CONTENTS

List of Tables and Figures xi
Acknowledgments xiii
List of Abbreviations xv

1. The Impersonal Construction in English 3
   1.1 Introduction: Aims and Method 3
   1.2 What Is Impersonal? Preliminary Notes on Terms and Terminology 5
   1.3 The Development of Impersonal Expressions in English 14
   1.4 Explanations for the Diachronic Development of Impersonal Expressions 16
      1.4.1 Grammatical Causes of Loss: Changes Affecting the Relationship between Subject and Object 16
      1.4.2 From Impersonal to Personal: What Motivates Language Change? 19
      1.4.3 Verb Meaning and Constructional Meaning: Why Is a New Analysis Needed? 20
      1.4.4 What Remains To Be Done? 22
   1.5 A Cognitive-Functional Perspective on Language Change: Basic Assumptions 23
   1.6 The Data 25
   1.7 Structure of the Book 30

2. Functional Aspects of Old English Grammar 34
   2.1 The Old English Nominal Cases 34
      2.1.1 Transitivity and the Functions of the Nominal Cases 34
      2.1.2 Nominal Case and Verbal Rection 39
   2.2 Subject or Object? The First Argument in Impersonal Patterns 41
   2.3 Old English Word Order and Information Structure 44
      2.3.1 The Concepts of Topic and Focus 44
      2.3.2 Verb-Second and the Syntactic Topicalization of Objects 46
   2.4 The First Argument in Impersonal Patterns: A Grammatical Hybrid 47
3. Aspects of Verb Meaning and Constructional Meaning: Theory and Methodology 51
   3.1 Verb Meaning 51
      3.1.1 Conceptual Domains 53
      3.1.2 Process Types and Frame Meaning 56
      3.1.3 Argument Structure and Semantic Roles 60
      3.1.4 Methodological Considerations 66
   3.2 Constructional Meaning and the Issue of Perspective 68
      3.2.1 Middle Voice and Middle Semantics 69
      3.2.2 Subjectivity and Subjectification 72
   3.3 Summary of Theory and Methodology 74

4. Semantic Analysis of Old English Verbs Capable of Impersonal Use 79
   4.1 Selection of Verbs 79
   4.2 Semantic Classification of Investigated Verbs 84
      4.2.1 Verbs Used in the Expression of Spontaneous Events 87
         4.2.1.1 Physical Sensation 87
         4.2.1.2 Emotion 90
         4.2.1.3 Cognition 93
         4.2.1.4 Existential Experience 96
      4.2.2 Verbs Expressing Motion Processes 98
      4.2.3 Verbs Expressing Relational Situations 101
         4.2.3.1 Ownership and Appropriateness 102
         4.2.3.2 Availability and Nonavailability 105
         4.2.3.3 Benefaction 107
   4.3 Summary: Semantic Properties of Old English Impersonal Verbs 109

5. Investigation of the Impersonal Syntactic Uses of Old English Verbs 112
   5.1 Frequencies of Impersonal Compared with Alternative Syntactic Uses 113
   5.2 Impersonal Patterns 119
      5.2.1 The First Argument in Impersonal Patterns in Main Clauses 120
         5.2.1.1 Realization by an NP or Pronoun in Dative, Accusative, or Accusative/Dative Case 120
         5.2.1.2 Realization by a Prepositional Phrase with To 126
         5.2.1.3 Nonrealization of the First Argument (Zero Argument) 127
      5.2.2 The Second Argument in Impersonal Patterns in Main Clauses 128
         5.2.2.1 Nonrealization of the Second Argument in IMPacc/dat Patterns 129
         5.2.2.2 Realization by a Genitive Complement 131
         5.2.2.3 Realization by a Complement Clause 134
         5.2.2.4 Realization by a Nonfinite Complement or Infinitive 138
         5.2.2.5 Realization by a Prepositional or Adverbial Complement 140
      5.2.3 Impersonal Subordinate Clause Patterns 143
      5.2.4 Borderline Cases of Impersonal Patterns 146
   5.3 Summary: Functional Properties of the Old English Impersonal Construction 148
6. A Comparison with Alternative Syntactic Constructions 154
   6.1 Transitive and Intransitive Constructions 154
   6.2 Formal Hit and Patterns Involving Extraposition 166
      6.2.1 Hit-Extraposition 167
      6.2.2 PERT-Extraposition 173
   6.3 The External Possessor Construction 178
   6.4 The Infinitive of Obligation 185
   6.5 Reflexive Patterns 187
   6.6 Passive Constructions 193
   6.7 Summary: Constructional Competition in Function and Use 197
7. The Diachronic Perspective: An Outlook to the Impersonal Construction
   in Middle and Early Modern English 203
   7.1 The Development of Old English Impersonal Verbs in Middle and Early
      Modern English 203
   7.2 The Extension of Impersonal Patterns in Middle English 208
   7.3 The Impersonal Construction in Decline 213
      7.3.1 Structural Developments in Early English 214
         7.3.1.1 The Emergence of the Subject Requirement 214
         7.3.1.2 Inflectional Loss and Lexical Case Loss 215
         7.3.1.3 Loss of Verb-Second and of Object-Fronted
            Word Orders 216
      7.3.2 Competing Syntactic Constructions 217
         7.3.2.1 Personal (In)transitive Constructions 218
         7.3.2.2 It-Extraposition 220
         7.3.2.3 The Reflexive Construction 222
         7.3.2.4 Passive or Adjectival Constructions 223
      7.3.3 Shifts of Meaning from Grammar to the Lexicon 225
8. Conclusion 229
   8.1 Summary and Results 229
   8.2 Research Agenda 235
9. Appendices 237
   9.1 Appendix A: Tabular Overview of Frequencies of Syntactic Uses 237
   9.2 Appendix B: Documentation of Old English Syntactic Patterns
      with References to the Textual Sources 249
10. Bibliography 523
11. Index 533