

A Private History of the Preposition By in English: From Instrumental to Passive Agent

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I revisit the controversy about the origin of the preposition by as marker of the demoted agent in the English passive construction. I claim that this use emerged from instrumental schemata which were once highly prominent in the history of English. I organize in a radial category the most relevant senses by conveys, both from historical times and in PDE. This analysis is intended to represent a polysemic network of meanings which show the motivated process leading to the outcome of an agency schema to express the passive agent.

KEY WORDS: instrumentality, agency, historical linguistics.

RESUMEN

En este estudio he querido retomar el origen algo controvertido del uso de la preposición by en inglés como marcador del agente desfocalizado en la construcción pasiva. En el presente trabajo propongo que varios esquemas instrumentales, que en su día fueron relevantes en la historia del inglés, desempeñaron un papel fundamental en el surgimiento de un esquema de agencia para expresar el agente pasivo. Para ello, varios de los sentidos más relevantes de la preposición by, ya históricos como de uso actual, se organizan aquí formando una categoría con estructura radial. Este análisis pretende representar una red polisémica que ilustre los procesos que motivaron la emergencia del esquema de agencia.

PALABRAS CLAVE: instrumentalidad, agencia, lingüística histórica.

I. INTRODUCTION

In this paper I account for the emergence of the preposition *by* as a marker of agency in the English passive construction, as in the sentence *the house was built by Mary*. I claim that this use of *by* first emerged as an extension from other instrumental schemata the preposition had been rendering throughout the history of the language in a rather stable way.

Some of these instrumental schemata **have** got lost in the way, having **been** taken over by other prepositions, namely *with* and *through*. However, they **have** contributed deeply to the forging of the use of *by* as a marker of a demoted agent.

I adopt **here** the cognitive approach already taken by several authors on the subject of polysemic networks, especially on preposition extensional **patterns** (Lakoff, 1987; Lindner, 1982; Langacker, 1991a). I array **several** schemata of *by* in the structural shape of a radial category, where **nodes** are **linked** via image-schema transformations to more central senses (Lakoff, 1987). This type of analysis stems from the belief that patterns of meaning can be accounted as motivated **within** a given conceptual system, and that different senses **may** arise from recurrent extensions elaborated via metaphorical or metonymic processes. In the present analysis I will **only** focus on those senses of *by* which play a relevant role in the **emergence** of the use of *by* as marker of a demoted agent. In this **fashion**, since no exhaustive analysis of the semantic net of *by* is intended **here**, other senses the preposition renders will be thus **ignored**¹.

I present historical data along the paper in **order** to illustrate the productivity of some of the schemata in a prior stage of the language. This is done in the belief that diachronic data are relevant to illustrate the semantic status of the network throughout history. **Besides**, the radial structure has evolved through time to its present state by **virtue** of language being a continuum, and no speaker is believed to make her language up by **starting** from zero, **because** there must be a core structure preserved **and inherited**. The semantic trends existing in the present radial structure were motivated at **some** time in the history of the continuum. Although intermediate crucial steps in the elaboration of the extensions might **have** got lost in the way, the actual shape of the semantic configuration itself is still preserved, and it is well available to the current speaker.

The preposition *by* shows in present-day English (PDE) a large variety of meanings. To illustrate this diversity consider the following examples²:

1. *I have a cottage by the big lake*
2. *Mary drove by her old family house*
3. *The thief came in the house by the back door*
4. *He cherished his lover by giving her presents*
5. *Perer was bitten by a strange creature coming from outer space*

In (1) the preposition renders a static spatial scenario, where a cottage is allocated in the proximity of a lake. In accord with other analysts (Langacker, 1987), I will **call** *the cottage*, or the entity being located, the Trajector (TR), while *the big lake*, or the spatial reference, will be treated as Landmark (LM). This terminology will be kept along more abstract extensions where both TR and LM are no longer spatial. In (2) the schema is dynamic, in the sense that it construes a motion event where *Mary*, the figure of the motion event (Talmy, 1985), **here functioning** as TR of *by*, is taken as moving to the proximity of the LM, *her old family house*. There is yet the **further** implication of Mary not stopping at the house, but driving on. Sentence (3) is an **instance** of an instrumental use of *by*. The LM of the preposition, *the back door* is profiled as the place **used** by *the thief* to **enter** the house. This instrumental sense is **also** present in (4), where the LM is no longer construed as a spatial locus but as an action. In (5) we **have** an **instance** of the canonical coding of a demoted agent in the passive construction. **The** goal of this paper is to show how the use of *by* as **in** (5)

emerges from previous instrumental senses. The claim is further supported by the fact that this use of *by* results as a much later historical preference over other prepositions.

II. SPATIAL SCHEMATA

Spatial schemata will serve to provide basis for further extensions. For analytical purposes, a description to schemata and participants involved will be given in the introduction of the most relevant schemata. Spatial schemata subdivide on the one hand in those schemata which render a static spatial configuration, and on the other, those which further incorporate a temporal dimension, and render dynamic spatial configurations.

II.1. STATIC SPATIAL SCHEMATA

II.1.1. Static Spatial Schema *BY* (1)

Description: Static Spatial Configuration. The TR is described as located in a static fashion within a short spatial distance from the LM. Figure (1) illustrates this configuration. The formalization is done in the shape these characterizations receive in Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 1987, 1991a, 1991b):

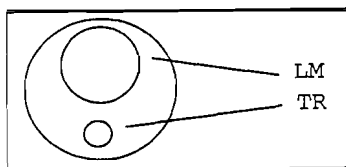


Figure (1)

Sentence (1) repeated here as (6) illustrates schema *BY* (1):

6. *I have a corrage by rhe big lake*

This basic spatial configuration has been very stable throughout time, and it is widely anested in texts. Sentences in (7) illustrate the schema in different periods of the English language³:

- 7.
- | | |
|------------------|--|
| a. OE (971). | <i>þa sæt þær sum blind þearfa be don wege</i>
'A poor blind sat in need by the path' |
| b. EME (1160). | <i>Hyo sæten be þam strande</i>
'They sat by the beach' |
| c. LME (1400). | <i>To be laid by hir legis</i> |
| d. EModE (1648). | <i>Hard by rhis island is Ruigna</i> |
| e. ModE (1764). | <i>The clock may strike by us wirhour being heard</i> |

- f. ModE (1881). *Where he has been buried by Chaucer and Cowley*

When the LM is construed as a **three** dimensional (3-DIM) entity, it is often the case that it may **also** receive a further characterization as having **sides** and possible front-back and top-bottom orientation. In this case, **BY** (1) allocates the TR with respect to a lateral region of the LM. When the LM is a human being, the region profiled is one **side** of the human body. In sentences (8) and (9) below, the LM is thought to **have** an inherent side, for this reason, the configuration can be expressed either by means of **BY** (1) or with the complex expressions, [TR **by the side of** LM] and/or [TR **by LM's side**]⁴.

8. *There is a suspicious man sitting by rhar old lady / by the side of rhar old lady*
 10. *She spend the nighr by him while he was sick. / by his side while he was sick*⁵.

II.1.2. Static Spatial Schema † **BY** (2)

This schema is a metaphorical extension of **BY** (1), and the same description can apply **here**. The LM is construed as a human being. The conceptual metaphor SHARING THE SAME SPACE IS BEING A COMPANION (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), allows the reading of the LM as being the TR's companion. However the schema is no longer productive in PDE, since the preposition **with** has **taken** over to render this configuration, as shown by the modern translation to the historical sentences below:

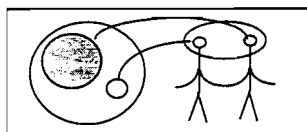


Figure (2)

11.
 a. OE *Wif þe biþ be anum man* "The woman who lives **wirh** a man"
 b. OE *þa odre be him libben* "The others live **wirh** him"
 c. ME *Heo liveþ bi him* "She lives **wirh** him"

Schema **BY** (2) is **marginally** present in PDE though. It accounts for **construals** where the TR is profiled **in** a state of solitude or doing a given action with no help of others. This reading is achieved **in** inferences made via a complex metaphor: being alone is thought of as being **in** one's own company, hence the TR's self is profiled as the accompanying LM with respect to which the TR is allocated. A further extension accounts for sentences (12) and (13) via metonymic inference, since being alone when involved in an activity **implies** performing the activity without the help of others:

12. *Since rhey gor married rhey have lived by themselves in the mountains*
 13. *He wore the letter all by himself*

The metaphor seems to **have been** stable in Germanic, since it is also evidenced in German *einsam sein* 'one.together be-INF' and Icelandic *að vera einn saman* 'to be-INF one-MASC:NOM together'. Both collocations translate "be alone" or "be by *oneself*" (lit., "be one together"). The same is true for historical English:

14.
 b. ME *Þo heo were al bi hem selve* "They were then all by themselves"
 a. ME (1300). *He fand his cosin Ion, in wilderness bi him allan*
 "He found his cousin Ion, in the wilderness by himself"
 c. EModE (1559). *Weigh this matter by yourself*

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) explain the comitative use of *with* in PDE as emerging from the **very** same conceptual metaphor SHARING THE SAME SPACE IS BEING A COMPANION. This metaphor is further **taken** up as the **source** to render **some** instrumental configurations, where **instruments** are **seen** as **companions**. This phenomenon can also apply to account for the relevant instrumental reading of *by in* the historical period, treated as *BY* (5), as we will see below in section (III.1). In order to keep track of the **emergence** of instrumental **readings**, I introduce in the next section the concept of functionality of the LM.

II.2. FUNCTIONALITY OF THE LANDMARK

One of the fundamental entailments from the spatial configurations rendered by *BY* (1) is that the TR is thought to be located in an optimal proximity to the LM so that it can interact with the LM. In this sense, the LM is ascribed certain functionality if the TR is believed to **make** use of the LM for **some** purpose. This is a relevant **feature** of the configuration, **and** instrumental extensions of *by in* PDE emerge from highlighting the functionality of the LM. **When** the functionality of the LM is relevant enough for a given configuration, I mark it in the description of the schema at issue by saying that "**the** functionality of the LM is highlighted". The LM may be further **seen** as having a certain space with functional **property** which I will call "the functional space of the LM". This latter **feature** is especially useful to account for certain expressions in more static configurations, where the LM is **construed** as a location, **and** the functional space of the LM refers to the space where the TR is thought to interact. However, if there is no special functional space ascribed to **the** LM, *BY* (1) will profile then a **mere** spatial configuration within an Euclidean space. As illustration of this concept, **consider** the following configurations, in sentences (14) and (15):

14. *The red chair is by the wooden table*
 15. *Mary knew the Avon-lady was standing by her front door*

In (14) there is no particular functional space ascribed to the LM - *the wooden table* - and consequently either **side** of the table would **serve** equally good as spatial **reference** to **allocate** the TR -*the red chair*. However in (15), the front door is ascribed a functional space by convention and refers to the space of the main **entrance** of a house. According to this reading, the space of the LM in (15) is not restricted exclusively to the actual Euclidean space the door frame occupies. In the contextual **situation** evoked by (15) the Avon-lady as

TR could have been moving impatiently around the porch, and she would still be said to be located as "waiting by the front door". In contrast to (15), consider context in (16) below, as an illustration of a configuration where the TR is located this time with respect to a door with no such functional space, in this case, the wooden board covering the hole of the frame in the wall:

16. *Mary got mad at the Avon-lady and kicked the door shut in a rage. The hinges got loose, and the door fell to the ground. This simply was too much for the poor Avon-lady, who fainted, fell, and lay down by the damaged door until she was found by the milk man.*

II.3. DYNAMIC SPATIAL SCHEMATA

The preposition *by* renders a great variety of spatial configurations through different schemata. I will treat here only those schemata which contribute to the emergence of some instrumental sense. For this purpose consider the following sentences:

17. *The suspicious truck drove by the house*
 18. *The car drove by*
 19. *Mr. Jones stopped by Mary's house in his way home*
 20. *Peter came by my office and had a drink*

In (17) and (18) the TRs - *the suspicious truck* and *the car*- do not stop at the LMs, *the house* or a reference location which is contextually known. In clear contrast, sentences (19) and (20) profile TRs -*Mr. Jones* and *Peter*- which do stop at LMs, *Mary's house* and *my office*. Sentences (19) and (20) instantiate schemata which highlight the LM as functional, the only difference being that in (20) the LM is treated as goal. I will devote the following sections to illustrate the two schemata motivating (19) and (20).

II.3.1. Dynamic Spatial Schema *BY* (3)

Description: **The** TR moves **and** describes a path in relation to LM by keeping to the spatial configuration of *BY* (1). **The** TR has two destination goals. The first and main destination (goal I) is located further away from the space of the LM. The LM is treated as a secondary destination (goal II). The functionality of the LM is highlighted. The LM is construed as a location - the schema **does** not allow human beings as functional LMs. The LM is located on the TR's path, in between the origin and the main destination. Figure (3) illustrates the schema:

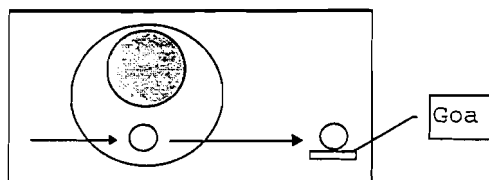


Figure (3)

There are several entailments arising from the schema:

1. The TR starts off moving from origin
2. The TR enters the space of the LM, and achieves goal (II)
3. The TR exits the space of the LM in pursue of goal (I)

The following sentences illustrate the schema:

21. *I went by Peter's office on my way home*
22. *The Wise Kings went by Jerusalem on their way back to Persia*

Schema *BY* (3) highlights the functionality of the LM, since the TR is believed to interact with the LM in some way or another. As an illustration, in (21) above, the speaker moves to *Peter's office* as to pursue some goal, namely, speak with him or arrange some schedule. In (22), *Jerusalem* is not thought as the mere landscape in the *Kings'* way back to their homeland, but instead it is believed as a secondary goal in their journey.

The schema can be further extended to cover uses when the functionality of the LM is even more relevant. This is achieved by not mentioning the main destination in the predication. This construal has however a low usage in PDE, and it is highly restricted to particular verbs, as in sentence (23) below, where the verb *come* refers to the deictic motion toward speaker. The same can be said for (24), where *stop* profiles the end-focus of the TR at the space of the LM. Although no overt reference is made to the primary destination, this falls within the default interpretation of the situations referred to, since they evoke a frame of a visit, where the TR stays at somebody else's space for a short while, and then sets off for some other place:

23. *He will come by my office and have a drink*
24. *We stopped by the Simpson's last night*

When the functionality of the LM is backgrounded we get readings like sentences (17) and (18) above, where the TR does not stop its motion to interact with the LM. In this fashion, sentence (25) below, renders ambiguous readings. In schema *BY* (3), locations are the only LMs to be construed as functional, human beings are hence ruled out from these configurations. This is illustrated by the infelicity of (26), which can only render a non-interactional spatial configuration, alike in sentences (17) and (18) above:

25. *She went by her office/ the house*
26. * *She went by Pefer*
intended meaning: 'she moved towards him and stopped close to him'

In historical periods there was no constraint to profile human beings as LMs of *BY* (3). It looks as if *by* had become increasingly more selective with regard to types of LMs, and had opted to favor those with a functional component:

- 27.
- a. EME (1175). *Com bi þis fonvundede mon*
"come nexr to this injured man"
 - b. ME (1330). *All þar he came by, he robbed*
"he robbed everyone he carne close by"
 - d. ME (1340). *An angill come & hem forbad ro wend by hym (Herod)*
"an angel carne and forbid him to go close to him"
 - e. EModE (1535). *Seek some means of how you may come by him*
 - f. EModE (1607). *To come by him. where he stands.*

II.3.2. Dynamic Spatial Scherna BY (4)

Description: The LM is construed as a two dimensional (2-DIM) bounded entity. prototypically, a road or a path⁶. The TR moves and describes a path along the space of the LM by keeping a spatial configuration defined by BY (1). The TR has a destination goal. The destination is located further away from the space of the LM. The functionality of the LM is highlighted. The LM is construed as the path.

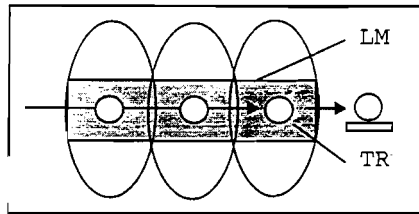


Figure (4)

The following sentences illustrate the schema:

- 28. *She came ro rhe city by rhe highway*
- 29. *The churches are wirhin 4 miles of one another by rhe nearest road*

In sentence (28) the destination goal is overtly mentioned as *the city*. In (29), *the churches* are construed as **destinations**, although there is no overt TR. The 2-DIM LM can be further construed as not being clearly bounded. In the following sentences, the instrumental reading of the LMs is already a **salient** one:

- 30. *She got here by land*
- 31. *I sent the package by sea ro Singapore*

Historical data support the **existence** of this schema from an early period:

- 32.
- a. OE (888). *Ic þe laede bi dam wege* "I lead you on this way"
- b. ME *Pere com a preoste bi de weie* "There carne a priest by that road"
- c. EME (1205). *Comen bi sæ & bi lond feole cunne leoden*
"People **knew** how ro come by see **and** by many lands"
- d. EModE (1630). *He wenr by water ro Greenwich*

- e. ModE (185 1). *Why nor send a parcel by rail?*

The present schema seems to be inter-connected with schema *BY* (3) because it helps to raise instrumental readings. The functionality of the LM is highlighted in both, although only in *BY* (4) as the means for the TR to achieve its destination goal. The schema has a low productivity in PDE if the goal is not profiled and thus the functionality of the LM is backgrounded. Hence, the archaic character of the following sentences:

33. *We chose to go by the scenic route*
 34. *Dorothy chose to go by the yellow brick road*

In the above sentences the TR moves towards an implicit destination goal, only retrievable from contextual knowledge: (33) evokes someone in motion towards a given place, and deciding to take the road that is more scenic in order to enjoy the driving by having a good view; in (34), according to the classical tale, Dorothy is moving to the place where one of the witches is living.

III. INSTRUMENTAL EXTENSIONS

In PDE *by* conveys stable instrumental readings, although it does not render a canonical instrument⁷. Nevertheless, some *by* schemata have succeeded through time to gain abstract instrumental semantics either via metaphor or metonymic inference. These instrumental schemata have contributed to the extension of *by* as a late marker of an agent of passive. I will claim in section (IV) that this coding emerges from viewing a demoted agent as a case of abstract instrument or intermediary in the outcome of the process treated under passive perspective.

In the mean time, I will present in following sections various schemata with relevant instrumental input. These schemata - organized in source-groups (I), (II) and (III) - are taken to shape out an abstract extension I treat as *BY* (INSTR). Besides, this abstract extension would account on the one hand for any configuration where the LM is used as the means for the TR to achieve a given goal, and on the other, it could serve to link and unify all the schemata I present below which yield instrumental nuances at some point in time. The schema I have in mind for *BY* (INSTR) could be represented as follows:

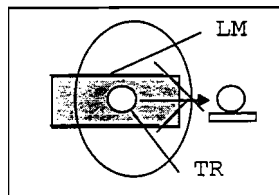


Figure (5)

Schema *BY* (INSTR) would account for a wide range of data in PDE, but it may be further productive to render sub-actions with a relevant instrumental component, as illustrated by

sentences (35) and (36):

- 35. *The student wrote the paper by putting all his ideas together*
- 36. *Mary broke the door open by hitting it with an ax*

In the above sentences, **by** profiles the LM as an action: the student's *putting his ideas together* and Mary's *hitting the door with an ax*. The TRs *the student* and *Mary* are **seen** as agents with an action goal, the writing of the paper and the opening (by breaking) of the door. The action profiled by the LM is treated as **the** means for the agent TR to achieve his/her action-goal. Similarly **BY** (INSTR) serves conventionally to construe transpos as means to achieve destination goals, as in (37) and (38):

- 37. *She came by ship*
- 38. *The man arrived here by car*

I proceed now to introduce the different **source** schemata **pertaining** instrumental semantics. These schemata are **organized** in **three** source-groups. PDE seems to **have** favored **source** schemata from group (II) and (III), this observation being based upon the fact that schemata from group (I) are no longer productive in the system, having **been** taken over by *with*. I will claim, however, that coding of agent in passive evolved perhaps from elaboration on schema **BY** (7) plus **further** semantic support from other instrumental schemata already active and productive in the system, including those from source-group (I).

III.1. SOURCE-GROUP (I): INSTRUMENTAL SCHEMA † **BY** (5)

Schema † **BY** (5) is a direct metaphorical extension from † **BY** (2) via the metaphor AN INSTRUMENT IS A COMPANION (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). This metaphor is based on the direct experiential correlation where **objects close to our** space are **seen** as instruments in that we **often make** use of them to achieve a given action-goal. This schema is no longer active in PDE and the configuration it used to render in historical times has **been** taken over by *with* nowadays. This is evidenced by the translations given below to the historical data provided to illustrate the schema:

- 39.
- a. OE be *hearpan singan* 'to sing with harp'
- b. OE *gif he gangan mæge bi stafe* "if he could walk with a stick"

The **instrumental** semantics provided by schema † **BY** (5) **reinforces** the status of **by** as marker of instrumental **configurations** throughout the system, and contribute in historical times for the **emergence** of an abstract **BY** (INSTR). The schema provided structure in historical times to construe either canonical instruments or more abstract **entities** viewed as instrumental. Sentences in (40) below illustrate this point. More abstract instruments as in (40.c) and (40.d) can still be conveyed by means of **by** although these sentences sound somehow archaic and **restricted** to a formal register. A difference in **meaning** arises however in PDE with the choice of preposition, i.e. in (40.d), **by** does not profile Christ's death as the instrument of Christ's instruction to men, but rather the **type** or **manner** of *dying*:

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- 40.
- a. OE *He leofode be hlafe ond be watre*
"He survived with bread and with water"
 - b. OE *Be hwilcum þingum feddes þu þe*
"What stuff did you feed yourself with?"
 - c. EModE (1548). *Christe drawerh soules unto hym by his bloody sacrifice*
"Christ draws souls unto him *wirhlby* his blood sacrifice"
 - d. EModE (1628). *He instructs men to dye by his example*
"He instructs men to die *wirhlby* his example"

III.2. SOURCE-GROUP (II): INSTRUMENTAL SCHEMA *BY* (6)

Description: The TR is involved in a process to achieve a **certain** goal. The goal of this configuration is another entity, namely a human being, conceived as a "whole", and treated as a ground. The LM is construed as a salient part of this "whole". **The** functionality of the LM is highlighted, **because** it is **seen** as the means for the TR to achieve the ground-goal. The TR keeps a spatial relation to LM as in *BY* (1). The following sentences illustrate the schema:

41. *Mary took the child by the hand*
42. *His wife is leading him by the nose*

In the above sentences, the relation between a TR and a LM is profiled with respect to a ground goal, *the child* in (41) and the husband in (42). In (41) *the hand* is the salient part of *the child* for *Mary* to **take him/her** under her control. Similarly in (42), *the nose* is comically treated as a salient part of the husband for the woman to manage to lead him. In these sentences, the LM is ascribed a marked functionality, and foregrounded as instrumental. The situation **often** evokes conventional frames of human interaction (in the sense "frame" has in Fillmore (1982)), as in (41) where hands are salient **parts** of the human bodies to grasp somebody and set that person under one's control. The schema is well supported by historical data:

- 43.
- a. OE *Hangað sward be smallan þræde*
"Swords hang from small threads"
 - b. OE (1000). *Heo reh hine be his clapum*
"She drew him by his nails"
 - c. EME (1154). *Me hengeð up bi þe fer*
"One would hang by the feet"
 - d. EModE (1526). *A hande sent down roke me by the heer of my heed*
"A hand sent down took me by the hair of my head"
 - e. EModE (1667). *I did give her a pull by the nose*
 - f. ModE (1711). *The little boy offers to pull me by the coat*

In schema *BY* (6), the TR can be **seen** as involved in a mental process. The ground is treated as the goal of this mental process. The LM is thus construed as an abstract entity, a quality or **property** of the ground. This is illustrated by sentences (44) and (45):

44. *She knows him by name only*
 45. *I know my neighbors only by sight*

III.3. SOURCE-GROUP (III):

Schema **BY** (4) was first introduced in section (II.3.2) for it counts as a relevant schema within motion extensions. The schema demands **further** notice **here** due to the instrumental inferences **it provides** via conceptual metonymy, namely PATH STANDS FOR MEANS. This metonymic map results from foregrounding the functionality of the path as means for the moving TR to get to the goal destination. According to this, sentences (28) and (29) repeated **here** as (46) and (47), present a relevant instrumental **sense** since the LMs are construed as means for the TRs to arrive at both *the city* and *the churches*. The same can be said of other spatial construals of **BY** (4) as *by land; by sea; by air*; etc., since they convey various instrumental LMs:

46. *She came to the city by the highway*
 47. *The churches are within 4 miles of one another by the nearest road*

Paths **have** a salient status as conceptual **entities** in the metaphorical understanding of events. Schema **BY** (4) is the **source** for more abstract instrumental readings. These readings arise in the first place from the complex conceptual mapping called the EVENT STRUCTURE METAPHOR as treated in Lakoff (1993) and Lakoff *et al.* (1994). According to this macro-mapping intended actions presenting a given goal, are conceived in metaphorical terms, as movements along a path where purposes are destinations. The direct experiential correlation of paths being spatial means to achieve destination goals, motivates the conceptual metonymy: PATH STANDS FOR MEANS to achieve destination goals. This metonymy will **motivate** via metaphor the **common** understanding of "means" as paths. These mappings account for the instrumental reading of expressions like *by way of*, as in sentence (48) below:

48. *Master workmen may have received instructions by way of drafts, models or frames*

Sentence (48) renders a group of people as TR. This group of people is involved in a mental process. Via EVENT STRUCTURE metaphor, we conceptualize the TR as an entity moving along a path towards a destination goal, i.e.: the state of *receiving instructions*. The *drafts*, *the models*, and the *frames* are diagrams helping people to understand ideas, in this case *instructions*. Via the mapping MEANS ARE PATHS, these diagrams are thought as the path to get to the metaphorical destination.

III.4. OTHER RELEVANT INSTRUMENTAL SCHEMATA

Schemata presented in this section are of special **relevance** for the radial category of **by** to extend to convey the demoted agent in the passive. It is somehow difficult to link any of these schemata to a particular schema within the semantic sources given above. I will

consider this apparent disadvantage as irrelevant for the present discussion. This situation reveals on the one hand how untangled instrumental meanings may be to the core structure of *by*, and on the other, proves how stable and suong these senses are through the radial category.

III.4.1. Instrumental Schema † *BY* (7)

Description: The LM is prototypically construed as a human being. The TR is involved in a goal-oriented process. The functionality of the human LM is highlighted since it is construed as the means for the TR to achieve the action goal.

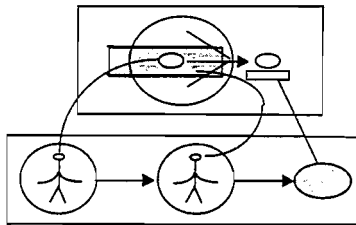


Figure (6)

Schema *BY* (7) is no longer productive in PDE, since this highly instrumental configuration has been taken over by the preposition *through*, as shown in the translation of the historical sentences in (49) below. The use of *through* was also a favored pattern in Old English, but schema *BY* (7) was given preference from the late Middle Ages, and once it was favored, the schema kept stable for centuries. The following historical sentences evidence this schema, they refer to intermediaries via which a given action-goal is achieved:

- 49.
- a. OE *He him onsænde be his cnihtum twa spyran*
"He sent him two spears *through* his knights"
 - b. ME (1300). *Darie hūr wot by a spye*
"Dario came to know about it *through* a spy"
 - c. ME (1325). *Sche greeres þe wel by me*
"She greets you well *through* me"
 - d. LME (1450). *Thou has herde be my moder the travayle that they hadde*
"You have heard *through* my mother the labour they had"
 - e. EModE (1622). *Harh he more benefit by his horse rhen by his Minisrer*
"He gets more benefit *through* his horse than *through* his minister"
 - f. ModE (1785). *The minisrer could nor adminisrered jusrice in his person bur only by his judges*
 - g. ModE (1833). *Send check by bearer*
 - h. ModE (1866). *The lord was presenr either by person or by a deputy*

III.4.2. Instrumental Schema *BY* (8)

Description: The LM is again construed as an agentive human being. The schema

profiles a frame of progeneration. Both TR and LM are the parents of a child, **here** treated as ground. The parent having the child is **seen** as TR. The LM is the begetting parent by means of whom the TR has the **offspring**. The following sentence illustrates the scherna:

50. *He had a ron by his second wife*

Historical data **serves** again as **evidence** for the productivity of scherna **BY** (8) in former times:

51.

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| a. OE | <i>Be ðære he hæfðe ane dohrer</i>
"He had a daughter by that (woman)" |
| b. ME (1393). | <i>And he had fyue sones by hus furste wyf</i>
"And he had five sons by his first wife" |
| c. EModE (1576). | <i>He begar me by Simplicitie</i>
"He begot me by Simplicity" |
| d. ModE (1805). | <i>A bastard child, which a young woman had had by rhe defendant</i> |

IV. **BY** AS MARKER OF PASSIVE AGENT

In this section I will treat the genesis of the use of **by** as a marker of the agent in the passive construction. For analytical purposes I will refer to this special scherna as **BY** (AGENT). Langacker (1991a) treats **BY** (AGENT) as stemming from **BY** (1). This process could be summarized as follows: from scherna **BY** (1) he proposes an extension to the domain of things created, where the semantic relation between the two participants in the frame, namely "the creator" and "the thing created", would be conceptualized in spatial terms since both entities prototypically share the spatial configuration rendered by scherna **BY** (1), i.e.: "the thing created" is a TR allocated in relation to "the creator" as LM: *the painting by Picasso*, where *the painting* is TR and *Picasso*, LM. The scherna of creation is highlighted, while the spatial salience motivating the application of the spatial scherna remains in the shade. From this highlighted domain of creation, the scherna passes onto a generic domain of activities carried out by agents. In these terms, **BY** (AGENT) emerges when the activity is treated as TR and conceptualized in relation to the agent as LM.

In my present analysis I will reject Langacker's view. I consider the domain of creation too restricted a frame to account for the emergence of the complex semantic structure of **BY** (AGENT), because agentive semantic notions cannot simply arise by metonymic inference from a single frame. Besides, by linking **BY** (AGENT) directly to spatial **BY** (1), this controversial position overlooks the relevant semantic input from the instrumental senses **by** conveys. In my opinion, **BY** (AGENT) can be better accounted as the natural consequence of extending instrumental schemata onto **construing** a denoted agent as the entity by means of which an event **takes** place.

Description: The LM profiles a denoted agent. The TR is an event, **which** profiles as **subject** the patient participant of the transitive event. The LM is construed as the means for the event TR to take place.

It is a common view in linguistic analysis nowadays to regard passive phenomena as a shift in focal perspective by means of which the patient participant is given special

prominence for pragmatic or conceptual purposes (Givón 1990; Chafe 1976). This shift is gained by backgrounding the agent to an oblique position. Languages with such passive constructions along with a viable **instantiation** of the agent differ in the way they **treat** this agentive argument so that it shows up for **informative** purposes as a demoted participant in the predication. English has **been** favoring from early modern times the treatment of demoted agents as instrumentals according to configurations rendered by *by*. However, this coding pattern has **been** competing with others, **namely** *from*, *of* and *through*. In the paragraphs that follow, I will attempt to show how a coding pattern based on *by* gained over **its** historical competitors.

In Old English dialects, the use of the preposition *fram/from* was **common** to convey the agent in the passive construction. This coding pattern was motivated by the **preference** of viewing this agentive argument as the cause of the event. Sentences in (52) illustrate this pattern. In OE there was yet another coding based on the preposition *of*, which was motivated by the very **same** causal pattern as *from*, although it **enjoyed** a marginal use during Anglo-Saxon times. This causal pattern seems to **have been** common across Old Germanic, as modern languages still **evidence**: German von "of/from"; and Scandinavian, Icelandic af or Nonwegian av, both "of/off" (more marginally "from"):

52.
 a. OE *He weard ofslagen from his agnum monnum*
 "He got murdered by his own men"
 b. OE *He wæs gelæred from anum biscope*
 "He was taught by a bishop"

Middle English dialects favored however a **construal** based on *of* throughout the Medieval period. It seems that *of* was foregrounded as innovative while *from* remained more in the shade, and turned rather archaic. Sentences (53.a) and (53.b) illustrate the use of *of* in OE, while (53.c/d/e) show the default coding agents received in Medieval dialects:

53.
 a. OE (893). *Æþelingas wurdon afliesmed of Sciddium*
 "The nobles were put to flight by Shythians"
 b. OE (1050). *Æðelstan wæs of Myrcum gecoren to cyng*
 "Aethelstan was chosen king by Myrce"
 c. EME (1154). *Wæl luued of the kinge and of alle gode men*
 "(he) was loved by the king and by all good men"
 d. EME (1225). *Ich wolde þæt heo weren of alle iholden*
 "I would like that they were kept by all"
 e. ME (1380). *Þe puple trowiþ betere þerto whanne it is seyd of a maistir*
 "People believe it more when that is said by a master"

In Anglo-Saxon we **also find** an alternative coding pattern for the demoted agent based on instrumental **construals**. This instrumental coding pattern was motivated from construing a backgrounded agent as a case of an instrumental agency by means of which a given event **takes** place. In OE, the preposition *through* was often used to convey these instrumental agencies, as shown by sentences in (54). These instrumental senses held rather stable throughout the Medieval period and passed onto modern times, when *through* was **further** **specialized** to render human **intermediaries** as in sentences (54.f) and (54.g):

- 54.
- a. OE (1000). *we þæt gehyrdon þurh halige bec*
"We heard that by means of the holy books"
 - b. ME *all þat sorwe and myschance schall turne ro himself þorg vertu of þat sron*
"all that sorrow and ill-luck will turn onto him by virtue of that stone"
 - c. EModE (1579). *Abel was slayne ... through the handes of his brother Cain*
 - d. Mod (1885). *Every notice sent through the post in a prepaid regisrered lerrer*
 - e. PDE *A conception of politics derived through book*
 - f. ModE (1793). *The answer given ro Monsieur Lesardier was through a young gentleman*
 - g. PDE *He applied for the grant through a closefrend*

The preposition *through* served as well in OE as a marginal marker of demoted agent, as illustrated by sentences (55.a) and (55.b) below. This coding choice evinces that an instrumental coding pattern was already active in the mind of Anglo-Saxon speakers. The instrumental based *construal* was highlighted during later Medieval times and competed with the favored causal pattern instantiated already at that time by *of*, as shown in (53) above. We still find examples of *through* as marker of a demoted agent up to the midst of the Early Modern English times, around the 16th century, as illustrated by (55.d) below:

- 55.
- a. OE (900). *Seo hergung wæs þurh Alaricum geworden*
"The ravaging was carried out by Alarice"
 - b. OE (971). *Heofonrices duru sceal þonne þurh þe onrened beon*
"The doors of the Kingdom of Heaven shall be then kindled by you"
 - c. ME (1425). *Vnnethes he was I-draw vp rthrough his felowes. that mych put har byf in aduentur for ro saw his lif*
"he was almost drown up by his fellows, (for) he put their lives at risk in order to save his"
 - d. EModE (1597). *The skinne beinge lift vp through some seruant, or through the chymrgiane with his pinsers*

As the use of *through* evinces from sentences in (55), the instrumental coding seemed to be at work from early historical times, and competed with the causal pattern realized by *of*. The process leading to the choice of *by* as optimal coding of agent in the passive seems to be derived from several factors. Schemata from *by* and *through* conveyed similar instrumental nuances during the earlier Medieval times, but in a time when the instrumental pattern was still marginal in Old English dialects, and *only* realized by *through*, some schemata from *by* were already active in the system as conveyors of intermediary agencies. As we have seen in section (III.4), *BY* (7) was already active in the system to render this configuration, while *BY* (8) served as well to *construe* the secondary agent in the frame of progeneration in a rather stable way. Sentences (49.a) and (51.a) are repeated here in (56) to illustrate these uses of *by*:

56.
 a. OE *He him onsænde be his cnihtum twa spyrtan*
 "He sent him two spears through his knights"
 b. OE *Be ðære he hæfðe ane dohrer*
 "He had a daughter by that (woman)"

These schemata would often convey instances of possible two-fold interpretations, both as **BY (7)**/ **BY (8)** and/or as **BY (AGENT)**. Consider for this purpose the following sentences, both from OE and EME times:

57.
 a. OE *Pa þing þe be him wærum geworden*
 "The things that were created through/(by) him"
 b. OE *Be þam men ic eom mid childe*
 "I am with a child by that man"
 c. EME (1205). *Ygærne was mid childe bi Uther*
 "Ygaern was with a child by Uther"
 d. ME (1382). *Alle þingis ben maad bi him*
 "All things were made through/(by) him"

Sentence (57.a) profiles a human being as the LM of by and rendered an interpretation based on schema **BY (7)**, as in the modern reading given by *through*, where the construction profiles the agency of an intermediary participant. However, this sentence could also naturally get construed as an emergent schema of **BY (AGENT)**, since the instrumental coding pattern was already active in the conceptual system of an Anglo-Saxon speaker, realized by means of *through*, as shown in (55.a) and (55.b) above. This is somehow clearer in sentences (57.b) and (57.c) rendered by schema **BY (8)**. These sentences profile the pregnancy state of the TR, and this state is thought of as due to the highlighted agency of the other agentive party, LM. Sentence (57.d) comes from a latter period, and could again be ambiguous to the Medieval speaker without the appropriate context. These sentences are given here as evidence of the first sprout of **BY (AGENT)**.

The question that remains is whether **BY (AGENT)** emerged in the system from inferential re-interpretation from actual contextual co-occurrence with instances of schemata **BY (7)** and **BY (8)**. However, it is perhaps too venturesome to signal sentences like those in (57) as the actual pragmatic means for the spreading of the new category (cf. Traugott, 1988), where a direct contextual correlation may occur enabling inferential readings. In my opinion, semantic grounds account for the very emergence of the ambiguity, and they can as well provide conceptual motivation for the extension of the new schema. In other words, **BY (AGENT)** does not only result from direct inference from **BY (7)** (or **BY (8)**), since the choice of **BY (7)** to conceptualize agentive parties in events was not random in the first place, but responded instead, to the instrumental coding pattern already active in Old English where agencies are metaphorically seen as means for a given event to take place.

Historical documents attest schema **BY (AGENT)** in the very late Medieval period. The OED dates the first entry for such an agentive construal as late as 1400, see sentence (58.a) below. Literary texts of this later period normally show a more-conservative register of the dialect being represented, and one could safely posit a much earlier date for the emergence of the schema among the language of the innovative lower classes (Leith, 1983). This claim is further supported by the findings of Peitsara (1992), who has a similar position in this

respect. On the basis of **evidence taken** from a large **corpus** of different sources and **genre**, she demonstrates that **by** was already extremely common in 15th century texts, and concludes that **BY** (AGENT) could hardly **have been** rare in the preceding **century**⁸.

No **matter** how late schema **BY** (AGENT) may **have** arisen, it was **slowly** fore-grounded and **finally** gained over through around the 16th century. It is around **this** time when the coding for the demoted agent based on **by** established **itself** as PDE **BY** (AGENT). This dynamics reminds of the preference of **of** **over from** with regard to the causal coding pattern. It is **difficult** though, to **provide** convincing explanations for the preference of **by** over through in this **crucial** period in the **formation** of the standard. **They** could perhaps be sought at a **semantic level** since **by** was gaining much ground as a marker of instrumental nuances. On the other hand, the socio-cultural pressure on the hands of **Latinized** grammarians for the **emergence** of a prestigious variety of the **language** as standard (Gorlach 1991) **would** as well **have** motivated a general trend to specialize grammatical markers to grammatical functions. The following are historical sentences illustrating **BY** (AGENT):

58.

- a. ME (1400). *þe Cytee was destroyed by hem of Greece*
"The city was destroyed by those from Greece"
- b. ME (1461). *Assigned be the commissioners*
- c. EModE (1549). *There was ever by the wit of man so well devised*
- d. EModE (1587). *Slaine miserable in prison be the duke Albanie*
- e. EModE (1682). *The walls of it were built by Diocletian*
- f. ModE (1848). *John was compelled by the Barons to sign the articles*

As I **have** mentioned above, in **later** Medieval times both the **ablative/causal** coding pattern realized by **of** and the **instrumental** one based on **by** (and more marginally on through), were already competing to gain space in the system. As the data suggests the cognitive **salience** of instrumentality won over the causal **pattern**⁹, and as a direct consequence the coding based on **of** ceased to be productive to encode the demoted agent of a prototypical transitive event viewed under passive perspective, but **became** restricted to construe the demoted agent of a mental process, as sentences in (59) illustrate. However, this **later** schema has **also** **become** unproductive in PDE, and predications **formed** on this pattern may sound rather archaic nowadays:

59.

- a. EModE (1548). *Communion, I am commaunded of God, especially to moue and exhorre you*
- b. EModE (1550). *The Principies of Christen Religion, to be known of the faythful*
- c. EModE (1600). *I have been told so of many*
- d. EModE (1611). *Being wamed of God in a dreame*
- e. ModE (1725). *A wretched stanger, and of all unknown!*
- f. ModE (1847). *Otho was not loved of his kinsfolk in his home*

V. SCHEMA **BY** (9) AS EXTENSION OF **BY** (AGENT):

The schema evokes the frame of creation where a human agent is **seen** as producing a given entity with an esthetic value. Under the conceptual **construal** of such an event the entity being created is given a prominent status and it is treated as TR. Schema **BY** (9) only

profiles the relation between the creator and the creation as two nouns within a single NP, however this relation is based on conceiving the creation event as **conceptually** viewed from the passive perspective. Hence, the creator, or the author, is thought of as a case of demoted agent and it is thus treated accordingly via a natural extension from schema **BY** (AGENT). This claim is further supported by historical data, since schema **BY** (9) does not show up until the Early Modern period of the language, only when schema **BY** (AGENT) had a stable position in the system as conveyer of a demoted agent, as illustrated by sentences in (60) below. This evidence proves as further inadequate Langacker's (1991a) views on this creation frame being the semantic precursor of **BY** (AGENT):

- 60.
- | | |
|------------------|---|
| a. EModE (1570). | <i>The Schoolemaster by Roger Ascham</i> |
| b. EModE (1673). | <i>Poems & c. upon Several Occasions by Mr. John Milton</i> |
| c. ModE (1779). | <i>Can the representations of moon-light, even by Homer, Milton, and Shakespeare, be more exquisitely finished?</i> |
| d. ModE (1832). | <i>I must get 'Manstein' directly, if it be by young Moskoffsky</i> |
| e. PDE | <i>The picture by Picasso</i> |

VI. CONCLUSION

In this paper I have accounted for the emergence of the preposition *by* as the marker of a demoted agent in English passive, in the shape of a schema I have treated as **BY** (AGENT). The analysis has been thought of as an instance of a radial network set up by means of interconnected senses. I have claimed along the paper that schema **BY** (AGENT) arose in *by*'s semantic network as a natural extension from historically prior, rather stable instrumental schemata. I have also introduced different data from different historical periods in an attempt to show how the different senses were diachronically shaping out the radial category. My present claims and analysis of the genesis of **BY** (AGENT) are virtually opposite to Langacker's (1991a). He basically proposes that **BY** (AGENT) is an elaboration from schema **BY** (9) which in turn results as a direct extension from the static spatial schema I have treated as **BY** (1). I have argued along the paper that this solution is inadequate for it ignores both the fundamental linkage relation between instrumental senses and **BY** (AGENT). On the other hand, it does not regard historical data, especially on the late emergence schema **BY** (10). In figure (7) below, I give a representation of the way *by* schemata interconnect in a radial semantic structure from **BY** (1) all the way to **BY** (AGENT) and **BY** (9) via main instrumental extensions.

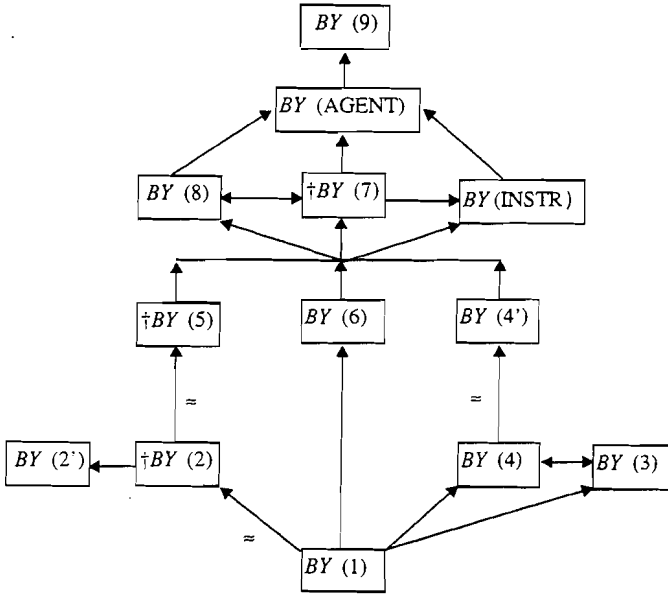


Figure (7)

= : extension via meraphor

Examples to illustrate the schemata:

BY (1): (1). *I have a cottage by the big lake* ; *BY (2)*: (11. a). OE. *Wif þe biþ be anum man* "The woman who lives with a man"; *BY (2')*: (13). *He wrote the letter all by himself* ; *BY (3)*: (21). *I went by Perer's office on my way home* ; *BY (4)*: (28). *She came to the city by the highway* ; *BY (4')*: (48). *Master workmen may received instructions by way of drafts, models or frames* ; *BY (5)*: (39. b). OE *gif he gangan mæge bi srafe* "if he could walk with a stick"; *BY (6)*: (41). *Mary took the child by the hand* ; *BY (INSTR)*: (36). *Mary broke the door open by hitting it with an ax* ; *BY (7)*: (49. b). ME (1300). *Dario hir wor by a spye* "Dario came to know about it through a spy" ; *BY (8)*: (50). *He had a son by his second wife* ; *BY (AGENT)*: (58. a). ME (1400). *þe Cyree was destroyed by hem of Greece* "The city was destroyed by those from Greece" ; *BY (9)*: (60. e). PDE. *The picture by Picasso*.

NOTES

1. Among the large number of schemata of *by* which are not treated in this paper, most relevant perhaps are those concerning temporal extensions as in, *she sleeps by night* or *she got to the station by five*. Further minor schemata are illustrated by the following sentences: *the horse won by two feet*; *she received letters by the thousands*; *she pays by the night*; *that's a by-road*; *it's fine by me*; *she plays by the rules*, etc.

2. PDE data comes **mainly** from **native informants**. I ave **also** consulted the following dictionaries: *Webster's Third New International Dicionary* (1961). Merriam Company; *The Random House Dicionary of rhe English Longuage*. Second Edition (1983). NY. Random House; *The Arnerican Heritage Dicionary of rhe English Longuage* (1980). Boston. Houghton Mifflin Company.

3. The historical data provided in this paper come from different sources: *The Oxford English Dicionary* (2nd Edition) (1989). Prepared by J. A. Simpson & E.S.C. Weiner. Oxford Clarendon Press; *A Middle English Dicionary* (1963). Bradley. Oxford University Press; *The Oxford Dicionary of English Etymology* (1966). Onions, C.T. (ed.). Oxford Clarendon Press.

4. This schema has **grammaticized** in complex prepositions in PDE such as: **beside, below, beneath and behind**.

5. Readings with a **by rhe side of** construction may sound redundant to the modern speaker, **because by** alone can render a similar configuration.

6. In historical times the landmark could **also** be construed as a "way", for ways were still prototypical spatial configurations in the landscape. In PDE this strict spatial meaning has **been lost** in favor of a more abstract interpretation based on functionality.

7. I take a canonical **instrument** to be **here** an object used by the agent to achieve an action-goal, as the **hammer** in, *Mary broke rhe window wirh a hammer*.

8. Peitsara (1992) **explains the emergence** of **by** over **of** as due to a tendency to avoid the functional overload that **of** already had in the Medieval system. I am **thankful** to one **of** my anonymous reviewers for pointing this **reference** out to me.

9. There is no apparent explanation for the reason why the instrumental pattern was the one **preferred**. One runs the risk of becoming too speculative **if** arguing for the role played by psychological values in the conception of an individual as a functional **part** of society, which was **under** great modification from a Medieval **rural**-oriented society towards a more city-oriented society in the Renaissance. This explanation **would specially** be fitted for London and the dialect spoken in the area. A similarphenomenon may **also** apply to **the** urban centers of **the** Netherlands where a similar instrumental coding emerges, but it **leaves** unaccounted the **survival** of causal partems in other Germanic urban dialecrs, like those spoken in German or Scandinavian ceries.

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