

**THE PRESENT PARTICIPLE IN
OLD HIGH GERMAN AND
MIDDLE HIGH GERMAN; A
DISSERTATION**

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The Present Participle in Old High German and Middle High German; A dissertation by John Bascom Crenshaw

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A DISSERTATION

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BY

JOHN BASCOM CRENSHAW.

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CHAPTER I.

THE PRESENT PARTICIPLE IN GERMAN.

(O. H. GERMAN AND M. H. GERMAN.)

(1) THE study of the Present Participle presents to the investigator of syntactical constructions an especially large and fertile field. Its two-sided nature, at once verbal and adjectival, gives scope for a great variety of uses—ranging from the settled meaning of a noun up to the activity of the verb. English has taken advantage of this to the fullest extent, and the strength, flexibility and accuracy of our language has been greatly increased by the participial constructions in which it abounds. Nor is this true only of English of the present period. The participial uses persist in an unbroken line through every period of our literary activity. The speech of to-day is in this respect only the result, the full-grown development, of those early beginnings.

In German, on the other hand, we find an abundance of participial constructions at first, and a corresponding decrease as the language grows. In Modern German the Present Participle is a mere remnant of its former self. In the Middle Period its scope was much broader, and an examination of the literature of this period furnishes material interesting in itself and especially noteworthy as showing the trend of the language with regard to the Participle. In the earliest, or Old High German Period, the Participle blossoms out into the greatest variety of uses—a variety only surpassed by the English.

It is my aim in the following investigation to trace the course of the development of the Present Participle in German, and if possible to ascertain its nature and origin. From what has been said above, the Modern Period would be practically useless for this purpose, as the few remaining instances of the Participle, interesting though they may be, could serve only as a species of analogical proof. This period I have accordingly excluded from the present inquiry. On the other hand, I have not found it practicable

nor deemed it best to limit the study to Old High German, though it is there that the origins of the Present Participle in German must be sought. In the following period (Middle High German) not only do the characteristic uses of the Participle continue in force, but they have become interwoven in the fabric of a universally recognized language of literature—a result never attained by the various and conflicting dialects of Old High German. This being the case, it was found expedient to include both the Old High German and Middle High German Periods in the present investigation.

What remained was to secure comprehensiveness by the examination of a sufficient number of characteristic monuments and to exhibit the data collected in tabulated form under suitable headings, so that the result might be tested.

The field covered by this investigation is properly divided into three periods.

- (2) 1. Old High German from the Eighth Century to 1050 A.D.
2. Period of Transition—1050 A. D.—1150 A. D.
3. Middle High German—1150 A. D. to Modern High German.

The following works have been examined in detail:

OLD HIGH GERMAN TO 1050 A. D.—Tatian, Isidor, Otfrid, Notker.

PERIOD OF TRANSITION.—Wiener Genesis, Williram, Frau Ava, Alexanderlied, Kaiserchronik, Rolandslied.

MIDDLE HIGH GERMAN.—Heinrich von Veldeke, Hartman von Aue, Wolfram von Eschenbach, Gudrun, Gottfried von Strassburg, Nibelungenlied, Konrad von Würzburg's Engelhard, Freidank, Berthold von Regensburg.

(3) As to the bulk of the material examined, the four writers of the Old High German Period contain 50,000 lines, distributed as follows: Isidor 700, Tatian 9,600, Notker 33,700 (from the 45,000 lines I deduct one-fourth for the Latin), Otfrid 6,000.

The writers selected from the Period of Transition contain 53,000 lines and those of the Middle High German Period above 160,000 lines.

According to the data gathered, the uses of the Present Participle fall under the following heads:

- (4) 1. Attributive; *das fließende Wasser*.
2. Noun; *die Lebenden, die Gernden*, where the Participle does not qualify any noun expressed, but unites in itself the functions of both Noun and Participle.
3. The Dative Absolute.
4. Present Participle after Verbs of Perception, *sehen, hören, finden*, and the Causative Verbs, *lassen* and *machen*.
5. Appositive Participle as qualifier of both Subject and Predicate.
6. The so-called Participial Adverb.
7. The Participial Phrases formed by means of the Present Participle and the Verbs *sich* and *werden*.

(5) ATTRIBUTIVE AND SUBSTANTIVE USES OF THE PRESENT PARTICIPLE.

Examples of these are found in such numbers in all periods of German as to render wholly unnecessary any special consideration of them in this place. The Participle by its very nature expresses both adjectival and verbal ideas, and thus lends itself most easily to the attributive function, on the one hand, and to the idea of the verbal agent, on the other. In the attributive use, the Participle is very common throughout both Old High German and Middle High German, while as a Noun it occurs rather infrequently, and seems then to be limited to certain stock words and phrases.

When thus used, the Participle is declined as a Simple Adjective. (Cf. Braune, *Ahd. Grammatik*, § 257, and Paul *Mhd. Grammatik*, §136 ff.)