

Preverbal subjects, information structure, and object clitic position in Old Occitan  
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The position of object and adverbial clitic pronouns remains one of the most problematic areas of Old Occitan syntax (Mériz 1978; Wanner 2010). This presentation analyzes clitic position in one specific clause type, affirmative main declaratives with overt preverbal nominal or pronominal subjects. In this context, henceforth a *SV declarative*, clitics are either preverbal (1a) or postverbal (1b) with no apparent change in meaning.

(1a) E.N Constantis **s'en** ANET.  
 and.Sir Constantine himself.from-there went  
*And Sir Constantine left. (Razo about Bertran de Born, §8; Boutière 1964: 92)*

(1b) E.N Guilhem ANET **s'en**.  
 and.Sir Guillaume went himself.from-there  
*And Sir Guillaume left. (Razo about Guilhem de Balaun, §34; Boutière 1964: 352)*

Although this variation has been described often (e.g., Hinzelin 2007; Lafont 1967; Mériz 1978; Smith & Bergin 1984), explanations of the underlying grammatical system responsible for it remain inadequate. One suggestion, intimated in numerous earlier studies, is that the variation is essentially random (Mériz 1978: 173-174). A more recent hypothesis (Hinzelin 2007) attributes the variation principally to regional differences within the Old Occitan territory. Neither view satisfactorily addresses:

- (a) the underlying structure of a grammar that generates both variants
- (b) the sizable imbalance in frequency between (1a), which is the predominant order, and (1b), which is relatively infrequent
- (c) the principles underlying the distribution of the variants in texts whose grammar generates both orders (if it is possible to identify such principles)

The present analysis combines theoretical claims about the organization of the clausal left periphery in medieval Romance (Benincà 2006) with a detailed examination of information-structural properties in Old Occitan prose. The data come from complete analyses of (a) the troubadour biographies (the *vidas* and *razos*) and (b) the *Vida* of Saint Douceline.

In Benincà's (2006) model of the clausal left periphery in medieval Romance, multiple projections are available to the left of the V2 core of main declaratives (on V2 in Old Occitan, see e.g., Kunert 2003; Lafont 1967; Smith & Bergin 1984). In the spirit of other recent work on Romance (e.g., Cardinaletti 2004, Gonzalez i Planas 2007, etc.), the present analysis posits multiple preverbal subject positions in Old Occitan, an idea whose basic premise can be traced at least back to Skårup (1975) but that has received little currency in subsequent work on Old Occitan (e.g., Hinzelin 2007). The analysis also follows Benincà's (2006) contention that the position of object and adverbial clitics is sensitive to the saturation of SpecFocus, the traditional 'first position' in declaratives.

As a first step, I detail the discourse-functional properties of SV declaratives in which the subject is clearly left-dislocated, as in (2a) and (2b).

(2a) [ForceP [FrameP [TopicP Bertrands de Born [FocusP si [Focus' FO]]]]] uns castellans.  
 Bertran of Born thus was a nobleman  
*Bertran de Born was a nobleman. (Vida XIA; Boutière 1964: 65)*

- (2b) Mas [<sub>ForceP</sub> [<sub>FrameP</sub> [<sub>TopicP</sub> ella [<sub>FocusP</sub> si [<sub>Focus'</sub> AMAVA]]]]] N'Ugo de Lasigna.  
 but she thus loved sir.Hugo of Lasigna  
*But she loved Sir Hugo of Lasigna.* (Razo of 167,52; Boutière 1964: 180)

I then demonstrate the information-structural equivalence of left-dislocated subjects like (2a,b) and subjects in sequences like (1b). I propose, contra Hinzelin (2007), that the subjects in (1a) and (1b) occupy distinct syntactic positions. In (1a), the most frequent variant, the subject straightforwardly occupies SpecFocus, structurally adjacent to the verb. In (1b), however, the subject is left-dislocated—despite its surface adjacency to the verb—and occupies the same left-peripheral Topic position as the subjects to the left of the sentence adverb *si* in (2a,b). Unlike in (2a,b), however, SpecFocus remains empty in (1b), with the consequence that object and adverbial clitics appear postverbally.

The analysis contributes to a long-standing problem in medieval Romance syntax by drawing on recent formal insights on the clausal left periphery as well as findings from information structure and discourse organization. The proposal offers a theoretically principled explanation of the variable position of object clitics in Old Occitan SV declaratives. The relative rarity of order (1b) stems from the fact that it is pragmatically marked, and a careful analysis of discourse organization elucidates the principles behind the distribution of orders (1a) and (1b) in texts whose grammar licenses both.

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