

# Remarks on the left periphery in the medieval Brittonic languages



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## ABSTRACT:

This paper proposes that the clausal configuration of affirmative root clauses in the medieval Brittonic languages is best characterised as a token of a relaxed verb-second (V<sub>2</sub>) language, in which the verb can appear as late as sixth position in the clause, but can be preceded by no more than a single argument. The absolute restriction to only a single argument occurring before the verb is related to the evolution of medieval Brittonic V<sub>2</sub> from a cleft structure. There are, in fact, tokens of two arguments appearing before the verb in all of the medieval Brittonic languages, but these are exclusively the result of poetic overdetermination.

## KEYWORDS:

left periphery; syntactic cartography; verb-second phenomenon; relaxed verb-second; Middle Welsh; Middle Breton; Middle Cornish

## 1. PRELUDE

§1. Willis (1998: 50–101) demonstrates beyond all reasonable doubt that the unmarked configuration of affirmative root clauses in Middle Welsh was verb-second (V<sub>2</sub>). He provides parallel data from Middle Breton in Borsley — Tallerman — Willis (2007: 290–291) and notes that Middle Cornish, likewise, follows this pattern. One of the principal diagnostic features of such an analysis is the post-verbal position of the verb when the direct object or an adverb(ial) precedes the verb.<sup>1</sup> Some sample tokens are:<sup>2</sup>

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- 1 N.B. that, across all three languages, the affirmative particle appears as *a* when the fronted XP is the subject or object; when the fronted XP is an adverb(ial), it appears as *γ(d)* in Middle Welsh, as *e(z)* in Middle Breton, and as *γ(th)* in Middle Cornish. For etymological discussion of these particles, see Schrijver (1997: 159–165).
  - 2 Grammatical abbreviations: ACC = accusative; AFF = affirmative particle; COP = copula; DAT = dative; DEF = definite; DEM = demonstrative; DIST = distal; FEM = feminine; FUT = future; GEN = genitive; IMPF = imperfect; IMPS = impersonal; IMPV = imperative; MASC = masculine; NEG = negator; NOM = nominative; PERF = perfective; PL = plural; POSS = possessive; PRES = present; PRET = preterite; PROG = progressive; PROX = proximate; PTCL = particle; PV = preverb; REL = relative; SG = singular; SPRLTV = superlative; V-ADJ = verbal adjective; VN = verbal noun; & = connective.



## (1) Middle Welsh

## a. Subject-initial (PKM 54.2):

[Caswallon] a glywei hynny  
 Caswallon AFF hear.3.SG.IMP DIST  
 ‘Caswallon would hear that ...’

## b. Object-initial (BR 1.18):

A [chyngor] a gymerth Madawc  
 & counsel AFF take.3.SG.PRET Madog  
 ‘And Madog took counsel ...’

## c. Adverb(ial)-initial (PKM 78.17):

[Yna] y magwyt y mab yn y llys  
 then AFF raise.PRET.IMPS DEF boy in DEF court  
 ‘Then the boy was raised in the court ...’

## (2) Middle Breton

## a. Subject-initial (BSN 242.45):

[Me] a ia breman dre an bro  
 1.SG AFF go.3.SG.PRES now through DEF land  
 ‘I go now through the world.’

## b. Object-initial (BSG 90.783):

[an trous] a clefaf spes  
 DEF noise AFF hear.1.SG.PRES clearly  
 ‘I hear the noise clearly.’

## c. Adverb(ial)-initial (BSC 84 §13):

hac [en continant] ez aparissas an eal dezy  
 & immediately AFF appear.3.SG.PRET DEF angel to.3.SG.FEM  
 ‘... and the angel immediately appeared to her.’

## (3) Middle Cornish

## a. Subject-initial (BM 34.594):

[ny] a 'th wor the pen an gluas  
 1.PL AFF 2.SG put.3.SG.PRES to Penn an Wlas  
 ‘We will bring you to Land’s End.’

## b. Object-initial (RD 72.909):

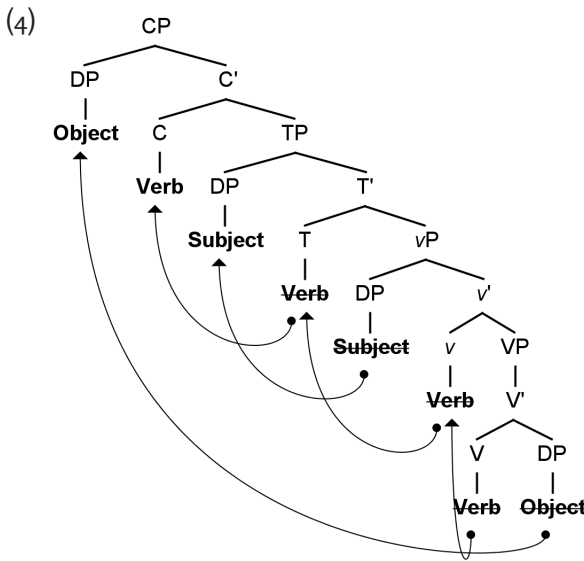
[guyr] a gousaf vy  
 truth AFF speak.1.SG.PRES 1.SG  
 ‘I speak truth.’

c. Adverb(ial)-initial (BK 314.3149):

[maraw] γ 's guylfyth hy thyр  
 dead AFF 3.SG.FEM see.3.SG.FUT 3.SG.FEM.POSS land  
 '... her country will see her dead.'



§2. Willis treats the V2 syntax of these languages as involving the verb moving into the C head with the concomitant movement of an XP — not specified as a subject — to SpecCP (such an analysis goes back to den Besten 1983 for German and Dutch), e.g., with fronting of the object:



§3. Unlike well known V2 languages such as German and Dutch, which allow the verb to occur in third position only within very limited conditions, the medieval Brittonic languages allow multiple adverb(ial)s to appear both before and after the fronted XP, with the verb thus appearing in as late as sixth position in the clause, for example, in Middle Welsh (a–b cited after Willis 1998: 60–61, c–d cited after Poppe 1991: 19):<sup>3</sup>

3 Paul Russell notes to me that tokens of V3\* clauses mostly occur in translation texts. This by no means suggests that they were somehow ungrammatical in spoken Middle Welsh. Cf. the opening sentence in the English folktale *Caporushes* (text available at [https://www.worldoftales.com/European\\_folktales/English\\_folktale\\_119.html#gsc.tab=0](https://www.worldoftales.com/European_folktales/English_folktale_119.html#gsc.tab=0); accessed 16 August 2020), in which the verb appears in fifth position, though English is a SVO language: [Once upon a time], [a long, long while ago], [when all the world was young and all sorts of strange things happened], [there] lived a very rich gentleman whose wife had died leaving him three lovely daughters. Such structures are not unusual in narrative texts.



## (5) a. Verb-third (HPE 35.15–16):

[Hwnnw] [hagen] a darogannwys y corr a 'r  
 DIST however AFF foretell.3.SG.PRET DEF dwarf & DEF  
 gorres it  
 dwarfess to.2.SG

'That, however, the dwarf and dwarfess foretold for you ...'

## b. Verb-fourth (YCM 18.23–24):

[An heneiteu ni] [drwy y fyd a gynhalywn] [wedy  
 1.PL.POSS soul.PL 1.PL through DEF faith REL uphold.1.PL.PRES after  
 an hageu] a ant y baratwys  
 1.PL.POSS death AFF go.3.SG.PRES to paradise

'Our souls, through the faith that we uphold, after our death, will go to paradise ...'

## c. Verb-fifth (BB 25.810–812):

Ac [gwedy gwelet o Cheldrych perygyl y kytymdey(thy)on]  
 & after see.VN by Cheldrig danger to.3.SG.MASC.POSS companion.PL  
 [en e lle] [hep annot] [ymchwelvt] a orvc  
 in DEF place without delay return.VN AFF do.3.SG.PRET

'And, after Cheldrig perceived the danger to his companions, he immediately returned without delay ...'

## d. Verb-sixth (BB 25.795–797):

Ac [o 'r dywed] [gan wuyhaf grym a llafvr] [gwedy kaffael  
 & of DEF end with great.SPRLTV power & toil after get.VN  
 o 'r Brytanyeyt penn e mynyd], [en e lle] [wynt]  
 by DEF Briton.PL head DEF mountain in DEF place 3.PL  
 a dangossasant  
 AFF show.3.PL.PRET

'And, in the end, with the greatest power and toil, once the Britons had gained the top of the mountain, they immediately showed ...'

Such constructions are also widespread in Middle Breton and Middle Cornish, e.gg.:

## (6) Middle Breton verb-fourth (BSC 86 §19):

ha [neuse] [an rouanes] [dre an carantez he deffoye  
 & now DEF queen through DEF love have.3.SG.FEM.PRET  
 cōmeret ouz an guerhes sanctes Cathell] a yez  
 take.V-ADJ towards DEF virgin saint Catherine AFF go.3.SG.PRET  
 en nos  
 in.DEF night

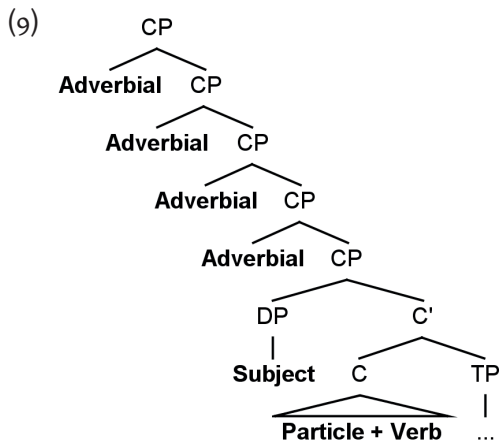
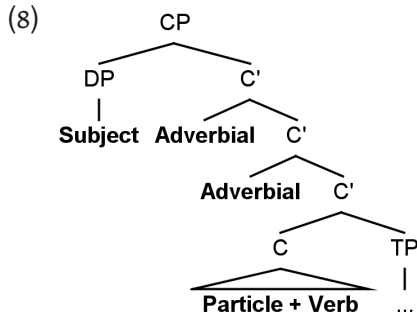
'... and now, the queen, through the love that she had taken towards the virgin saint Catherine, went into the night ...'

(7) Middle Cornish verb-third (BM 52.941):

*ha* [*my*] [*lemmen*] *a* 'th *vygeth*  
 & 1.SG now AFF 2.SG baptise.3.SG.PRES  
 '... and now I will baptise you.'



§4. Willis (1998: 58–72) allows multiple adjunctions to CP and C' to attach adverb(ial)s. (5b) would thus be represented as in (8), while (5d) would be represented as in (9):



Under this approach, adjunction appears to be unconstrained.

## 2. THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE LEFT PERIPHERY

§5. Since Rizzi (1997), it has become clear that the left periphery of the root clause is highly articulated (see further Poletto 2002; Benincà — Poletto 2004; Rizzi 2004b, 2013; Frascarelli — Hinterhölzl 2007; Hinterhölzl — Petrova 2010; Haegeman 2012, *inter alios*). I follow the current *communis opinio* in understanding the hierarchical architecture of the left periphery to be:



(10) [<sub>FrameP</sub> [<sub>ForceP</sub> [<sub>AbTopP</sub> [<sub>ContrTopP</sub> [<sub>FocP</sub> [<sub>FamTopP</sub> [<sub>FinP</sub> ...]]]]]]]]]]]]

Within this framework, FrameP is the locus of scene-setting locatival and temporal adverb(ial)s and hanging topics; ForceP is the locus of markers of illocutionary force and clause-typing; AbTopP (Aboutness Topic) is the locus of topical XPs that are “newly introduced, newly changed or newly returned to” (Givón 1983: 8; see also Frascarelli — Hinterhölzl 2007: esp. 88); ContrTopP (Contrastive Topic) is the locus of XPs “that [induce] alternatives which have no impact on the focus value and creates oppositional pairs with respect to other topics” (Frascarelli — Hinterhölzl 2007: 88; see also Kuno 1976; Büring 1999); FocP is the locus of focussed XPs; FamTopP (Familiar Topic) is the locus of “a given or accessible (cf. Chafe 1987) constituent, which is typically destressed and realised in a pronominal form (Pesetsky 1987)” (Frascarelli — Hinterhölzl 2007: 88); and FinP (Finite) expresses the finiteness or non-finiteness of the clause.

### 3. THE VERB-SECOND PHENOMENON

**§6.** It is current syntactic *communis opinio* that the V2 phenomenon results from Fin bearing an uninterpretable  $\varphi$ -feature which is valued by movement of the verb to Fin. Fin also bears an Edge Feature, which requires that SpecFinP be lexicalised, but the XP satisfying this requirement is not restricted to subjects (Mohr 2009).<sup>4</sup>

Poletto (2002) proposes that the locus of the V2 phenomenon, in fact, can be either FinP + ForceP or FinP alone. In V2 FinP + ForceP languages, the verb and initial XP move into and through FinP to ForceP, as in (11), thus severely restricting the number of constituents that can appear before the verb. Only SpecFrameP is available to host an XP to result in a verb-third clause.

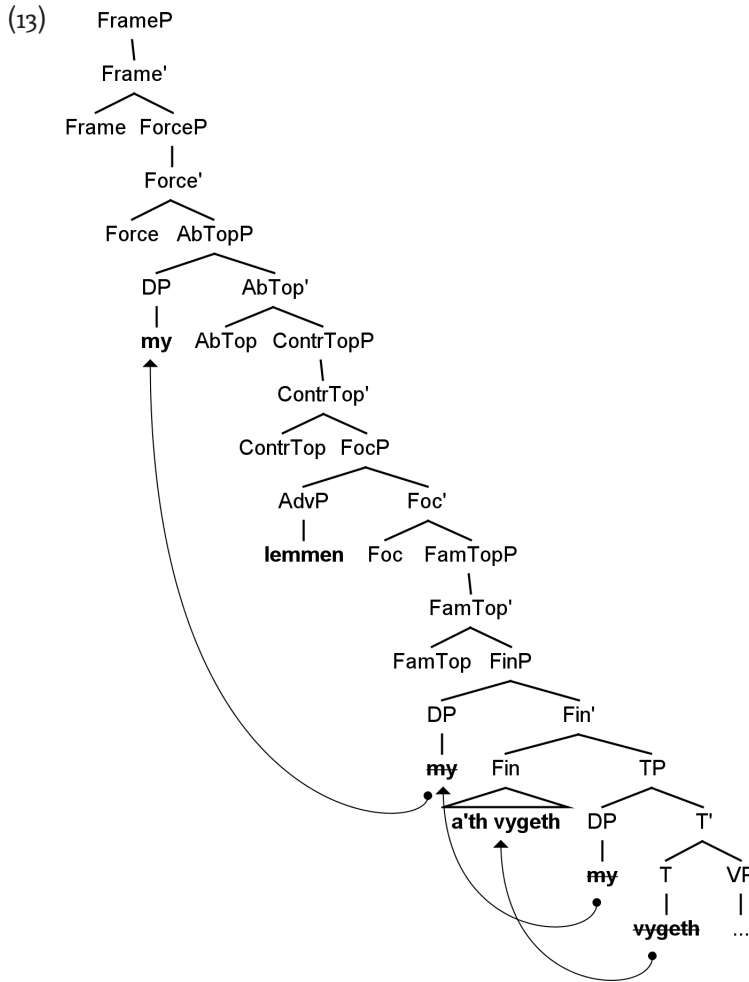
(11) [<sub>FrameP</sub> [<sub>ForceP</sub> **XP** [<sub>Force</sub> **V**] [<sub>AbTopP</sub> [<sub>ContrTopP</sub> [<sub>FocP</sub> [<sub>FamTopP</sub> [<sub>FinP</sub> **XP** [<sub>Fin</sub> **V**] ... ]]]]]]]]]]]

In V2 FinP alone languages, however, the verb and XP do not move to ForceP, as in (12), and FrameP, ForceP, AbTopP, ContrTopP, FocP, and FamTopP may all host a constituent that precedes the verb.

(12) [<sub>FrameP</sub> [<sub>ForceP</sub> [<sub>AbTopP</sub> [<sub>ContrTopP</sub> [<sub>FocP</sub> [<sub>FamTopP</sub> [<sub>FinP</sub> **XP** [<sub>Fin</sub> **V**] ... ]]]]]]]]]]]

In this ‘relaxed’ instantiation of V2, the XP may move out of SpecFinP, for example, to SpecAbTopP, as in the Middle Cornish clause in (7), which accounts for clauses in which adverb(ial)s occur between the XP which satisfies the V2 Edge Feature requirement and the verb (illustrated in [13]).

<sup>4</sup> For the view that the V2 phenomenon is driven by phonological requirements, see Richards (2016: 127–138, 285–289).



§7. Wolfe (2016a, 2016b, 2018, 2019a, 2020) makes good use of this approach to explicate configurational microvariation in medieval Romance (see also Wolfe 2019b for similar consideration of Germanic V2 languages). He demonstrates that later Old French is a Force V2 language and restricts the number of constituents that can precede the verb. In *Queste* 129.21, a frame-setting clause appears in SpecFrameP:

- (14) *Et* [<sub>FrameP</sub> *quant il est apareilliez,*  
 & when 3.SG.MASC COP.3.SG.PRES appear.PST-PTCPL  
 [<sub>ForceP</sub> *il* [<sub>Force</sub> *prent*] *ses armes et monte ...* ]  
 3.SG.MASC take3.SG.PRES 3.PL.POSS weapon.PL & ride.3.SG.PRES  
 ‘When he appeared, he took his weapons and rode ...’

In Wolfe’s sample, there are but two tokens of verb-fourth out of 632 clauses (0.32 %).



On the other hand, in his sample of 622 clauses in Old Occitan, not only does verb-third occur more often than in later Old French,<sup>5</sup> but verb-fourth occurs in 8.04 % of clauses, as well as verb-fifth in 1.29 % and verb-sixth in 0.64 %, none of which appear in later Old French. Thus, verb-fifth clauses such as in *Douc.* 96 §41 are possible in Old Occitan, but not in later Old French:

- (15) *E* [*per aisso*], [*illi*] [*adoncs*], [*am gran confuzion*]  
 & for PROX 3.SG.FEM therefore at great confusion  
*comandet a totas*  
 command.3.SG.PRET to all  
 ‘Because of this, therefore, amongst great confusion, she commanded every-one to ...’

§8. We may also note that, though modern German is a Force V2 language and allows only a single constituent before the verb in all but a very restricted number of instances, early Old High German appears to have been a Fin V2 language, as illustrated with a verb-fourth clause from *Isidor* 55.504–505,<sup>6</sup> suggesting that a diachronic change has occurred.

- (16) [*dhuo*] [*azs iungist*] [*bidhiu*] *quham gotes sunu*  
 then at finally therefore come.3.SG.PRET god.GEN.SG SON.NOM.SG  
 ‘Then, finally, thus, the son of God came ...’

Similarly in Old English, furthermore, as in the verb-fourth clause from *OEBede* 1.94.23–24 in (17):<sup>7</sup>

- (17) [*to Criste*] [*he*] [*Ongle*] *gehwyrfde mid*  
 to Christ.DAT.SG 3.NOM.SG.MASC English.ACC.SG convert.3.SG.PRET by  
*arfæstnesse lareowdomes*  
 piety.DAT.SG teaching.GEN.SG  
 ‘He converted the English to Christ with the piety of (his) teaching ...’

This type of ‘relaxed’ V2, thus, adequately accounts for the medieval Brittonic clauses.

#### 4. ARGUMENTS IN THE LEFT PERIPHERY

§9. One might think that, with a number of preverbal positions available to host XPs in ‘relaxed’ V2 languages, that both a subject and an object could occur before the verb.

<sup>5</sup> Old Occitan 29.74 %, Old French 24.53 %.

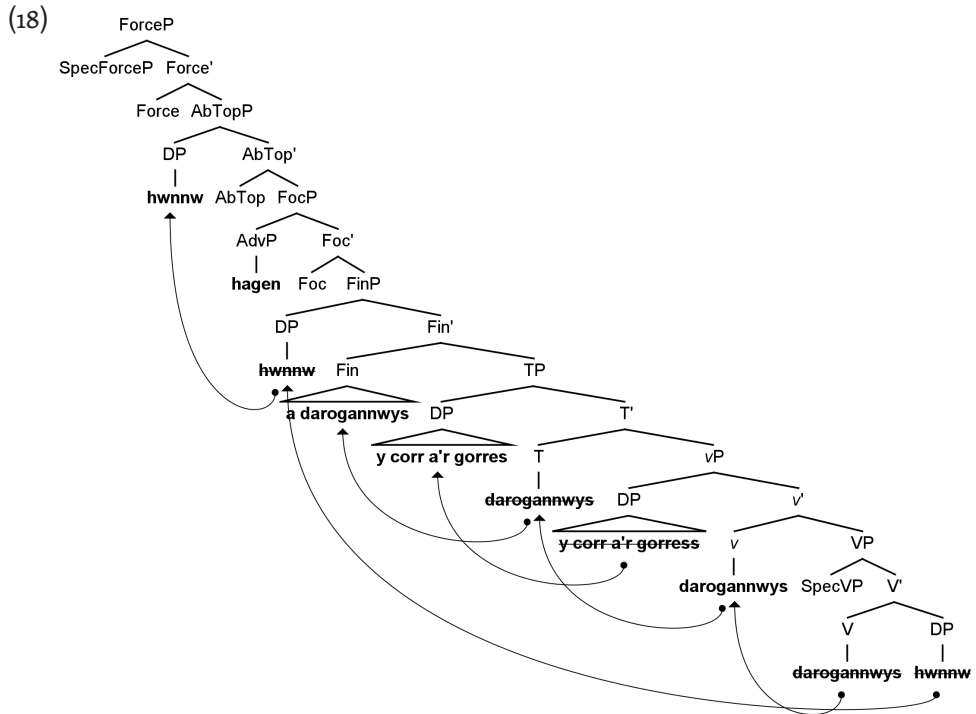
<sup>6</sup> Though *Isidor* is translated from Latin, it is clear that this clause is not copying the syntax of the Latin text, which reads *Uenit tandem filius dei*.

<sup>7</sup> N.B. the original Latin text, an examination of which makes it clear that the Old English translation is not copying the Latin syntax: *De quo nos conuenit, quia nostram, id est Anglorum, gentem de potestate Satanae ad fidem Christi sua industria conuertit ...*





Linguistic theory, however, generally states that only a subject or an object can appear in preverbal position, owing to ‘Relativised Minimality’ (developed by Rizzi 1990; see further Haegeman 2012: 109–111; perhaps most simply and clearly articulated by Roberts 2004: 316–317; see also Wolfe 2019a: 122–124). In brief, it states that a preverbal subject or object in a V2 language must pass through SpecFinP. Even if it moves higher into the left periphery of the clause, the copy that it leaves behind blocks any other XP from moving through SpecFinP, thus forming a bottleneck. Cf. the Middle Welsh clause in (5a), repeated here in tree form to illustrate movement:



In this clause, the object *hwnnw* moves into SpecFinP in order to satisfy the V2 Edge Feature, but leaves behind an unpronounced copy when it moves into SpecAbTopP to value an uninterpretable feature, thus blocking the possibility of the subject from moving into the left periphery.

§10. Multiple arguments, however, can occur in preverbal position in ‘relaxed’ Romance V2 languages, as in the Old Occitan prose text *Douc.* 38 §1:

- (19) [*Per aisso*], [*aquist maire sancta, ma donna Doucelina*], [*tot*  
 for PROX PROX mother saint 1.SG.FEM.POSS lady Douceline all  
*aquest mont*] *mesprezet*  
 PROX world despise.3.SG.PRET  
 ‘... because of this, my mother saint Douceline hated the whole world.’



Other tokens cited in the literature are:<sup>8</sup>

(20) a. Old Sicilian, Jacopo da Lentini:<sup>9</sup>

[*La figura piacente*] [*lo coro mi*] *dilanca*  
 DEF figure pleasant DEF heart 1.SG.DAT wrench.3.SG.PRES  
 ‘The pleasant figure tears my heart.’

b. Old Umbrian, Jacopone da Todi:<sup>10</sup>

[*La mia cattivanza*] [*l’ alma*] *ha menata*  
 DEF 1.SG.FEM.POSS wickedness DEF soul have.3.SG.PRES lead.PST-PTCPL  
 ‘My wickedness has led my soul.’

Haegeman (2012: 130–138 and *passim*) proposes that these types of constructions result when one argument bears an additional feature to draw it forward, thus allowing it to avoid the intervention effect of the blocked SpecFinP.

## 5. THE LEFT PERIPHERY IN THE MEDIEVAL BRITTONIC LANGUAGES

**§11.** These kinds of constructions never occur in medieval Brittonic prose. We should ask why this should be. Is it Relativised Minimality? Why do a topicalised argument and a focalised argument not ever coöccur in preverbal position as seems possible in medieval Romance?

**§12.** This is owing to the ultimate origin of V2 in the medieval Brittonic languages. There is general consensus that V2 in these languages likely emerged from a cleft

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<sup>8</sup> One must note that these tokens occur in poetic texts, so, therefore, the fact that two arguments appear before the verb could well be due to the clausal configuration having been overdetermined by metrical requirements. Cf.:

(i) *GL* 30.49–56  
*la figura piacente*  
*lo core mi diranca:*  
*quando voi tegno mente*  
*lo spirit mi manca — e torna in ghiacco:*  
*né-mica mi spaventa*  
*l’ amoroso volere*  
*di ciò che m’atalenta,*  
*ch’eo no lo posso avere, — und’eo mi sfaccio.*

(ii) *JT* 57.21–24  
*La mia cattivanza — l’ alma menata*  
*lá ’v è predato — da tre nemici*  
*e la piú forte — la tena abrecciatA*  
*ed encatenata — e mostronse amici.*

<sup>9</sup> Cited after Cruschini 2011: 108.

<sup>10</sup> Cited after Benincà 2004: 279.



structure (e.g., Schrijver 1997: 165–172; Manning 2000; Willis 2010: 146–147; Currie 2015: 20; Meelen 2020) — unlike Fin V2 medieval Romance and Germanic languages, in which V2 arose as the result of the loss of Information Focus (Wolfe 2016b: 479–481 ≡ 2019a: 139–140). (The medieval Romance tokens in [19], and perhaps [20], then, could be relic forms.) N.B. that the affirmative particles of V2 clauses are identical with the relative particles of cleft clauses, e.g.:

(21) a. Clefted subject (CO 21.566):

Ys [mi] a 'e heirsch  
 COP.3.SG.PRES 1.SG REL 3.SG.FEM seek.3.SG.PRES  
 'It is I who seeks her.'

b. Clefted object (YMTh 57.5):

Oed [Maelgun] a uelun in imuan  
 COP.3.SG.IMPF Maelgwn REL see.1.SG.IMPF PROG fight.VN  
 'It was Maelgwn whom I could see fighting.'

c. Clefted adverb(ial) (CO 4.99–100):

bydhawt [ragot ti] gyntaf yd agorawr y porth  
 COP.3.SG.FUT to.2.SG 2.SG first REL open.PRES.IMPRS DEF gate  
 'It will be for you that the gate is first opened.'

§13. The first step is the loss of the copula. To (21a), cf. the following:

(22) CO 21.562:

[Mi] a 'e heirsch  
 1.SG REL 3.SG.FEM seek.3.SG.PRES  
 'It is I who seeks her.'

This loss was already occurring in Old Welsh:

(23) a. Comp. 3:

is [did ciman] ha ci  
 COP.3.SG.PRES day whole REL get.2.SG.PRES  
 'It is a whole day that you get.'

b. Comp. 19–20:

[salt] emmi· guollig hinnith ir bloidin hinnith  
 saltus PV.REL·prevent.3.SG.PRES DIST DEF year DIST  
 'It is the saltus which prevents that that year.'

§14. Structures such as in (22) and (23b) then came to be interpreted as neutral statements, with the relative particle reinterpreted as an affirmative particle. At first, there was no agreement between fronted subjects and the verb,<sup>11</sup> e.g.:

11 Only non-agreement for number is attested.



- (24) CA 4.84:  
*Gwyr a aeth Gatraeth gan wawr*  
 man.PL AFF go.3.SG.PRET Catraeth with dawn  
 ‘Men went to Catraeth at dawn.’

But subject-verb agreement subsequently developed in Middle Welsh, e.gg.:

- (25) a. PKM 68.4–5:  
*Ti a wdost ... kynedaf Math uab Mathonwy*  
 2.SG. AFF know.2.SG.PRES peculiarity Math uab Mathonwy  
 ‘You know ... the peculiarity of Math uab Mathonwy.’
- b. PKM 21.12:  
*A ’r guyrda a doethant y gyt*  
 & DEF noble.PL AFF come.3.PL.PRET together  
 ‘And the nobles came together.’

Such agreement never developed in Middle Breton or Middle Cornish, e.gg.:

- (26) Middle Breton (BSN 256 §240):  
*breman a crenn me a gourchemen dit*  
 now plainly 1.SG AFF ask.3.SG.PRES to.2.SG  
 ‘Now, I plainly ask of you.’
- (27) Middle Cornish (BM 34.594):  
*ny a ’th wor the pen an gluas*  
 1.PL AFF 2.SG put.3.SG.PRES to Penn an Wlas  
 ‘We will bring you to Land’s End.’

Consequently, V2 clauses and clefted clauses, which generally have lost the copula, are formally indistinguishable in Middle Breton and Middle Cornish.

This is also the case in the two Old Welsh tokens which may be early attestations of V2 configuration — but, formally, could be clefted constructions:

- (28) a. *Juv. 9 §5<sup>a-b</sup>*:  
 [[*Gur*] *dicones remedaut elbid*] *a ’n guorit*  
 man make.3.SG.PRET wonder world PTCL 1.PL redeem.3.SG.PRES  
 ‘The man who created the wonder of the world redeems us.’  
 or  
 ‘It is the man who created the wonder of the world who redeems us.’
- b. *Chad 7*:  
 [*Mormarh Tutnred*] *ha rodes alt Guhebric deo et sancto elivdo*  
 Mormarh Tutnred PTCL give.3.SG.PRET Allt Chwefrig  
 ‘Mormarh Tutnred gave Allt Chwefrig to God and St. Eliudd.’  
 or  
 ‘It is Mormarh Tutnred who gave Allt Chwefrig to God and St. Eliudd.’

It is important to note that as the V2 construction was emerging in early Welsh out of a cleft construction, the cleft construction did not disappear, but continued to be employed to focus an XP.

§15. It is crucial to observe that cleft constructions allow only a single argument to appear before the relative marker. Cf. the Middle Welsh tokens in (21), the Old Welsh tokens in (23), and the English examples below:

- (29) a. It is Barbara who ~~Barbara~~ took Peter to the doctor.  
 b. It is Peter whom Barbara took ~~Peter~~ to the doctor.  
 c. \*It is Barbara Peter who ~~Barbara~~ took ~~Peter~~ to the doctor.

As in the Middle Welsh token in (21c), adverbials can appear with arguments before the relative marker:

- (30) It is Barbara, early in the morning, who ~~Barbara~~ took Peter to the doctor.

§16. It is evident, then, that in the period when a cleft construction was being reinterpreted as V2 with a fronted XP, language learners would only have had evidence that a single argument could occur before the verb. A relic construction of the type found in medieval Romance would not have been possible because it never existed in the Middle Brittonic languages. This would have been reinforced by the fact that the cleft construction continued to exist to focus an XP.

## 6. CODA. POETIC OVERDETERMINATION OF SYNTAX

§17. It is necessary to note that it is possible for a full DP subject and a full DP object to coöccur preverbally in the medieval Brittonic languages, but such constructions are always the result of poetic overdetermination, i.e., one cannot conclude that they are generated by the grammar, e.g.:

- (31) Middle Welsh (*ArmP*<sup>2</sup> 6.77–80):
- Kymry kyneircheit eneit dichwANT*  
 Cymry follower.PL life reckless  
 [gwyr deheu] [eu tretheu] a amygANT  
 man.PL south 3.PL.POSS tax.PL AFF fight-for.3.SG.PRES  
 llym llifeit llafnawr llwyr y lladANT  
 keen sharpened blade.PL completely AFF strike.3.PL.PRES  
 ny byd y vedyc mwyn o 'r a wnaANT  
 NEG be.3.SG.FUT to surgeon gain of DEM AFF do.3.PL.PRES  
 'The supporters of the Cymry (will be) reckless of their lives:  
 the men of the South will fight for their taxes,  
 with keen whetted blades they will strike thoroughly:  
 no surgeon will get much profit from what they do.'



## (32) Middle Breton (BSG 34.16–17):

[*da roe map Doe nep a 'z croeas*]  
 2.SG.POSS king son God who AFF 2.SG create.3.SG.PRET  
*dyt [salut flam] a dylamas*  
 to.2.SG greeting bright AFF send.3.SG.PRET  
 ‘Your king, the son of God, who created you, sent a bright greeting to you.’

## (33) Middle Cornish (PC 414.2423–2426):

*pur wyr certan [an den ma]*  
 very true certain DEF man PROX  
*[lyes den] re wruk treyle*  
 many man PERF do.3.SG.PRET turn.VN  
*[agan laha] [ef] yma<sup>12</sup>*  
 1.PL.POSS law 3.SG.MASC COP.3.SG.PRES  
*pup vr ow contradye*  
 every hour PROG contradict.VN  
 ‘Truly, this man certainly had converted many men. He is always opposing our law.’

§18. George (1990: 229–230, 239–240; 1991: 216), however, identifies five tokens in *Beunans Meriasek* which do not appear to be the result of poetic overdetermination, e.g.:

## (34) Middle Cornish (BM 102.1805–1808):

*Myr age ymach heb wov*  
 behold.2.SG.IMPV 3.PL.POSS image without lie  
*mar syns y havel certyn*  
 if COP.3.PL.PRES 3.PL similar certain  
*ha thyso [age hanov]*  
 & to.2.SG 3.PL.POSS name  
*[me] a leuer pur ylyn*  
 1.SG AFF say.3.SG.PRES very fair  
 ‘Behold their images without a lie, if they are alike, certainly, and I will tell you their names very fairly.’

In l. 1808, *me a leuer* could also have been written as *a lauaraf* without disturbing the rhyme, both sequences bearing four syllables; thus George’s conclusion that these tokens are generated by the grammar and, therefore, represent an innovation.

Still, Eska — Bruch (2020: 332–334) are doubtful that this is the correct analysis. This matter will be the subject of future research based upon the full range of Middle Cornish texts.

12 N.B. that *yma* is one of the few verbs in Middle Cornish that usually requires V1 configuration even in affirmative root clauses. The occurrence of an adverb(ial) or verbal adjective to the left of *yma* is not unusual, but a DP in that position is very unusual.

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