþ god ne his oðþe on ænne Omnes declinaverunt simul inutiles facti sunt non est qui faciat bonum non est usque ad unum. (PsGIE: 52.4)

3.2.3.1 The case of *fēolan* (< **felyan*)

The preterite plural form *fulgon* was in fact rare, instead in West Saxon the form *fælon* tended to spread, and so did *fūlon* and *-fēlun* (attested only twice as *ætfeolun* (VP)).¹⁴ Both *-fēlun* and the past participle *folen* (also *folgen*) were formed on the pattern of SV₄. The past participle forms *-fūlen*, *fōlen*, *fælon*, scattered across various texts, are the only forms of this verb, which exhibit no traces of Vernerian alternations. In fact, the status of these forms is quite ambiguous: although they show no alternations, they certainly cannot be attributed to analogy, working towards generalisation of one variant and restoration of the voiceless fricative. They can be viewed instead as effects of some individual development, entailing liability to adopting a different ablaut pattern, in this particular case, the pattern of SV₄. The following forms are attested without Vernerian alternants:

23) *ætfeolun* (2 occurrences)

Unscēððende & rehtwise *ætfeolun* me for ðon ic arefnde ðe dryhten Innocentes et recti adhererunt mihi, quoniam sustinui, te domine. (PsGIA: 24.20)

... & adrugað heorte min for ðon offergeotul ic eam eotan hlaf minne from stefne gearmrunge minre *ætfeolun* 7 ætclōfodon ban min flæsce minum ...et aruit cor meum quia oblitus sum manducare panem meum a uoce gemitus mei adhererunt ossa mea carni meae. (PsGIA: 101.4)

¹⁴ The regular ablaut pattern in SV₄, attested in *Vespasian Psalter*, was *e - e - ē - o* (Brunner 1962: 298).

24) *bi/befolen* (5 occurrences)

Wæs him niwe gefea *befolen* in fyrhðe, wæs him frofra mæst ond <hyhta> nihst heofonrices weard. (El: 195)

Him ða gleawhydig ludas oncwæð, hæleð hildedeor, him wæs halig gast *befolen* fæste, fyrhat lufu... (El: 934)

Se mæg eal fela singan ond secgan þam bið snyttru cræft *bifolen* on ferðe. (Christ A, B, C: 666)

Ic þære sawle ma geornor gyme ymb þæs gæstes forwyrd þonne þæs lichoman, se þe on legre sceal weorðan in worulde wyrme to hroþor, *bifolen* in foldan. (Jul: 413)

Table 7 presents overall distribution of Vernerian alternations in Class III.

Table 7. The percentage of forms which eliminated the alternations by Verner's Law in Class III with respect to particular inflectional categories

CATEGORY	PRESERVED		ELIMINATED	
	#	%	#	%
PRETERITE SG.	26	100%	0	0,00%
PRETERITE PLURAL	866	96.65%	30	3.35%
PAST PARTICIPLE	1660	98.57%	24	1.43%
SUBJUNCTIVE PRET. SG.	290	96.35%	11	3.65%
SUBJUNCTIVE PRET. PL.	46	100%	0	0.00%

Figures in Table 7 illustrate the pattern of distribution of forms which eliminated and preserved Vernerian alternations in this class. The pattern indicates that the forms of subjunctive pret. pl. and preterite ind. plural were most susceptible to the operation of analogical levelling. Affected were also forms of past participle, whereas no, even slight traces of levelling were found in subjunctive plural and 2sg. preterite ind.

3.2.4. Strong verbs Class V

Regular grammatical change in Class V can be identified in four simplex verbs: *sēon*, *fēon*, *wesan* and *cweþan*. Out of these, in turn, the tendency towards levelling of Vernerian alternations is most pronounced in *cweþan*. Pre-Old English levelling affected four verbs in this class: *fnesan* 'sneeze' (no attestations found in the corpus), *lesan* 'collect, lease', *alesan* 'choose', (*ge*)*nesan* 'survive', in all of which the voiceless fricative was generalised:

ġenesan : *ġenæs* : *ġenæson* : *ġensen*
lesan : *læs* : *læson* : *lesen*
ālesan : *ālæs* : *ālæson* : *ālesen*

Following are contexts in which they were found in the investigated material:

25) *ġenesan*

Swa he niða gehwane *genesen* hæfde, sliðra <geslyhta>, sunu Ecgðiwes, ellenweorca, oð ðone anne dæg þe he wið þam wyrme gewegan sceolde. (Beo: 2397)

Of þam him aweaxeð wynsum gefea, þonne hi þæt yfel geseoð oðre dreogan, þæt hy þurh miltse meotudes *genæson*. (Christ A, B, C: 1252)

Æfter þæm for Hannibal ofer Bardan þone beorg, þeh þe ymb þone tieman wæren swa micel snawgebland swa þætte ægþer ge þara horsa fela forwurdon ge þa elpendas ealle buton anum, ge þa men selfe uneaðe þone ciele *genæson*. (Or: 4 8.100.9)

26) *lesan*

and hig foron towerd Sandwic, and *læson* æfre forð mid heom ealle þa butsecarlas þe heo gemetton, and comon þa to Sandwic mid geotendan here. (ChronC (Rositzke): 1052.16)

27) *alesan*

Hæfde him *alesen* leoda dugeðe tireadigra twa þusendo, þæt wæron cyningas and cneowmagas, on þæt <ealde> riht, æðelum deore. (Ex: 183)

... vsig on deað rod' lvtvme gisaldest gilef allvm vs rehtlice gilefendvm þætte ðerh þæt ilca deað from deaðe ecvm ve sie *alesen*. (DurRitGl 1: (94.10)

Class V is most numerous with respect to forms which levelled effects of Verner's Law and at the same time not much diversified in the sense that in fact all of the forms affected by levelling belong to one simplex *cweðan* and its prefixed derivatives. The data allow for identification of 39 forms of preterite plural which no longer preserve the voiced alternant induced by the operation of Verner's Law. Single past participle and preterite subjunctive sg. forms without Verner's Law can also be identified. Liable to the working of levelling was also *gecweðan* which showed discernible traces of the process in past participle and sporadically in preterite plural and subjunctive pret. singular. Very sparse traces of levelling are present in *ācweðan*, *becweðan* and *tocweðan* which levelled Verner's Law in single forms of past participle and preterite pl. (*ācweðon*,

becweðon, tōcweþon). Finally, slight tendency towards elimination can also be detected in *wiþcweþan* where the voiceless fricative is extended to forms of past participle (*wiþcweþen*).

Given that *sēon* is the only verb in Old English, which testifies to the labiovelar alternation of $*\chi w \sim *y w$, as well as given the diversity of forms in which the verb was attested, it deserves a brief comment. The West Saxon regular preterite plural form of *sēon* was *sāwon* and in Anglian *sēgun, -on*, the latter often "West-Saxonized" as *sāgon* (*Ru¹ -sēgon, -sāgon, -sāgun*). The past participle form *sāwen* adopted *ā* from preterite plural; *sewen*, an alternative past participle, remains in accordance with the regular vocalism of SV₅. The Anglian past participle form was *gesegen* with the consonantism adopted from the preterite and consistently the form of Anglian subjunctive pret. sg. was *sēge*.¹⁵ The loss of medial *g* is evident in some Northumbrian texts, namely in forms such as *gesēne* (*Ru¹, Ru², Li.*) (in fact an adjective employed often as past participle), *gesēanæ, gesānæ* (*Ru¹*), *gesēen* (*Li.*). Again these forms preserve no voiced alternant reminiscent of the earlier operation of Verner's Law; still they cannot be viewed as the effect of analogical levelling but rather as products of dialect-specific phonological development (cf. section 3.3).

The distribution of the effects of Verner's Law in verbs belonging to Class V is demonstrated in Table 8 (facing page), followed by the presentation of contexts in which forms without Vernerian alternants were found.

Following are contexts illustrating forms which eliminated the allomorphy brought about by the operation of Verner's Law:

28) *acwēþan*

Wærun wuldurlice wið þe wel *acwēðene*, þæt þu si cymast ceastra drihtnes; eac ic gemyndige þa mæran Raab and Babilonis begea gehwæðeres. (PPs A5: 86.2) intermediate saxon

¹⁵ According to Prokosch (1939), the *y* present in past participle is an expected development when the original IE ending was *-ono-*, but *w* when the original ending was *-eno-*. The *y* found in preterite plural is a regularly expected form since it was followed originally by *u* (Prokosch 1939: 74).

Table 8. Distribution of the effects of Verner's Law in Class V

CATEGORY	PRET. SG.		PRET. PL.		PAST PTCP.		SUBJ. PRET. SG.		SUBJ. PRET. PL.	
	P	L	P	L	P	L	P	L	P	L
INFINITIVE	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<i>acwēþan</i>	0	0%	1	0%	30	3.23%	0	0%	0	0%
<i>becwēþan</i>	0	0%	1	50%	12	14.29%	0	0%	0	0%
<i>cwēþan</i>	97	0%	1745	2.19%	123	4.65%	98	10.09%	9	10.0%
<i>forcweþan</i>	0	0%	2	0%	4	0%	0	0%	1	0%
<i>fōrcwēþan</i>	0	0%	3	0%	52	0.00%	2	0%	0	0%
<i>gecwēþan</i>	3	0%	35	5.41%	834	1.77%	23	4.17%	5	0%
<i>oncweþan</i>	0	0%	3	0%	0	0%	1	0%	0	0%
<i>tōcweþan</i>	0	0%	4	0%	4	20.00%	0	100%	0	0%
<i>wiþcweþan</i>	0	0%	18	18.18%	5	0%	3	0%	0	0%
<i>wiþercwēþan</i>	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<i>feon</i>	0	0%	1	0%	12	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<i>gefeon</i>	0	0%	24	0%	15	0%	1	0%	3	0%
<i>sēon</i>	2	0%	27	0%	29	0%	3	0%	3	0%
<i>besēon</i>	1	0%	5	0%	2	0%	5	0%	0	0%
<i>forsēon</i>	6	0%	54	0%	48	0%	11	0%	3	0%
<i>foresēon</i>	3	0%	0	0%	6	0%	1	0%	0	0%
<i>gesēon</i>	108	0%	795	0%	364	0%	211	0%	32	0%
<i>geondsēon</i>	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%
<i>ofersēon</i>	1	0%	6	0%	2	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<i>onsēon</i>	3	0%	3	0%	5	0%	1	0%	0	0%
<i>ymsēon</i>	0	0%	0	0%	2	0%	1	0%	0	0%
<i>wesan</i>	315	0%	5514	0%	0	0%	2996	0%	129	0%
<i>gewesan</i>	0	0%	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<i>æwasan</i>	0	0%	2	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
TOTAL	539	0%	8244	0.55%	1550	1.59%	3357	0.39%	186	0.53%

29) *cwēpan*

Ða *cwædon* his apostolas, drihten, geic urne geleafan. (Lk (WSCp): 17.5)

þa halgan sawla þa mid unasecggendlicum gefean cleopodan to Drihtne, & þus *cwæþon*. (HomS 26 (BIHom 7): 83)

And syððon þæt fers & geseald þare abbodesse bletsunge, beon geræd opere feower rædunge of þare niwe cyðnesse þare ænbyrdnesse, þe we before *cwædon*. (BenRW: 11.47.8)

Se steðe is *ycwæden* si denæ of tæran besyde hebron þe adam & eue wyphen. (HeptNotes: 8)

þa wuldorfestan *cwēþene* sien be ðe ceaster godes Gloriosa dicta sunt de te civitas dei. (PsGIE: 86.3)

et respondentes dicunt iesu nescimus respondens iesus ait illis & ondueardon *cuoedon* ðæm hælende neutu woe geonduearde se hælend cuoed to him (MkGl (Li): 11.33)

And þæræfter hine God geuferade þæt he wearð prior & fæder þæs bufan *cwēðenan* mynstres. (StWulf: 18)

30) *becwēpan*

of ealles cynnes ðingæ swa full 7 swa forð 7 swa freo swa Tosti eorll 7 Leofrun his wif min fostermoder hit firmest ahten/ 7 ðider inn *becwæden* on ece yrðe. (Ch 1137 (Harm 93): 4)

Ealle ða. mynstra and in cyrican wæron givene and becweðene Gode. (Chr. 694; Th. 66.6, note 2: Th. Diplm. A. D.830; 465,1)

Ænd ic cyþe eow þæt ic hebbe *bicwæden* Portland 7 eall þæt ðerto bilyð in to Gealden Mynstre on Wyncheastre Gode to lofe 7 Sancte Petre 7 Sancte Suuthune þam monkan to scrudan... (Ch 1154: 2)

31) *gecwæðan*

et ait illi iesus uide nemini dixeris sed uade ostende te sacerdoti & cueð him hælend loca geseh þæt ðu ænigum menn ðu *gecuoeda* gesæcga ah gaa ædeau ðec ðæm meassepreost. (MtGl (Li): 8.4)

Her is geswutelod an ðis gewrite hu Ælfheah ealdorman his cwidæ *gecwæden* hæfð. be his cynhlafordæs gepafunge. (Ch 1485 (Whitelock 9): 1)

& ælc þæra þinga forgifan beon sceolde þe <him> gedon oððe *gecwæden* wære. (ChronE: 1014.8)

Seo feorðe mihte is Pacientia, þæt is geðyld *gecwæden*. (ÆAbusWarn: 256)

Rex we cweðeð cyng, þæt is *gecwæden* Wissigend, forþan þe he sceal wissigen mid wisdomes his folc, & unriht alecgen. (ÆAbusWarn: 129)

Ic blitsige on þysum þæ *gecwædene* syndon to me on huse drihtnes we gað Letatus sum in his quae dicta sunt michi in domum domini ibimus. (PsGIE: 121.1)

Swa hit *gecwæden* is. ðonne se heretoga wacað þonne bið eall se here swiðe gehindred. (ChronE: 1003.10)

32) *tocwēapan*

& ordal & aðas syndan *tocwæden* freolsdagum & rihtymbrendagum & fram Adventum Domini oð octabas Epiphani // & fram Septuagessiman oð XV niht ofer eastran. (LawVAtr: 18)

et si quis uobis aliquid dixerit dicite quia dominus his opus habet et confestim demittet uobis & gif hwa eow // inc awiht *tocwæpe* sæcgaþ þæt dryhten heora ðearf & sonæ forleteð heo. (MtGl (Ru): 21.3)

33) *wiðcwæðan*

Him *wiðcwæden* muneces & eorles & þeignes ealle mest þe þær wæron. (ChronE: 1123.36) late saxon

& ealle þa oðre þe ðær wæron munechades men hit *wiðcwæden* fulle twa dagas. (ChronE: 1123.28)

Ne ða opre ongean þæt nan ðincg *wiðcwædon*. (BenRWells: 64.118.1)

Table 9 presents overall number of occurrences and percentage of forms which lost Vernerian alternations in this class, taking into account the distribution of these in particular inflectional categories (without *wesan*¹⁶).

¹⁶ The verb *wesan* was not included in the final count since its frequency of occurrence is much higher than the frequency of other verbs in this class as well as verbs in other classes. The inclusion of the figures obtained from the analysis of *wesan* would be likely to level the final results and obliterate thus the tendencies observable in the above figures.

Table 9. The percentage of forms without Verner's Law in Class V with respect to particular categories

CATEGORY	PRESERVED		ELIMINATED	
	#	%	#	%
PRETERITE SG.	224	100%	0	0%
PRETERITE PLURAL	2727	98.34%	46	1.66%
PAST PARTICIPLE	1550	98.41%	25	1.59%
SUBJUNCTIVE PRET. SG	361	96.52%	13	3.48%
SUBJUNCTIVE PRET. PL.	57	99.47%	1	0.53%

The figures indicate that the form of subjunctive sg. was evidently most innovative, showing traces of elimination in close to 4% of all attested forms. Analogical levelling operated also on forms of preterite pl. and past participle, affecting 1.66% of attested forms in the former and 1.59% in the latter. The alternations are best preserved in 2sg. preterite indicative and subjunctive preterite plural which show either no or very scarce traces of elimination.

The single occurrences of levelled forms attested in this class are scattered throughout various texts. Most of the forms are found in texts of West-Saxon provenience, especially *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, *Benedictine Rule* (11th c.), *Cura Pastoralis*, various *Charters*, *Homilies*, *West-Saxon Gospels*. Quite frequent occurrences of the levelled forms can also be traced to Northumbrian texts, here especially *Lindisfarne Gospels* but also *Rushworth Gospels* and *Durham Ritual*, all dating back to the 10th century as well as *Cædmon's Hymn*, dated to early 8th century (c. 730), or Mercian *Vespasian Hymns*.

3.2.5. Strong verbs Class VI

Verbs belonging to Class VI manifest a different pattern as far as preservation of the effects of Verner's Law is concerned, displaying the alternations with relative regularity at the same time. The voiced fricative was apparently extended to the form of 3sg. preterite ind. in verbs whose stems ended in a velar fricative (*lōg*, *flōg*, *hlōg*, *slōg*, *pwōg*). Later forms of preterite singular, however, contain already the voiceless fricative, hence *lōh*, *flōh*, *hlōh*, *slōh*, *pwōh* and their corresponding prefixed forms. Frequent spellings with *-h* in the 3sg. preterite ind. can be explained by the process of unvoicing of final voiced fricatives, which took place shortly after the voicing of medial spirants (Campbell 1959: 180).

On the superficial level, it seems, the forms of preterite singular must have been affected by Vernerian voicing since the voiced fricative present here corresponds to those induced by Verner's Law in preterite plural, subjunctive and past participle. In fact, the status of these preterite singular forms is ambiguous. To view the alternation as original, i.e. generated by the operation of Verner's

Law, one would have to assume a different pattern of accentuation for the form of preterite singular, with root accentuation in the present and suffixal accent in all the other forms, including preterite singular. Such assumption is not uncontroversial however. According to standard grammars no such special accentuation pattern need be postulated. Campbell (1959) claims that the preterite singular form, in contrast to the present system, received root rather than suffixal accentuation, and the voiced fricative was simply transferred from the past participle form (Campbell 1959: 305). Luick (1921), Wright (1925), Brunner (1962), much in the same line, maintain that the extended voiced fricative appeared under the influence of the preterite plural. Finally, as suggested by Wright (1925), the alternation should be viewed as orthographic rather than phonological. The exact conditions of the variation can be defined as follows:

When Germanic *ʒ* came to stand finally in OE., it is probable that it became a voiceless spirant (*χ*) just as in Goth. OS., and prehistoric O.Icel., but that the *g* (= *ʒ*) was mostly restored again owing to the influence of the inflected forms. After liquids and guttural vowels the restoration of the *g* was merely orthographical, but the further history of the sound in OE. shows that after palatal vowels it was mostly restored in pronunciation as well...

(Wright 1925: 169)

Elimination of the effects of Verner's Law in this class is evident in the verb *sceþþan* only, which in the past participle form preserved the levelled form *sceaðen*. The verb evidently favoured the fricative and extended it very early to past participle; hence frequent citations of *sceaðen* as the basic form of past participle in major Old English grammars (Brunner 1942, 1962; Campbell 1959; Wright 1925; Bosworth and Toller's 1898). *sceþþan* corresponds to the Gothic verb *skapjan* : *skōþ*; the strong present *sceapan* is attested only in poetry. The verb already in Old English tended to shift to weak declension and the weak preterite forms *sceþede*, *sceþedon*, *sceþeden* (corresponding to OIcel. *skeðja/skaddi*) are attested in West Saxon.¹⁷ The following sentences illustrate the use of the levelled forms of *sceððan*:

Scyldfull mine *sceaðen* is me sare, frecne on ferhðe; ne dear nu forð gan for ðe andweardne. (Gen A, B: 869)

Nu earttu <*sceaðana*> <sum>, in fyrlocan feste gebunden. (Sat: 57)

Table 10 (next page) presents the distribution of the vestiges of Verner's Law in Class VI.

¹⁷Another related weak verb attested in Old English to which these forms can belong is *sceapian* 'injure' (which corresponds to OIcel. *skaða/skaðaði*, OHG *scadōn/scadota* and *sceþþan/sceþede* (Bosworth and Toller 1898: 437).

Table 10. Distribution of the effects of Verner's Law in Class VI

CATEGORY	PRET. SG.		PRET. PL.		PAST PTCP.		SUBJ. PRET. SG.		SUBJ. PRET. PL.	
	P	L	P	L	P	L	P	L	P	L
INFINITIVE	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
flean	0	0%	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
aflēan	0	0%	0	0%	3	0%	0	0%	0	0%
beflēan	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%
hliehhan	3	0%	13	0%	0	0%	1	0%	0	0%
lēan	0	0%	4	0%	1	0%	4	0%	0	0%
belēan	0	0%	1	0%	3	0%	1	0%	0	0%
forlēan	0	0%	0	0%	9	0%	0	0%	0	0%
sceþþan	0	0%	3	0%	0	100%	1	0%	0	0%
gesceþþan	0	0%	1	0%	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%
sleān	19	0%	107	0%	28	0%	18	0%	0	0%
āslēan	0	0%	2	0%	12	0%	0	0%	0	0%
beslēan	0	0%	0	0%	6	0%	0	0%	0	0%
forslēan	0	0%	0	0%	26	0%	0	0%	0	0%
geslēan	0	0%	23	0%	84	0%	0	0%	0	0%
ofaslēan	0	0%	1	0%	15	0%	0	0%	0	0%
ofslēan	20	0%	255	0%	438	0%	26	0%	2	0%
oferslēan	0	0%	4	0%	2	0%	0	0%	0	0%
tōslēan	0	0%	1	0%	7	0%	0	0%	0	0%
þurhslēan	0	0%	1	0%	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%
þwēan	0	0%	7	0%	6	0%	1	0%	0	0%
āþwēan	0	0%	4	0%	50	0%	5	0%	0	0%
gebwēan	1	0%	2	0%	14	0%	0	0%	0	0%
TOTAL	43	0%	430	0%	707	2.28%	57	0%	2	0%

In other verbs belonging to this class grammatical change is preserved intact. The forms *slohge* (attested once; subj. pret. sg.) and *sloghen* (attested once; past participle) indicate no more than spelling variation rather than levelling. They were identified in the following contexts:

& hine heton þurh bismornysse witegian hwa þæt wære þe hine ðonne *slohge*. (HomS 24.2: 197)

& flemden þe king æt te Standard. & *sloghen* suite micel of his genge. (ChronE: 1138.2)

Needless to say, any conclusions based on the type of data availed by Class VI (with one verb displaying traces of elimination in single attested forms) inspire little confidence and must be treated with a considerable degree of criticism.

3.2.6. Strong verbs Class VII

Class VII, combining several accent types, is very irregular with respect to Verner's Law. In fact, most verbs belonging to this class display no grammatical change at all, and in those which do, preterite singular and preterite plural have the same root consonant. The reason for the irregularity may be sought in the fact that the past participle form had full grade vocalism rather than zero or reduced grade, which was the case in verbs showing relatively regular grammatical change. The presence of the same vocalism in the present and past participle may be seen as a factor encouraging levelling of the effects of Verner's Law in this class. Irregular traces of Verner's Law can be identified in two verbs only *hōn* and *fōn* and their prefixed forms, where the preterite plural and singular have the same consonantism.¹⁸

Alongside the regular forms containing the *ng* alternation, a set of forms without traces of Vernerian alternations was attested. All of them are of Anglian provenience and the attested past participle forms of *-fōn* and *-hōn* are *-fōen* and *-hōen*.¹⁹ This evident lack of Vernerian alternations in all of these forms however cannot be attributed to the operation of analogical levelling which, in line with the adopted definition of elimination, involved generalisation of one consonantal variant. The forms could be subsumed under a common heading of Anglian past participles (cf. section 3.3). Table 11 (next page) presents the distribution of the

¹⁸ **fan*χan > **fā*χan (-an- > -ā-) > **fō*χan (-ā- > -ō-) > **fōan* (loss of intervocalic χ) > OE *fōn* and similarly: **han*χan > **hā*χan (-an- > -ā-) > **hō*χan (-ā- > -ō-) > **hōan* (loss of intervocalic χ) > OE *hōn*. The Vernerian voiced alternant is extended to the form of preterite singular: *fēng* and *hēng* are new formations based on the corresponding plural *fēngon* and *hēngon* (Welna 1996: 73).

¹⁹ They may go back to monosyllabic **fōin* and **hōin*. According to Campbell (1959) these Northumbrian forms should be viewed as disyllabic, containing a sequence of *ō* followed by *e* rather than monosyllabic *ōē* (Campbell 1959: 234).

Table 11. Distribution of the effects of Verner's Law in Class VII

CATEGORY	PRET. SG.		PRET. PL.		PAST PTCP.		SUBJ. PRET. SG.		SUBJ. PRET. PL.	
	P	L	P	L	P	L	P	L	P	L
INFINITIVE	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
fōn	2	0%	0	0%	6	0%	0	0%	5	0%
āfōn	16	0%	0	0%	8	0%	0	0%	0	0%
ærfōn	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%
anfōn	7	0%	0	0%	7	0%	0	0%	3	0%
befōn	1	0%	0	0%	85	1.16%	0	0%	0	0%
forfōn	1	0%	0	0%	5	0%	1	0%	0	0%
fōrefōn	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%	0	0%
oferfōn	0	0%	0	0%	8	0%	0	0%	0	0%
gefōn	1	0%	0	0%	58	4.506%	4	0%	5	0%
onfōn	40	0%	0	0%	224	1.85%	2	0%	4	50%
tōfōn	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
underfōn	20	0%	0	0%	102	0%	0	0%	0	0%
ymbfōn	0	0%	0	0%	4	0%	0	0%	0	0%
hōn	0	0%	0	0%	13	0%	0	0%	0	0%
āhōn	4	0%	0	0%	141	10.76%	17	0%	0	0%
behōn	0	0%	0	0%	7	0%	2	0%	0	0%
gehōn	0	0%	0	0%	2	50%	2	0%	0	0%
TOTAL	93	0%	0	0%	570	4.36%	26	0%	17	19.05%

vestiges of Verner's Law in Class VII, taking into account the less regular cases of elimination to be discussed and illustrated in the following section.

Table 12 illustrates overall distribution of forms which eliminated and preserved effects of Verner's Law in verbs belonging to Class VII:

Table 12. The percentage of forms which preserved and eliminated effects of Verner's Law

CATEGORY	PRESERVED		ELIMINATED	
	#	%	#	%
PRETERITE SG.	93	100%	0	0%
PRETERITE PLURAL	628	100%	0	0%
PAST PARTICIPLE	570	95.64%	26	4.36%
SUBJUNCTIVE PRET. SG.	146	100%	0	0%
SUBJUNCTIVE PRET. PL.	17	80.9%	4	19.05%

3.3. Anglian forms

A group of verbs and their past participle forms due to their individual pattern of development deserve special attention as their status with respect to Verner's Law is quite ambiguous. When subject to closer scrutiny, it can be noticed that all of them are of Anglian provenance and come from three classes: *āhōn*, *gehōn*, *befōn*, *onfōn*, *gefōn*, (*gifōn*), belonging to Class VII; *þwēan*, *gēþwean*, belonging to Class VI and *gesēon*, assigned to Class V. Their past participle forms attested in Anglian show no traces of Verner's Law on the surface level. Accordingly, in Northumbrian the past participle forms of *þwēan* are *ðuāen*²⁰ (*ðwaen*), *-ðuēnum* (dat.pl.), *-ðuēanum* (for *ðuāenum*), *ðwēanum*, attested alongside more regular *ðuegenum*, *ðuegnum*. The attested past participle forms in *Li* are *geðuāen*, *unðuēn*, *unðuēnum* (for **geðwægn*, *ðwegn*).²¹ Similarly, the mentioned Northumbrian past participle forms of *-fōn* and *-hōn* are *-fōen* and *-hōen*.²²

This evident lack of Vernerian alternations in all of these forms however cannot be attributed to the operation of analogical levelling which, in line with the

²⁰ *ðuāen* may be viewed as a misspelling of *æ* for *āe* (Brunner 1962: 290).

²¹ The two regular forms with the prefix *un-*: *unðuegenum* and *unðuegnum* (occurring twice in the analysed collection) were treated together with *þwēan*.

²² They may go back to monosyllabic **fōin* and **hōin* or can be treated as disyllabic forms with analogical ending. According to Campbell these Northumbrian forms should be viewed as disyllabic, containing a sequence of *ō* followed by *e* rather than monosyllabic *æ* (Campbell 1959: 243).

adopted definition of elimination, would involve generalisation of one consonantal variant. Instead, it should be viewed as the effect of an individual, Anglian development which involved the loss of medial *g* and contraction of the vowels.

Following are some instances of these “ambiguous” past participles and subjunctive plural forms found in the corpus:

34) *gepwēan* (the only form found in the corpus)

dicit ei iesus qui locutus est non indiget ut lauet sed est mundus totus et uos mundi estis sed non omnes cuoed him to se hælend seðe *geðuæn* is † sprec uæs ne ðorfæð ? þætte aðoa hine ah is clæne all & gie clæno aron ah ne alle. (JnGl (Li): 13.10)

35) *pwēan* (only forms with the prefix *un-* are attested)

Quaerentibus de non lotis discipulorum manibus ea dicit hominem quae de corde exeunt inquinare soecendum of *unðweanum* ðara ðeigna hondum ða ilca cwoed ðone monno ða of heorta gaes unclaensia. (MtHeadGl (Li): 53)

haec sunt quae coincinant hominem non lotis autem manibus manducare non coincinant hominem ðas aron ða widlas ðone monno *unðuenum* uutedlice hondum eatta ne widlas ðone monno. (MtGl (Li): 15.20)

36) *āhōn* (altogether 17 past participle forms found in the corpus)

At illi instabant uocibus magnis postulantes ut crucifigeretur et inuallescebant uoces eorum soð hia onstodon stefnum miclum gebedon þætte *ahoen* woere & ontrymmedon † stefno hiora. (LkGl (Li): 23.23)

Fratres hoc scientes quia uetus homo noster simul crucifixus est... bro' ðis witendo fðon se alda //monn// vser gilic *ahoen* is... (DurRitGl 1 (Thomp-Lind): 26.10)

37) *gehōn* (2 past participle forms attested in the corpus)

...et tradidit iesum flagellis caesum ut crucifigeretur & salde ðone hælend mið suuippum to geðearsanne þætte were *gehoen*. (MkGl (Li): 15.15)

scitis quia post biduum pascha fiet et filius hominis tradetur ut crucifigatur wutas gie forðon æfter tuæm dogrum † dagum eastro biað & sunu monnes gesald bið þætte he se *gehoen* † ahongen. (MtGl (Li): 26.2)

38) *befōn* (one form only attested in the corpus)

adducunt autem scribae et pharisaei mulierem in adulterio deprehensam et statuerunt eam in medio læddon † brohton uutedlice ða wuðuotto & ælaruas uif in ðernelegerscip ofnumen † *befoen* & aseton ðailca † hia on middum. (JnGl (Li): 8.3)

39) *onfōn* (2 past participle forms and 3 subj. pret. pl. forms found in the corpus)

In ðon ðonne bioð gesomnade alle somud wið me ðæt hie *onfoen* sawle mine geðaehtende werun In eo dum congregarentur omnes simul aduersum me ut acciperent animam meam consiliati sunt. (PsGlA (Kuhn): 30.16)

Tunc duo erunt in agro unus adsumetur et unus relinquetur ða tuoege biðon on lond an ondfoende bið † him bið *onfoen* genumen bið & an bið forleten. (MtGl (Li): 24.40)

40) *gefōn* (4 past participle forms altogether)

et farissei mulierem in adulterio depraehensam et statuerunt eam in medio & æs larwas wif in dernegilegerscipe ginumen *gifoen* & asettum ða ilco on middum. (JnGl (Ru): 8.3)

at illi accepta pecunia fecerunt sicut erant docti soð hia *gefoen* hæfdon feh dedon suæ weron gelæred. (MtGl (Li): 28.15)

The exceptional contracted past participle form *bisēon*, belonging to SV₁ and attested once in Christ A, B, C can also be included here. It appears in the following context:

41) *bisēon*

Ne bið him to are þæt þær fore ellþeodum usses dryhtnes rod ondweard stondeð, beacna beorhtast, blode bistemed, heofoncyninges hlutran dreore, *biseon* mid swate þæt ofer side gesceaft scire scineð. (Christ A, B, C: 1083)

4. Concluding remarks

Elimination of the effects of Verner's Law started very early in some verbs, even before the time of their earliest attestation. Such was the case with *mīþan*, *bemīþan* 'conceal, avoid', *rīsan* 'rise', *arīsan* 'arise', *wriþan*, *gewriþan* 'twist', *ætclīþan* 'adhere' (Class I), *abrēoþan*, *brēoþan* (Class II), *lesan* 'collect, lease', *ālesan* 'choose' (*ge*)*nesan* 'survive' (Class V), all of which were attested in Old English texts with the voiced fricative, reminiscent of the PGmc. original voiceless variant, with the exception of *findan* (Class III) which generalised the voiced stop in a cluster with a nasal. Levelling of the effects of Verner's Law in verbs which evince Vernerian alternations more or less regularly in historic Old

English begins towards the end of the Old English period and is a gradual process. It must be noticed that none of the verbs eliminated the voiced alternant completely, instead they tend to vacillate between the two forms: the archaic Vernerian one and the innovative one without Verner's Law.

All instances which display the levelling tendencies derive from late West Saxon and late Anglian texts, and they are best represented in *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and *Lindisfarne* and *Rushworth Gospels*. In fact, most of them come from the later manuscript of the *Chronicle* – MS. Laud. 636 (noted in the corpus as Chron. E) referred to as the *Peterborough Chronicle*. The manuscript, dated to the first half of the 12th century, has been frequently classified as belonging to the Early Middle English period or the intermediate stage between Old and Middle English known as the transition period. It comes as no surprise then that forms with both alternants, the voiceless and the voiced one are found alongside each other, indicating the imminent process of elimination. Traces of earlier elimination appear sporadically in earlier West Saxon texts: *Pastoral Care* and Bede's *History of the English Church and nation*, dating back to the 10th and 11th century.

The present analysis of the Old English material took into consideration the behaviour of Vernerian alternations, viewed from the perspective of their loss, with respect to a number of factors (variables). These included the relevant inflectional categories, alternation sets and class membership.

Tables 13 and 14 present the overall percentage of forms which eliminated the alternations by Verner's Law with respect to two variables, namely class membership and inflectional category.

Table 13. The percentage of forms which eliminated the alternations by Verner's Law in particular inflectional categories

CATEGORY	ELIMINATED	PRESERVED
PRETERITE SG.	0.41%	99.59%
PRETERITE PLURAL	1.71%	98.29%
PAST PARTICIPLE	1.30%	98.70%
SUBJUNCTIVE PRET. SG.	2.57%	97.43%
SUBJUNCTIVE PRET. PL.	4.58%	95.42%

Table 14. The percentage of forms which eliminated the effects of Verner's Law with respect to class membership

CLASS	ELIMINATED	ELIMINATED
CLASS I	2.04%	97.96%
CLASS II	0.63%	99.37%
CLASS III	2.17%	97.83%
CLASS V	1.70%	98.30%
CLASS VI	0.16%	99.84%
CLASS VII	2.02%	97.98%

The data unerringly indicate that levelling tendencies are most pronounced in the form of subjunctive pret. pl. and preterite ind. plural. The forms of 2sg. preterite ind. seem to be most conservative, showing relatively little inclination towards levelling.

The noted frequency pattern indicates that there is a relatively high proportion of forms which lost Vernerian alternations in strong verbs of Classes I and III and VII. Classes VI and II are apparently most archaic in that very few verbs display tendency towards levelling of the effect of Verner's Law. In fact, in Class II the number of occurrences is relatively high (12 occurrences altogether), but given the ample attestation of verbs belonging to this class, this does not constitute more than 0.63% of all occurrences. In Class VI traces of levelling are present in one verb only (*sceþpan*).

The picture emerging from the analysed material with respect to particular alternations shows that the dental alternation was most innovative and most readily subject to the working of analogy. A similar tendency is present in the alternation of sibilant/*r* where traces of elimination are attested in *cēosan* and its prefixed forms. Intact remain all other alternations which do not show even slight tendency towards levelling.

Viewed against the complete corpus, without considering class membership and inflectional categories the overall percentage of forms which eliminated the effects of Verner's Law in Old English strong verbs relative to those which still preserved it looks as in Table 15:

Table 15. Overall percentage of strong verb forms which eliminated the effects of the operation of Verner's Law (irrespective of class, inflectional category, alternation or any other variable)

PRESERVED	ELIMINATED
98.45%	1.55%

In fact, if it were not for the data provided by subsequent period in the history of English, one would be justified in treating such percentage distribution, with 1.55% of forms where levelling operated, as a case of some sporadic, ad hoc development; an irregularity rather than a trace of a consistent process working towards regularisation. Given the knowledge availed by the Middle English data however as well as the nature of the process of Vernerian voicing, one must view these figures as testifying to the presence of some development encouraging elimination of the Vernerian alternants. Accordingly, the figures indicate that the effects of Verner's Law were still firmly preserved in Old English strong verbs. The process of elimination, very irregular and sporadic affected only a handful of Old English verbs and must be viewed as no more than a marginal process.

In a number of verbs the tendency to extend the voiced alternant to forms of the present or preterite singular could be observed. Such was the case, for instance, with *wrēon* where the voiced fricative was extended to 1, 3 pret. sg. (*wrāg*) and the present system (3sg. pres. ind. *wrīgap*), or *þēon* (*þāg*, *geþong*). Such an unexpected extension can be viewed as a development in the opposite direction in the sense that the voiced rather than the voiceless alternant is generalised.

The behaviour of three verbs *līpan*, *forlīpan* and *sceþpan* deserves some attention. These three verbs show traces of elimination, in forms of preterite plural (*līpan*, *forlīpan*) and in past participle (*sceþpan*). Noteworthy is the fact that they eliminate the working of Verner's Law completely in the attested occurrences in the respective forms, i.e. *līpan* and *forlīpan* are the only attested preterite plural forms of *līpan* and *forlīpan* respectively, whereas *sceapen* is the only attested past participle form of *sceþpan*.

Finally, the pattern of distribution of the levelled forms in the Old English material indicates an evident correlation between the process of levelling and the frequency of occurrence of particular verbs. It could be observed that verbs which were attested more frequently in the corpus (e.g., *cweþan*, *weorþan*) tended to be more liable to the operation of the levelling process.

Concluding, the forms which show traces of elimination of Vernerian alternations are rather sporadic and scantily evidenced, their number being very low throughout the Old English period. None of the classes and none of the inflec-

tional forms testify to a radical or rapid removal of Vernerian alternations from the paradigm of Old English strong verb. The slight increase in the number of forms without Vernerian alternants can be dated to the end of the 10th century, and later. This slight frequency increase towards the end of the Old English period indicate that some linguistic development must have been in progress. Certainly, the relatively small number of these forms does not allow to view them and the process as actual *spread* of the tendency at this early stage. The development will continue into the Early Middle English period and will be characterised by the increasing popularity of the forms without traces of Verner's Law at the expense of those still preserving it.

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