


FRONTING IN OLD CATALAN: ASYMMETRIES BETWEEN NARRATION AND REPORTED SPEECH¹

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the distribution, syntax, and information structure of XVS clauses in the narrative text and the reported speech of a thirteenth-century Old Catalan chronicle, the *Llibre dels Fets*. It is shown that XVS occurs mainly within reported speech and in embedded clauses. This corresponds with the conservative nature of these syntactic domains (the former reproducing syntactic structures echoing epic literature, the latter being inherently conservative syntactically), while XVS is less frequent in narrative text, which, in this chronicle, is more innovative and closer to spoken language. The data presented demonstrate that by the thirteenth century, XVS constructions were mainly used to express verum focus within the scope of nonveridical operators and their use only connected with a structural V2 requirement que in conservative domains. This variation captures the loss of V2 in Old Catalan and the emergence of modern SVO grammar.

ABSTRACT IN CATALAN

Aquest article explora la distribució, la sintaxi i l'estructura informativa de les oracions amb estructura XVS en el text narratiu i el discurs directe del *Llibre dels Fets*, una crònica del segle XIII. En aquest text, les oracions amb estructura XVS ocorren principalment en fragments de discurs indirecte i oracions subordinades degut a la naturalesa arcaïtzant d'aquests dos contextos sintàctics: mentre que el discurs directe vol emular la sintaxi de les cançons de gesta, les oracions subordinades són, generalment i comparativament, conservadores a nivell sintàctic. Les dades analitzades mostren que al s XIII, les estructures XVS s'empraven per expressar focus verum dins l'abast d'operadors no verídics. La distribució de les oracions XVS ens permet documentar la pèrdua de la sintaxi V2 en llengua catalana: activa en contextos arcaïtzants i absent en contextos innovadors, així com l'emergència de la sintaxi SVO moderna.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article explores the syntactic asymmetries between the syntax of Reported Speech (RS) and Narration in the *Llibre dels Fets* (*LdF*), a thirteenth-century chronicle written in Old Catalan, with a twofold goal: firstly, to establish whether the asymmetries between RS and

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Narration instantiate a case of grammar competition, where one domain would display innovative features and the other conservative syntax; and secondly, to establish how linguistic register and orality interact with the choice of grammar, as RS has generally been described as a linguistic domain that favours the appearance of innovative and colloquial features (Culpeper & Kytö 2010; Marchello-Nizia 2014; Mazziotta & Glikman 2019; Vermader 2020). By focusing specifically on the distribution of XVS clauses in Narration and RS, it is shown that the asymmetries found are indeed the reflex of grammar competition during the thirteenth century: the distribution of XVS clauses in Narration corresponds to that of XVS in an SVO grammar, where it is associated with marked information structure configurations, and XVS clauses in RS respond to the distributional features of an active V2 grammar, which, by the thirteenth century, was associated with older chansons de geste that narrated the feats of great knights. RS in *LdF* does not emulate the spoken language of the day. Instead, it aims at rendering exchanges between characters solemn, epic, and knightly. Two main conclusions can be drawn from this study: that by the thirteenth century, the use of V2 in Old Catalan was reduced to marked contexts, making it the first language to lose this syntactic feature; and that RS should not be systematically taken to be a source of oral-like data and that its value for historical syntax should be evaluated on a text-by-text basis.

The article is organised as follows. In Section 2, the theoretical frameworks used for the analysis of *LdF* at the syntactic and socio-historical linguistic levels are presented. In Section 3, a succinct account of V2 in Medieval Romance is offered, with special attention to XVS clauses, which have been described as one of the main cues for the acquisition of a V2 grammar (Lightfoot 1999; Yang 2000; Westergaard 2009). Section 4 explores the syntax, information structure, and pragmatic context of XVS clauses in *LdF* in RS and Narration. Section 5 contains a summary of the findings presented in the article and points to future lines of research stemming from them.

2. BACKGROUND: SYNTAX, INFORMATION STRUCTURE, REGISTER, ORALITY, AND THE DATA

2.1. Syntax

In this article, I follow the cartographic approach to the left periphery (Rizzi 1997; Rizzi 2004; Benincà & Poletto 2004; Rizzi & Cinque 2016; Wolfe 2018a, among many others). The cartographic approach assumes that the left periphery is composed of ordered functional projections organised in fields and associated with specific pragmatic functions. On the left of the left periphery, the Frame field anchors the speech act in terms of participants, location, and temporal deixis (Benincà & Poletto 2004; Haegeman 2012). It is followed by Force, a projection associated with illocutionary force and clause typing. The Topic and Focus layers follow, connected to topical and focal informational elements. Lastly, Fin acts as the hinge between C and T and is connected with verbal finiteness and mood:

(1) [Frame... [Force... [Top... [Foc... [Fin... [TP...

2.2. Information structure

In this section, the different informational readings associated with XVS sequences in Modern Romance, and more specifically, Modern Catalan, are provided in order to offer a standard of comparison for the analysis of XVS in Old Catalan offered in Section 4.

The dominant unmarked word order pattern in Modern Romance languages is SVO. However, to a greater or lesser extent, all Romance languages display alternative word order

patterns, such as XVS, where the verb is preceded by a phrase other than the subject and the subject surfaces immediately after the verb. This word order pattern has been associated with certain predicate types (quotative inversion with *verba dicendi*, unaccusative predicates) and marked information structure configurations. Here, I will focus on the latter.

XVS constructions have received different labels in the literature, often associated with the informational value of the resulting clause. Leonetti (2017) distinguishes ‘Focus Fronting’, which he mainly associates with contrastive focus on the preverbal constituent, from cases where the fronted constituent signals the lack of a topic-comment information partition, yielding focus on the clause’s polarity, that is, *verum focus*. Contrastively, Cruschina & Remberger (2017) use the term ‘Focus Fronting’ to refer to a syntactic operation where a focalised constituent is fronted to a preverbal position, triggering a variety of interpretations that depend on the information structure of the sentence, the speaker’s attitude towards its content, and the dynamics of the wider discourse. They distinguish FF from anaphoric preposing, an XVS structure akin to Leonetti’s (2017) OVS constructions. The essential features of these structures are the movement of a constituent to the left periphery and the presence of focus (be it narrow or broad), and thus, I will refer to them as Focus Fronting (henceforth FF).² Additionally, they also present the following syntactic traits, illustrated below with Modern Catalan data.

(2) Syntactic features of FF

- a. A’ movement of a constituent that surfaces preverbally;
- b. The fronted element must be adjacent to the verb;
- c. The fronted constituent cannot be doubled by a resumptive clitic (as is the case with certain types of topicalisation);
- d. The fronted constituent cannot be preceded by other fronted constituents with focal readings, but can be preceded by topics;
- e. FFs occur in main and embedded clauses (complement and adverbial clauses) with a fully fledged left periphery;

In FF, a phrase that is base-generated elsewhere in the clause targets a dedicated projection in the left periphery (Cruschina & Remberger 2017), and it occurs in a Spec-Head configuration with the verb, which also raises to the left periphery. This results in the subject surfacing postverbally (remaining in T):

- (3) (dic que) ALGUNA COSA ens dirà
 say.1SG that SOME thing to;us= say.3SG.FUT
 en David, de la feina nova.
 the David of the job new
 ‘(I say that) David WILL TELL us something about his new job.’

In (3), the NP *alguna cosa* ‘something’ has been fronted to a preverbal position. There is no coindexed resumptive clitic, as would be the case with a topical left dislocation. It can be appreciated that the subject surfaces postverbally when *alguna cosa* is fronted, while its canonical position is preverbal. Since Catalan is a pro-drop or null subject language, the subject need not be overtly expressed in XVS configurations. When it is, it can occur in the expected verb-adjacent and postverbal position, or it can be left or right dislocated. In the first case, it would linearly precede the fronted constituent and be separated from the core of the clause by a prosodic pause. In the second, it would occur postverbally, but once again,

² Leonetti (2017) describes instances of XVS with *verum focus* interpretation as non-focal fronting, because the fronted element is not narrowly focused, as is the case with contrastive focus. Since they do yield focus, just not on the fronted element, the term Focus Fronting is still pertinent.

separated from the core of the clause by a prosodic pause. Hence, in Modern Catalan XVS structures do not always present a postverbal subject, allowing us to certify whether there is XP and verb movement to the left periphery. Nevertheless, when the subject does surface, it appears in SpecTP, differing from other VS configurations where the subject remains in vP, as is the case with unaccusative predicates.

Informationally, FF is always connected to the notion of focus, which indicates the presence of alternatives relevant for the interpretation of an utterance (Krifka 2008). They might be an open set of alternatives, as is the case of *wh*-operators, or a more restricted alternative set, as is the case of contrastive focus, which indicates that there is only one alternative available in the discourse. In Modern Catalan, FF can trigger three different interpretations,³ all connected to contrast: contrastive focus on the fronted constituent, mirative focus, and *verum focus*, which take scope over the whole clause.⁴

Contrastive focus, as we have just mentioned, indicates that there is only one correct alternative variable in the discourse:

- (4) PERES menjó, no pomes.
 pears eat.1SG not apples
 ‘I eat PEARS, not apples.’

Mirative interpretations of FF express unexpectedness and surprise (Bianchi et al. 2016; Cruschina 2012; Cruschina & Remberger 2017), as in (5):

- (5) Apa aquí! Dues ampolles s’ han begut!
 INTJ two bottles REFL.3PL= have-3PL drunk
 ‘Come on! They have downed two bottles!’

Based on Cruschina & Remberger (2017: 518)

Mirative interpretations are only possible when there is at least one alternative proposition that is more likely than the asserted proposition according to the speaker (Bianchi et al. 2016), with the surprise effect deriving from the misalignment between the speaker’s expectations and the common ground or context set shared by the conversational community. Cruschina & Remberger (2017: 520) point out that in certain conditions, mirative focus can occur in out-of-the-blue contexts. While this is possible in Italo-Romance, it is not the case in Catalan: the referent always has to be retrievable from the common ground, where all alternatives are present. This aligns mirative interpretations of FF with contrastive ones. However, mirative FF differs from contrastive FF in that only quantified phrases modified by numerals can trigger this reading with marginal acceptability (indefinite quantifiers and quantitatives cannot).

The third interpretation that FF can receive is *verum focus*, which, according to Leonetti & Escandell-Vidal (2009) and Leonetti (2017), puts the focus on the positive polarity of a sentence. While FF with a contrastive interpretation triggers a partition in the clause’s information structure between the fronted constituent, which receives narrow focus, and the rest of the clause (note that both elements are already present in the common ground), a clause with a *verum focus* interpretation functions like a single informational unit. While Leonetti & Escandell-Vidal propose that in *verum focus* configurations the polarity of the

³ I refer the reader to Cruschina & Remberger (2017: 513f) for an overview of interpretations of FF across the Romance languages.

⁴ Bosch et al. (2013) propose that Catalan (Central and Balearic) can also have information focus in the preverbal position. Nevertheless, and in the absence of a wider context, I and five other speakers consulted (from Girona, Barcelona, Vilanova i la Geltrú and Tarragona) judged the examples they provided as instances of contrastive foci. Thus, I take information focus as an informational reading encoded postverbally, and I do not include information focus in the set of interpretations that FF can trigger.

clause is highlighted, I consider that they convey emphasis on the speaker's commitment to the truth value of a proposition, and not its polarity, hence the possibility of verum focus occurring in negative sentences, as in (7) below. In Modern Catalan, verum focus does not differ from other cases of FF syntactically, apart from the fact that the fronted constituent must be an indefinite quantifier:⁵

- (6) ALGÚ hi trobarem, a la Rambla.
 someone there.CL= find.1PL in the Rambla
 'We will indeed find someone in the Rambla.'
- (7) GAIRE ESTUDIANTS no deu haver aprovat,
 not.many students not must.3SG have.INF passed
 aquest professor.
 this teacher
 'That teacher can't have passed many students.'

Adapted from Quer (2002: 156, 25a)

In (6) and (7), the fronting of the indefinite pronoun *algú* 'someone' and the indefinite NP *gaire estudiants* 'not many students' triggers verum focus (the speaker is certain that they will bump into someone in the Rambla, and that the teacher has not passed many students, respectively).

A particularity of verum focus that sets it aside from mirative and contrastive readings is that it must appear within the scope of a nonveridical operator (Giannakidou 1998, 1999; Giannakidou & Alda 2021). Giannakidou distinguishes veridical and nonveridical operators. Veridical expressions convey certainty and commitment to the truth of a proposition, where certainty is understood as an epistemic assessment carried out by an individual on the truth value of a sentence. Nonveridical ones express the opposite: uncertainty and a lack of commitment. FF with a verum focus reading invariably occurs within the scope of an implicit or explicit nonveridical operator or expression. They include modal, intensional, generic, downward entailing contexts, disjunctions, and non-assertive contexts (questions, imperatives, and the protasis of conditionals), as well as nonveridical implicatures.

- (8) Context: Speakers A and B had planned to go for a walk and meet some friends, but since it is raining, Speaker A thinks their friends will stay home.
- A: Plou. Ja veuràs que ningú sortirà.
 rains already see.2SG.FUT that no one go.out.3SG.FUT
- B: Va, que ALGÚ hi trobarem, a la
 come.3SG that someone there.CL= find.1PL.FUT in the
 Rambla.
 Rambla
- A: 'It's raining. There won't be anyone around.'
 B: 'Come on, we WILL find someone in the Rambla.'

In (8), speaker A states that since it's raining, there won't be anyone around, implying any of their friends. Speaker B responds with a clause containing FF with verum focus reading, specifying that they are certain that despite the weather, there will be some of their friends in la Rambla. This specificity of verum focus is relevant to understanding the distribution of XVS in Old Catalan.

⁵ Modern Catalan allows only for indefinite quantifiers to undergo fronting and trigger verum focus, as is the case for Modern Italian and some dialects of Modern Occitan (Batllori & Hernanz 2013; Leonetti 2017; Pujol i Campeny 2021a, 2021b).

In sum, FF in Modern Catalan can convey three readings: contrastive focus, mirative focus, and verum focus. FF with mirative and verum focus readings create thetic clauses with no bipartite information, while contrastive focus correlates with narrow focus on the fronted constituent. Both mirative and verum focus occur within the scope of nonveridical operators: in the case of mirative focus, the speaker believed the proposition not to be possible (there is a nonveridical implicature in the speaker's belief set), while in the case of verum focus, the nonveridical operator is found in the surrounding discourse. In the three cases, the movement of a constituent and the verb to the left periphery is presupposed.⁶

2.3. Register and orality

The reconstruction of the syntax of the spoken language of the past presents researchers with great challenges, as it is only to be accessed through written sources governed by genre and register conventions. Research aiming at the reconstruction of oral language has generally focused on the reported speech or *oral représenté* (Marchello-Nizia 2014: 167) of literary documents (Marchello-Nizia 1998, 2012, 2014; Culpeper & Kytö 2010; Glikman & Mazziotta 2013; Mazziotta & Glikman 2019; Vermander 2020), which has been shown to display syntactic features that distinguish it from the surrounding text (Glikman & Mazziotta 2013; Mazziotta & Glikman 2019).⁷

Synchronic syntactic variation acts as an indicator of language change (Roberts 2007, 2010, 2012). Roberts (2012) and Biberauer et al. (2009) propose that syntactic variation is the result of oscillations in parameter setting, where one variant is archaising and another is innovative. Parameters are understood as formal aspects of natural language that are activated by exposure to Primary Linguistic Data (Ledgeway & Roberts 2017) and shape a language within the limits of Universal Grammar (Chomsky 1981), which contains a limited set of principles structurally defining human language. In addition to sign-posting language change, the study of syntactic variation can contribute towards the characterisation of linguistic traits associated with different registers, linguistic features associated with a specific situational context, and genres, ad hoc textual classifications that respond to the needs of a speaking community, often characterised by formal traits (as defined by Biber & Conrad (2009)). Comparing the syntax of surrounding text with that of RS can therefore contribute to our understanding of synchronic syntactic variation. For instance, Mazziotta & Glikman (2019) examine the syntactic features of the RS of four thirteenth-century Old French texts belonging to different genres and point out that despite the many changes undergone by French grammar, features associated with orality remain stable. The diachronic stability of syntactic traits associated with orality supports the traditional notion that reported speech offers a

⁶ According to Cruschina & Remberger (2017: 512), this is the case except for contrastive foci in Modern Catalan, Galician, Italian, Sardinian, and Sicilian, where the subject can intervene between the fronted constituent and the verb:

i AL FUSTER la mare va donar les claus,
to.the carpenter the mother PST.3SG give.INF the keys
no al lampista.
not to.the electrician
'My mother gave the keys TO THE CARPENTER, not the electrician.'

Adapted from Vallduví (1995: 131)

Speakers consulted for Modern Catalan express different degrees of acceptability for this structure, ranging from fully acceptable (speakers from Barcelona) to fully ungrammatical (speakers from Girona), suggesting that verb movement to the left periphery is optional for some but compulsory for others. I leave this matter for future research.

⁷ Interestingly, some of the features that have been associated with reported speech for the medieval languages remain stable diachronically (Glikman & Mazziotta 2013; Mazziotta & Glikman 2019). One such case is quotative inversion. Whether the motivation for this is stylistic or linguistic falls outside the scope of this article.

window into oral language, while the language of Narration is more prone to be subject to rigid and stable stylistic conventions. However, as shown below, this traditional assumption does not apply across the medieval textual record and should not be taken for granted.

Koch & Oesterreicher (2012) challenge the written/spoken dichotomy and propose an approach that distinguishes two axes of variation: the *mode*, which refers to whether a text receives a phonic or a graphic realisation, and the *style*, which refers to how the text is channelled, which can be in either oral or written form. These two axes of variation interact with each other and create a continuum, with the *language of immediacy*, associated with phonic features and linguistic features associated with oral registers, at one end, and the *language of distance*, associated with graphic features and linguistic features associated with written registers, at the other end. A lecture, for instance, would be a text with phonic realisation but presenting features often found in written language, while a conversation on a messaging app appears in graphic mode but reflects features of spoken language.

2.4. The data

LdF narrates the life and feats of King James I of Aragon in the first person, using the royal ‘we’. It was written in the period between 1228 and 1276 (the year of the king’s death, when a closing passage narrating his passing was added). Its importance lies in the fact that it is the first text to break with the ANNALES tradition, where historical events were simply presented in a list form, and it offers a personal and propagandistic account of the king’s life with the objective of justifying the conquest of the kingdoms of Mallorca and Valencia (Aurell 2005: 258; 2008: 315). While the authorship of the text cannot be attributed to King James I in the modern sense, the King was directly involved in the composition of the text and would have dictated it for a scribe to put together (Bruguera 1991; Bruguera 1999; Argenter 2005; Aurell 2005; Ferrando Francés & Nicolás Amorós 2005: 113). Among the evidence in favour of this hypothesis, we find several references to the composition of the text and its future audience (as it was conceived to be read aloud),⁸ as well as phenomena associated with spoken language, such as code-switching in reported speech spilling into the narration, as would often happen when produced in spoken language (Margarit & Maria 1986; Argenter 2005; Renedo 2010; Pujol i Campeny 2021a). *LdF*’s narration displays traits of the language of immediacy, according to Koch & Oesterreicher’s (2012) approach. This is further confirmed by the study of the distribution of XVS clauses, as shown in Section 4.

3. XVS AND WORD ORDER IN MEDIEVAL ROMANCE

There is general consensus in the literature that the Medieval Romance languages went through a V2 phase in their passage from Latin SOV word order to their present SVO (Adams 1987; Roberts 1993; Ribeiro 1995; Vance 1997; Poletto 2014; Galves et al. 2017; Wolfe 2018a). Holmberg (2015) defines V2 grammars as follows:

⁸ A reference to the text’s audience is reproduced in (i), and a reference to the book’s composition is in (ii):

(i) E, per tal que sàpien aquels qui hoiran aquest libre, (...)

And, so that those who will hear this book may know (...)

Fol. 41v, l 14

(ii) e Don Guillem de Puyo, (...), qui era ab nós quant faÿem aquest libre.

And Sir Guillem of Puyo, who was with us when we were making this book.

Fol. 8r, l. 21

- (9) a. A functional head on the left periphery attracts the finite verb.
 b. This functional head has an EPP feature that triggers the re-merging of a constituent to its specifier position.

Holmberg (2015: 375)

Thus, for the V2 requirement to be satisfied, the verb must rise to the left periphery, and a constituent needs to move the specifier of the projection where the verb has risen. Wolfe (2019) distinguishes two types of V2 languages depending on whether the V2 requirement is found in ForceP, in which case no constituent other than the one that has undergone movement to SpecForceP can precede the verb (with very few exceptions), or in FinP, in which case the verb can be preceded by elements base-generated in the projections preceding it. He labels them ‘strict’ or ‘high’ and ‘relaxed’ or ‘low’ V2, respectively. Additionally, V2 languages can either be asymmetric and only exhibit V2 in main clauses, as is the case in Modern German, or symmetric, displaying V2 also in embedded clauses, like Yiddish or Modern Icelandic. In Pujol i Campeny (2018), Old Catalan was shown to exhibit SVO grammar in unmarked declarative clauses, a conclusion that would make it the first medieval Romance language to have lost V2, with no notable asymmetries in regards to verb position between main and embedded clauses.

Analyses that propose that the Medieval Romance languages went through a V2 stage view XVS orders as a consequence of the formal requirement that requires the specifier of the projection to which the verb raises to be filled,⁹ while analyses that propose that the Medieval Romance languages presented a SVO structure defend that XVS responds to the interplay of information structure and the structure of the predicate (unaccusative predicates, for instance, favour postverbal subjects due to their argument structure) with word order. These types of inversion are compatible with a V2 syntax, as there is no requirement for the subject to raise to SpecTP or to the left periphery, but they are not indicative of the presence of a V2 grammar since they do not provide evidence for the movement of the verb to the left periphery, unlike Germanic Inversion (GI), which has been used as a diagnostic for whether the Medieval Romance languages exhibited a V2 grammar (Vance 1997; Vance et al. 2010; Poletto 2014: chap. 1; Salvesen & Bech 2014; Wolfe 2018a) or not (Rinke & Meisel 2009: 126; Sitaridou 2011: 164; Sitaridou 2019). GI is found in clauses where the subject appears between the inflected verb and the participle or infinitive of a periphrastic verbal form, a predicative complement, or other verbal object, elements that delimit the left edge of vP (Cinque 1990, among others), while another constituent precedes the verb. The subject position in GI is assumed to be SpecTP, with the finite verb having moved to the left periphery. Therefore, GI provides unambiguous evidence of V-to-C in the left periphery and for the requirement of a constituent to raise to the specifier of the projection targeted by the verb:

- (10) Germanic Inversion
 XP V_{Aux} S V_{Part/Inf}

The frequency of GI has also been tightly associated with the acquisition of a V2 grammar; the proposed proportion of OVS (XVS with a fronted direct object) where verb movement is non-ambiguous that is required in Primary Linguistic Data (PLD) varies across the literature and remains a matter of debate: 30% for Lightfoot (1999), based on German and Dutch data; 23% according to Yang (2000), based on Dutch data; and 13.6% according to

⁹ Formally, either Force or Fin is endowed with a V-Probe and an Edge Feature (EF), which requires the movement of both the verb and a phrase to the left periphery. For more on the formal particulars of this requirement (mesoparametric in Biberauer & Roberts 2012: 268), see Walkden (2016).

Westergaard (2009), based on Norwegian. The lesser frequency of XVS orders in Medieval Romance textual data has been used as an argument against these languages presenting a V2 grammar. However, two matters need to be considered to assess the validity of XVS as a cue for the acquisition of V2 in Medieval Romance: on the one hand, as Leonetti (2017: 889) points out, frequency in medieval texts is not a reliable criterion, as texts' representativity of spoken language and, more specifically, PLD is difficult to establish. On the other hand, the Medieval Romance languages were, generally speaking, null subject languages (NSLs), which means that XVS structures will often lack an overt subject, and the frequency of XVS with overt subjects is therefore not necessarily demonstrative of the presence of an active V2 grammar. Nevertheless, if cases of GI are found together with other features associated with an active V2 grammar, such as an informationally unspecified preverbal field (Poletto 2014; Wolfe 2018a) or the position of the verb relative to certain adverbs (Cinque 1990), they can be taken to be signposts of the presence of an active V2 grammar.

Preverbal constituents in the Medieval Romance languages could be discourse-new as well as discourse-old (Batllori & Sitaridou (2020: 26) for Old Spanish, Larrivé (2019, 2022), Wolfe 2018b), and Steiner (2014: 170) for Old French; Poletto (2014: chap. 1), and Cruschina (2011: 112) for Old Italian).

Larrivé (2019) studies XVS sequences and whether they are associated with a specific informational reading of the preverbal constituent in a corpus of Old Norman legal texts, the *Flan+* corpus. Texts originate from Normandy and the Paris region and belong to three legal text types that respond to very different formal conventions: custom records, judicial hearings, and investigations.¹⁰ Given that the texts included in the corpus present a good balance of linguistic registers ascribed to the language of immediacy (judicial hearings and investigations, which consist of sets of depositions) and the language of distance (custom records), it can be considered a balanced corpus despite not including texts belonging to other genres. In Larrivé (2019), only preverbal constituents that have undergone movement to the left periphery are considered. The author shows that from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, there is a steady increase of informationally new constituents in the preverbal position, which are prevalent by the fourteenth century, across the corpus. Interestingly, these results contrast with the analysis of preverbal objects put forth by Labelle & Hirschbühler (2018), who find the opposite tendency: an increase in discourse-old fronted objects across genres from the thirteenth century. In the case of fronted predicates (non-finite verb forms, subject complements) and quantifiers, Labelle & Hirschbühler indicate that they are often part of the clause's information focus but do not further specify whether the movement of these elements triggers other readings (verum focus, mirative focus).¹¹

In Larrivé (2022), the author seeks to assess whether XVS constructions are more frequent in dialogue or narration, assuming that dialogue is less conservative than narration, which exhibits more formal, conventionalised features. While the author finds that narration exhibits a significantly higher rate of XVS than dialogue in less formal texts (legal texts containing witness depositions), this asymmetry is not attested in formal texts (literary texts). Based on this, he concludes that formality (or the distance features associated with a certain

¹⁰ Larrivé (2019) does not describe the formal features of each of these sub-genres. We can assume, based on literature on the topic for other languages (Culpeper & Kytö 2010), that this corpus contains texts produced with different intentions in relation to orality and that are associated with the language of immediacy or distance (Koch & Oesterreicher 2012), despite falling within the 'legal text' category due to its content and purpose. Custom records tend to be conservative and follow strict linguistic conventions; judicial hearings tend to include reported oral speech of illiterate people, always through the quill of the scribe (Culpeper & Kytö 2010: 69), and thus, they offer a glimpse of the language of underrepresented segments of the population in the written record that has reached us, and investigations, which contain fragments that reproduce witness statements or declarations.

¹¹ In their study, Labelle & Hirschbühler (2018) exclude explicitly contrastive preverbal elements.

text) is the variable that correlates with a high frequency of XVS orders, and that written literary material is not the best reflection of medieval language diachronically.

Batllori & Sitaridou (2020) examine XVS order in Old Spanish in three thirteenth-century texts: the *Cantar de Mio Cid*, an epic poem; the *Fazienda de Ultramar*, a historical and geographical work intended to guide pilgrims through the Holy Land; and the *General Estoria* and *Estoria de España*, two historiographical texts that extensively paraphrase fragments of the Bible. Their study offers a qualitative analysis of the distribution of different types of XVS orders throughout the four texts under study, and while there are comments on the frequency of certain phenomena in one text or another, no specific numbers are provided (and is therefore not readily comparable with Larrivéé (2019)'s article).

According to their analysis, cases of XVS where the preverbal constituent is not base-generated in the left periphery (objects, adjuncts, and non-finite forms) can receive either information focus on the constituent itself, contrastive focus, or trigger verum focus, in which case the clause receives athetic reading (Batllori & Sitaridou 2020; Batllori 2015; Sitaridou 2011: 178; Sitaridou 2015; Sitaridou 2019). They also suggest that the use of XVS structures is a device found in texts conceived to be delivered orally to attract and keep the audience's attention.

Thus, there is consensus in the literature that XVS orders were not as specialised in Medieval Romance as they are in the Modern Romance languages: the preverbal constituent could be informationally new, informationally old (in which case they could trigger verum focus) or contrastive, and in some cases, the clause as a whole could receive verum focus. In the following section, I consider the distribution of XVS orders in Old Catalan regarding the Narration/RS dichotomy, as well as the syntactic context of the structure and its informational value.

4. THE DISTRIBUTION OF XVS: MAIN AND EMBEDDED CLAUSES; NARRATION AND REPORTED SPEECH

In this section, I present the distribution and frequency of XVS structures in the *Llibre dels Fets del Rey en Jacme* or LFRJ database (Pujol i Campeny 2018). LFRJ contains 2000 syntactically parsed clauses, of which 1000 are main clauses and 1000 are embedded clauses from *LdF*. Embedded clauses include complement clauses and peripheral adverbial clauses in the sense of Haegeman (2010). All clauses were marked for the following categories: [\pm pro-drop], [\pm reported speech], and verb position (1/2/3+). For the purpose of this article, preverbal constituents have been tagged for their informational value either as [old] or [new], following Larrivéé's (2019: 6) decision tree, inspired by Rahn's (2016: 39–40) and Steiner's (2014: 92–94) decision trees:

- (11) i. Has the phrase been explicitly mentioned in the previous discourse?
 - a. Yes: It is discourse-old.
 - b. No: Go to (ii).
- ii. Is the phrase referring to anaphor or deixis to a previously mentioned phrase?
 - a. Yes: It is discourse old.
 - b. No: Go to (iii).
- iii. Is the phrase used in a construction that accommodates it as discourse-old information?
 - a. Yes: It is discourse-old.
 - b. No: Go to (iv).

- iv. Is the phrase used in a context that leads to inferring it as discourse-old information based on (a) previous discourse or (b) world knowledge?
- Yes: It is discourse-old.
 - No: It is discourse new.

For this article, only V2 clauses with a preverbal constituent moved to the left periphery have been considered.¹² V3 and V4 clauses have not been included, as the status of some of the other preverbal constituents is often unclear. I consider both pro-drop and non-prodrop XVS clauses, which, in Old Catalan, do not exhibit asymmetric distribution across main and embedded clauses (Pujol i Campeny 2018: Ch. 4).

In what follows, I first consider the overall distribution of XVS in main and embedded clauses, and in Narration and RS. Secondly, I consider the informational value of fronted constituents and their discourse environment.

Table 1 shows that XVS clauses are more frequent in embedded clauses than in main clauses. There is a significant relationship between the variables: embedded clauses are more likely than main clauses to present XVS syntax ($p = 0.0001$, Fisher Exact Test).

Tables 2 and 3 show the distribution of XVS clauses across RS and Narration in main and embedded clauses:

Table 1. Distribution of XVS structures in the main and embedded clauses of LFRJ

	Main		Embedded	
XVS	43	4.3%	103	10.3%
Other	957	95.7%	897	89.7%
Total	1000	100%	1000	100%

Table 2. XVS in Narration and RS in main clauses

	Narration		RS	
Main XVS	13	1.3%	30	3%
Main non-XVS	790	79%	167	16.7%
Total (/1000)	803	80.3%	197	19.7%

Table 3. XVS in Narration and RS in embedded clauses

	Narration		RS	
Embedded XVS	56	5.6%	47	4.7%
Embedded non XVS	639	63.9%	258	25.8%
Total (/1000)	695	69.5%	305	30.5%

¹² Sentence initial Frame-setters such as temporal adverbial clauses (such as ‘*quan*’ or *when* clauses) and hanging topics are assumed to be base-generated or first-merged within the Frame-field (Frascarelli 2000:§3.2; Benincà & Poletto 2004:§5; Wolfe 2015), and therefore, clauses presenting a preverbal frame-setter or hanging topic are excluded from the analysis. Left-dislocated topics are also assumed to be first-merged in the left periphery, following Cinque (1990), Benincà & Poletto (2004), Benincà (2004, 2006), and De Cat (2009), among others. As listed in the tables, only clauses with preverbal elements that are not first-merged preverbally have been considered: direct objects, argumental prepositional phrases, subject complements, low adverbs, and non-finite verb forms.

As shown in Table 2, in main clauses, XVS clauses are more frequent in RS than in Narration. Again, there is a significant relationship between the variables ($p = 0.00001$, Fisher Exact Test). In embedded clauses, they are more instances of XVS in Narration than in RS, but proportionately, they are significantly more frequent in RS than in Narration ($p = 0.00007$, Fisher Exact Test).

Therefore, the data presented in Tables 1–3 show that the distribution of XVS has a significant relationship with the two domains of variation assessed: main/embedded clauses and Narration/RS.

Tables 4 and 5 further explore XVS in main and embedded clauses:

Table 4. XVS in main clauses

	Narration				RS			
	XVS		XVS (verb-adjacent postverbal subject)		XVS		XVS (verb-adjacent postverbal subject)	
Direct object	5	38%	2	33%	8	27%	5	38%
Prepositional phrase	4	31%	2	33%	6	20%	2	15%
Adverb	1	8%	0	0%	7	23%	5	38%
Subject complement	3	23%	2	33%	2	7%	1	8%
Non-finite verb	0	0%	0	0%	7	23%	0	0%
	13	100%	6	100%	30	100%	13	100%
/1000	1.30%		0.60%		3%		1.30%	

Table 5. XVS in embedded clauses

	Narration				RS			
	XVS		XVS (Adjacent subject)		XVS		XVS (Adjacent subject)	
Direct object	22	39%	2	20%	10	21%	2	13%
Prepositional phrase	21	38%	3	30%	10	21%	4	27%
Adverb	8	14%	4	40%	17	36%	4	27%
Subject complement	4	7%	1	10%	4	9%	4	27%
Non-finite verb	1	2%	0	0%	6	13%	1	7%
	56	100%	10	100%	47	100%	15	100%
/1000	5.6%		0.1%		4.7%		1.50%	

Tables 4 and 5 show the frequency of specific fronted elements in main and embedded clauses. As can be appreciated in both tables, fronted adverbs and non-finite forms are more frequent in RS than in Narration, while the rest of the fronted elements exhibit a similar frequency in both. It can be appreciated that clauses where an overt subject occurs post-verbally and adjacent to the verb are few and represent a low percentage of the overall database that falls well below the threshold for the acquisition of V2 suggested in the literature.

Tables 6–8 explore the informational status of preverbal constituents in XVS clauses in main and embedded clauses and in Narration and RS, respectively:

Table 6. Informational value of preverbal constituent in XVS—main clauses

	Narration		RS	
	Old	New	Old	New
Direct object	5	0	8	0
Prepositional phrase	4	0	6	0
Adverb	1	0	5	2
Subject complement	2	1	2	0
Non-finite verb	0	0	5	2
	12/13	92.3%	1/13	7.7%
			26/30	87.8%
			4/30	12.2%

Table 7. Informational value of preverbal constituent in XVS – embedded clauses

	Narration		RS	
	Old	New	Old	New
Direct object	21	1	7	3
Prepositional phrase	18	3	7	3
Adverb	6	2	5	12
Subject complement	3	1	4	0
Non-finite verb	1	0	5	1
	49/56	87.5%	7/56	12.5%
			28/47	59.6%
			19/47	40.4%

Table 8. Proportion of XVS within the scope of nonveridical operators

	Main clauses		Embedded clauses	
	Narration	RS	Narration	RS
Direct object	5	5	11	5
Prepositional phrase	2	3	11	5
Adverb	1	5	5	3
Subject complement	0	1	0	2
Non-finite verb	0	5	0	5
Total	8/13	19/30	27/56	20/47
% out of XVS	62%	63%	48%	42%

Tables 6 and 7 show the frequency of informationally old and new fronted elements in XVS sentences. Fronted constituents are predominantly informationally old. In main clauses, there is one case in which the fronted element is informationally new in Narration, and there are only two cases in RS. In embedded clauses, however, informationally new constituents are more frequent. They occur in both Narration and RS, where they make up 40% of XVS cases.

In this case, no tests of statistical significance can be applied, as the value of certain cells is 0.

Finally, recall that in Modern Catalan XVS, orders can trigger either verum focus or contrastive focus. When triggering verum focus, XVS invariably occurs within the scope of a nonveridical operator. To assess whether this was also the case in Old Catalan, we have controlled for whether cases of XVS occur within the scope of nonveridical operators.

Table 8 shows that XVS predominantly occurs within the scope of nonveridical operators in main clauses, in both Narration and RS. However, in embedded clauses, the proportion of XVS occurring within the scope of nonveridical operators is less in both main and embedded clauses.

Fronted constituents that occur within the scope of nonveridical operators are predominantly informationally old across the board, as shown in Tables 9 and 10:

Table 9. Instances of XV(S) under the scope of nonveridical contexts in main clauses

	Narration		Reported speech	
	Old—NV	Total old	Old—NV	Total old
Direct object	5	5	5	8
Prepositional phrase	2	4	3	6
Adverb	1	1	5	5
Subject complement	0	2	1	2
Non-finite verb forms	0	0	5	5
Total	8	12	19	26
%	67%		73%	

Table 10. Instances of XV(S) under the scope of nonveridical contexts in embedded clauses

	Narration		Reported speech	
	Old—NV	Total old	Old—NV	Total old
Direct object	11	21	5	7
Prepositional phrase	11	18	5	7
Adverb	5	6	3	5
Subject complement	0	3	2	4
Non-finite verb forms	0	1	5	5
Total	27	49	20	28
%	55%		71%	

To sum up, the data presented in Tables 1–8 show that:

- i. In main clauses, XVS is more frequent in RS, while in embedded clauses it is equally attested in Narration and RS. This distribution is not likely to be by chance;
- ii. Fronted adverbs and fronted non-finite verb forms are more frequent in RS than in Narration;
- iii. Fronted constituents tend to be informationally old, although there are a few cases of XVS with informationally new ones;
- iv. Informationally new fronted constituents occur mainly in RS in embedded clauses;
- v. XVS in main clauses tends to occur within the scope of a nonveridical operator;
- vi. When occurring within the scope of a nonveridical operator, the fronted constituent tends to be informationally old in all contexts.

In the following section, the syntax of XVS is described, and the distribution of XVS cases is analysed, connecting it to linguistic register and orality.

5. AN ANALYSIS

In this section, we discuss the syntax and information structure of XVS clauses and analyse their distribution in main and embedded clauses.

5.1. The syntax and information structure of XVS

XVS has long been associated with emphatic positive polarity or verum focus in Old Catalan, a language which otherwise exhibits SVO word order in unmarked declarative

(14) Licensing context

a. Question:

No ens **diràs** res de la feina nova?
 not to;us= say.2SG anything of the job new

‘And won’t you tell us anything about your new job?’

Paraphrase: *I thought that you were going to tell us about your new job, please confirm that I am right.*

[CP ... [PoiP [Poi’ [Pol ±] ... [ΣP no[SpeciP pro_j] [TP ens diràs_i [vP [SpecvP pro_j] [VP [DP res de la feina nova [v t_i]]]]]]]]]

b. Answer with FF

UNA COSA us en **diré**: és a Barcelona.

One thing to;you.CL= of;it.CL= say.1SG is in Barcelona.

‘One thing I WILL tell you about it: it is in Barcelona.’

[CP ... [FocP [SpecFocP UNA COSA [F’ [Foc us en diré_i] [PoiP [Poi’ [Pol + t_i] [TP [SpecTP pro_j] [T’ [T t_i] [vP [Spec,vP pro_j] [v’ [v t_{ij}]]]]]]]]]]]

Adapted from Pujol i Campeny (2019: 17)

As can be appreciated in (14b), XVS clauses conveying verum focus involve the raising of the verb to the left periphery, which, in this approach, values PoiP as coinciding or diverging with the common ground (which Farkas & Bruce (2010) formalise as a [±coincide] feature).

Verb movement to the left periphery linked to verum focus (or polarity focus, as also referred to in the literature) is already attested in Latin (Devine & Stephens 2006: 145; 2020: 39), with the difference that it does not involve the raising of a constituent to the specifier of the projection targeted by the verb. Latin V2 structures where non-focal material rises out of the verb phrase (be it a complement or an adjunct) together with the verb have been described as thetic constructions with no topic-comment split, instead of exhibiting a Topic–Verb–Focus structure, common in V2 constructions (Devine & Stephens 2006: 178). The constituent and the verb, like in Modern Catalan XVS clauses, target the specifier and head of a projection that is not defined in the literature, although the idea that it might be a focus position is entertained.¹⁴

The same structure sketched for Modern Catalan in (15) can be applied to Old Catalan:

(15) Licensing context

a. Nonveridical context

E que-ns pregaven e-ns clamaven mercè
 and that = to.us begged.3PL and = to.us implored.3PL mercy

que nós no-ls faéssem tort,
 that we not = them do.1PL.PST.SBJV wrong

‘And they begged us and implored our mercy for us not to wrong them...’

[CP ... [PoiP [Poi’ [Pol ±] ... [ΣP no[SpeciP pro_j] [TP faéssem_i [vP [SpecvP pro_j] [VP [DP mal [v t_{ij}]]]]]]]]]

b. Answer with FF

car TORT los faým can nós los havíem emparats
 since wrong to.them= did.1PL when we to.them = had.1PL seized

los feus e les honours (...)

the fiefs and the honours

‘...since we HAD wronged them when we seized their fiefs and their estates (...).’

¹⁴ Devine & Stephens (2006, 2020) dismiss this hypothesis on the basis that it poses an *ad hoc* focus position for Latin, a language in which, according to them, focus is located postverbally. However, the presence of an emerging left peripheral focal position is not to be dismissed, given its pervasiveness in the Romance languages. It is possible that we find the initial stages of Romance marked XVS in Late Latin (Ledgeway 2017).

certain degree of grammaticalisation and is often used in Modern Catalan, where the order *més v* would otherwise be unpreferred.¹⁶ This is shown in (19):

- (19) Ben sabets vós que més val la nostra
 well know.2PL you that more be.worth.3SG the our
 senyoria que d' om del món.
 lordship than of man of;the world
 'You know WELL that our lordship is worth more than any other in the world'.

Fol. 23r, l. 5

In (19), we are presented with two cases of XVS: on the one hand, the adverb *ben* 'well' preceding the epistemic verb *sabets* 'you know' (this collocation contributes to the eventual grammaticalisation of *bé* as an epistemic marker), and the case of *més* 'more' being fronted across the verb *val* 'be worth'.

The fronting of non-finite verbal forms consists in the movement of a past participle or infinitive to the left periphery, across the auxiliary of the verbal periphrasis it belongs to. It has been linked to verum focus in the literature (Batllori 2015). In the LFRJ database, fronted non-finite forms can convey new information, but even when doing so, their fronting puts emphasis on the assertion of the proposition. However, as we shall see below, their distribution is a marked structure that is associated with specific registers:¹⁷

- (20) "Don Nuno, pugem ab aquesta companya, que
 Sir Nuno climb.1PL.IMP with this company that
 ara van, que **vençuts** són (...)"
 now go.3PL that defeated are.3PL
 'Don Nuno, let's go up with this company, since it is leaving now, because they ARE vanquished'.

Fol. 38v, l. 25

The two informationally new direct objects found in XVS clauses consist in a cataphoric demonstrative adjective and the direct object of a light verb, *prendre conseryl* 'to take advice'. When the fronted element is cataphoric, its referent is introduced immediately after the XVS clause, as in (21), where *açò* 'this' refers to the embedded clause headed by *que* 'that' that follow (note that proclisis is indicative of FocP being saturated, supporting the proposal that XVS involves XP movement to FocP, as sketched above). The fronting of a direct object of a light verb is similar to non-finite verb form fronting in that the direct object carries the semantics of the expression while the light verb carries the grammatical information. It also exhibits a certain degree of grammaticalisation, like all constructions with light verbs (Acedo-Matellán & Pineda i Cirera 2019). It is not unusual cross-linguistically for objects of light verbs to exhibit distributional specificities (Devine & Stephens 2019: 36).

- (21) e açò·ls prometem en la fe de Déu
 and this = to.them.CL promised.1PL in the faith of God

¹⁶ Even though it is often described as a Spanish interference phenomenon, that could not have been the case in the 13th century. See Pujol i Campeny (2021a) for more on the sociolinguistics of the Crown of Aragon in the 13th century.

¹⁷ A swift search in the Corpus Informatitzat del Català Antic (CICA) of the sequence *vengut és* 'come is', a common case of non-finite verb fronting, shows that the phenomenon is attested only in learned literary genres (historiographic texts, religious works, and poetry) until the 15th century. Further work is needed to establish the precise distribution of non-finite verb fronting.

e en la nostra: [que açò·ls atendriem sens
 and in the ours that this = to.them.CL uphold.1PL without
 corruptment]_i (...)
 dishonest behaviour
 ‘And we promised them THIS on God’s faith and ours, that we would uphold it without
 dishonest behaviour (...)’

Fol. 32r, l. 10

- (22) E nós dixem-los que conseyl hi podien
 and we said.1PL = them.CL that advice there.CL could.3PL
pendre: (...)
 take.INF
 ‘And we told them that they could take some advice on it: (...)’

Fol. 33v, l. 4

In (22), the fronted direct object, *conseyl* ‘advice’ is immediately spelt out in the following sentence or passage. Therefore, it contributes to the structuring of the text, signposting the introduction of new content that makes the narration advance.

Finally, the one case of subject complement is a peculiar case, reproduced in (23):

- (23) Vera cosa és e certa que (...)
 true thing is and certain that (...)

Fol. 2r, l. 3

The expression *vera cosa és* ‘it is a true thing’ is attested in three Old Catalan texts: two thirteenth-century texts (*LdF* and *Taula General*) and one sixteenth-century text, with four out of the seven cases occurring in *LdF*, all cases in RS. This is a relevant fact for the following section, where I consider the distribution of XVS cases in the text.

5.2. The distribution of XVS: Orality and archaising syntax

As shown above, XVS structures are both syntactically and informationally marked, as they deviate from the syntax of unmarked declarative clauses. In addition to their syntactic and informational features, as shown in Section 4, their distribution in the text is not homogeneous; they do not occur at the same frequency in the main and embedded clauses or Narration and RS. Recall:

- i. In main clauses, XVS is more frequent in RS, while in embedded clauses it is equally attested in Narration and RS. This distribution is not likely to be by chance;
- ii. Fronted adverbs and non-finite verb forms are more frequent in RS than in Narration;
- iii. Fronted constituents tend to be informationally old, although there are a few cases of XVS with informationally new ones;
- iv. Informationally new fronted constituents occur mainly in RS in embedded clauses;
- v. XVS in main clauses tends to occur within the scope of a nonveridical operator;
- vi. When occurring within the scope of a nonveridical operator, the fronted constituent tends to be informationally old in all contexts.

Here, I will first consider the differences in distribution between main and embedded clauses, as well as between Narration and RS, while taking into account the role of nonveridicality in XVS constructions.

Crosslinguistically, embedded clauses have been shown to exhibit more conservative grammar than main clauses (Lightfoot 1982: 154; Bybee et al. 1994: 230–231; Crowley &

Bowern 2010: 231), or rather, innovations tend to occur first in main clauses and then spread to embedded clauses.¹⁸ Thus, the asymmetry in the distribution of XVS in main and embedded clauses suggests that main clauses are an innovative domain that is less accepting of XVS sequences (as is the case in Modern Catalan).

However, recall that in RS, XVS is as frequent as in embedded clauses. In addition to having to account for the main/embedded clause asymmetry, we have to account for the Narration/RS asymmetry within main clauses. Recall that RS is often described as a reliable source of oral-like data. Following this line of thought, XVS might be considered a feature of thirteenth-century oral Catalan.

Nevertheless, in *LdF*, oral-like features (or features associated with the language of immediacy) are not limited to RS. The narrative text contains evidence that the text was, at least, partly dictated. For instance, we find references to the moment of the composition itself; there is an abundance of anacoluthon (Aguilar Àvila 2011: 14), and we find several cases of code-switching spilling outside the boundaries of their syntactic domain, as often happens in oral production. These features have often been described as ‘preliterary’. However, as Pujol (1996: 36) puts it, it is only ‘preliterary’ if we understand ‘literature’ as ‘written literature’, as these traits are frequent in oral literature. The abundance of oral-like traits beyond RS in *LdF* is therefore connected to its composition. If XVS were an oral trait, it would be expected to occur in equal measure in Narration and RS. But that is not the case, as RS exhibits a higher frequency of XVS.

Recall that in Batllori & Sitaridou (2020) and Larrivé (2019), XVS is described as more frequent in epic literature. No Old Catalan epics have reached us, but XVS, and especially non-finite verb fronting, is also widely attested in early legal texts (Pujol i Campeny 2013; in press). Koch & Oesterreicher (2012: 457) describe artistic-aesthetic discourses (the label they apply to what is commonly referred to as ‘oral literature’) as elaborated orality. Its constitutive features derive from a creative process that is constrained by the mode of delivery and the fact that the text had to be memorised. This promotes the use of aesthetic elements to support memorisation (the use of formulae, repetition, rhyme, and rhythm, among others). This results in texts that share features with the language of distance, rather than the language of immediacy. Legal texts are among the first textual genres to be put in writing, and they exhibit many of the features associated with the language of distance (Pujol i Campeny 2013; in press): the genre is highly conventionalised and strives for clarity and authority; it is carefully planned, elaborated, and has a clear finality; there is distance between the different communication partners (the author and the reader/hearer do rarely coincide in space and time); and it is contextually dissociated. These features are shared with epic literature, with the difference that those legal texts would be written for the purpose of being read aloud verbatim and preserving a record of the law or legal act, whereas epic literature would often be memorised and delivered orally, which introduces scope for improvised intervention. If this is correct, the presence of XVS in *LdF*'s reported speech aligns it with the language of distance found in early epic poems and legal texts instead of with the language of immediacy, which is what is often said of RS.

Why would RS display features of the language of distance in a text chiefly characterised by orality? In Narration,¹⁹ the narrator identified with the character of the king and used colloquial language, an unsurprising fact given that the text aimed at humanising the figure of

¹⁸ Although other authors have argued the opposite, for instance, Vance (1997: 294ff) for the distribution of null subjects in Old French.

¹⁹ With the exception of the preface and the epilogue, which were added after the death of the king (Soldevila 1971: 17; Vinas & Vinas 2008).

the king and aligning his deeds with God's will²⁰ and that the text was partly dictated. By contrast, in RS, the king portrays interactions between himself and his vassals, the Pope, or other kings. It is in his interest to portray himself as well-spoken, and maybe, as sounding like the character of an epic poem,²¹ to confer more authority to his account and portray his character as solemn, heroic, and authoritative. The use of syntactic features associated with the language of epic poetry would yield such an effect.

Therefore, *LdF* presents us with a special case in the realm of the medieval written record of Western Europe. It challenges the generally accepted notion that RS brings us closer to contemporary spoken language by presenting us with Narration that is closer to spoken language than RS, as the text was dictated, while RS is elaborately crafted to add an epic tone to conversations between the characters, one of whom is often the king himself.

A further motivation for the presence of XVS in RS is the negotiation of common ground between the interlocutors and what is held to be true at the moment of the exchange. As shown in Table 8, XVS is mostly used within the scope of nonveridical operators, from which we can infer that it has a verum focus reading. Since verum focus is a marked strategy used to challenge an alternative statement evoked in the context, it is a device that is expected to occur more frequently in exchanges, where one of the interlocutors might be challenged by another, than in Narration, where the story line advances largely unchallenged, except for fragments with indirect RS and cases in which the narrator engages in a 'dialogue' with the audience, where he anticipates questions or doubts that may arise in the audience's mind:

- (24) VERA COSA és e certa que nostre avi, el rey Don Amfós,
 true thing is and certain that our grandfather the king Sir Alphonse
 féu parlar matrimoni a l'emperador de Contastinoble
 made.3SG speak.INF marriage to the;emperor of Constantinople
 que li donàs sa filla per muylar.
 that to.him.CL= gave.3SG.SBJV his daughter as wife
 'It is TRUE and certain that our grandfather, king Alfonso, asked the emperor or
 Constantinople to give him his daughter as his wife.'
 Fol. 2r,

1. 3

In (24), the narrator fronts the subject complement to cancel possible doubts over the truth of the content of the clause that initiates the narration of the king's conception, which is presented as serendipitous. Given that the conception and the events that preceded it are so unlikely, the narrator-king decides to dispel any doubts about their truth by using XVS with verum focus reading.

Finally, a note on the diachrony of XVS clauses. As we saw above, in Latin, verb-initial clauses can receive verum focus (Devine & Stephens 2006, 2019). The position of the verb in these clauses is assumed to be on the left periphery (Ledgeway 2017: 165). The specifier of the projection targeted by the verb would host a null operator associated with the particular interpretation of the clause (in the case of verum focus, a polarity operator (Devine & Stephens 2019: 40)). V-to-C becomes generalised in main clauses from the second-century AD, to the detriment of SOV. The specifier of the projection targeted by the verb could be occupied by fronted focal constituents (Salvi 2004: 110), but by the sixth century, the position

²⁰ See Aurell (2005, 2008) for more on the motivations behind *LdF*.

²¹ It has been argued that *LdF* echoes fragments of contemporary epics. However, this has not been proven (Aguilar Àvila 2011: 12).

becomes informationally unrestricted, as in Medieval Romance (Wolfe 2018a). For Old French, Wolfe (2018a; 2021) argues that the loss of Information Focus contributes to the specialisation of the preverbal field for hosting subjects²² and the loss of V-to-C. The same tendency is attested in Old Spanish (Batllori & Sitaridou 2020; Wolfe 2018a).

Data from *LdF* suggest that XVS orders were already undergoing specialisation by the thirteenth century, occurring mostly within the scope of nonveridical operators and favouring the fronting of informationally old constituents, with information focus being pervasively encoded postverbally. This is illustrative of the erosion of the low V2 grammar of earlier Catalan (Pujol i Campeny, in press) and the repurpose of V2 grammar for constructions with specific informational value. If this is shown to hold for other contemporary texts, XVS would then be a case of historical V2 in the sense of Sailor (2020): 8), being a historical relic of a V2 system from an earlier diachronic stage of the language. It further suggests that, as was the case for Old French, the loss of information focus in the left periphery led to the specialisation of XVS structures to convey foci types linked to contrast and epistemic modality: contrastive focus and *verum* focus.

Formally, the underlying structure of informationally-motivated XVS differs significantly from the underlying structure of V2: the left periphery is no longer endowed with a probe that attracts the verb, nor with an edge feature that attracts a constituent to the projection targeted by the verb. Instead, the verb and the fronted constituent raise to the left periphery in order to value the relevant features of PolP, a head activated by the nonveridical operator, creating a structure that resembles that of V2 grammars at the surface level but is limited to marked pragmatic contexts (within the scope of a nonveridical operator).

Nonveridicality also plays a role in the preservation of V2-like structures in English, where conditional inversion (where Pol is valued through auxiliary movement) is one of the pockets that preserves V2-like grammar (Holmberg 2013; Biberauer & Roberts 2016; Biberauer 2017), instantiating a move from V2 being a macro-parameter to it being a micro-parameter associated with specific auxiliaries (*be*, *have*, and *should*),²³ making English a partial V2 language, understood as a language that exhibits a V2 grammar in non-declarative environments (Cruschina & Sailor 2022: 17). In light of this, thirteenth-century Catalan from *LdF* could also be classified as a partial V2 language, where V2 could be activated as a macro-parameter in specific registers. Its high frequency in embedded clauses, however, remains unaccounted for unless we assume that embedded clauses do display conservative syntax, as suggested in the literature. XVS with *verum* focus reading in Modern Catalan would be reduced to a micro-parameter, as it is only possible when a quantifier is involved.

Poletto (2019) shows that while the disappearance of subject-inversion structures has been linked to the acquisition and loss of V2 in the literature, it is not necessary for the maintenance of a V2 grammar: Cimbrian, a German dialect spoken in Northern Italy, has never had nominal subject inversion in its attested history and has remained actively V2.²⁴ Nevertheless, the data presented here back up a loss of V2 in Medieval Romance, which would involve the specialisation and restriction of the environments in which there is unequivocal verb movement to the left periphery through subject inversion, and that, at least in the case of thirteenth-century Old Catalan, this could be linked to the specialisation of said structures for the expression of polarity (and epistemicity). This does not rule out the interaction of other variables, such as the possibility of having information focus in the left

²² However, Larrivé (2019) finds the opposite tendency, with a diachronic increase of informationally new elements in preverbal position from the 12th to the 15th century.

²³ Another polarity-linked V2 structure found in Modern English is *fuck*-inversion, but in this case, it is an innovation, rather than a remnant from a V2 grammar (Sailor 2020).

²⁴ Note, however, that Westergaard (2009) does propose that the cue for the acquisition of V2 should be refined to XVS_{Pro}.

periphery (Sitaridou 2011; Wolfe 2022) or the availability of V3 orders (Roberts 1993; Bidese & Tomaselli 2007; Vance et al. 2010; Poletto 2019: sec. 3.1).

In order to gain a full understanding of the mechanisms that led to the loss of V2 in Old Catalan evidence from a wider range of texts, instantiating different genres and registers, as well as different periods, would be required. Nonetheless, the grammar competition presented here hints at a situation that is paralleled elsewhere, but that is by no means universal.

6. CONCLUSION

This article has offered an overview of the syntax and distribution of XVS sequences in the thirteenth-century Old Catalan of *Llibre dels Fets*. It has been argued that the asymmetric distribution of XVS clauses in Narration and Reported Speech portrays a situation of grammar competition where Narration exhibits a non-V2 grammar and XVS is restricted to pragmatically marked contexts, while Reported Speech favours a conservative V2 grammar, where XVS is the result of an active V2 macro-parameter.

It has been shown that, like in Modern Catalan, XVS constructions involve V-to-C movement as well as movement of a constituent or head to the specifier of the projection to which the verb raises. The projection to which the verb raises has been hypothesised to be linked to veridicality (or relative polarity) already in the thirteenth century, requiring the content of the proposition contained in the XVS clause to be present in the common ground. Nevertheless, informationally new constituents could still be fronted in XVS configurations, even though they are restricted to cataphoric deictics, non-finite verb forms, adverbs, and subject complements that belong to set expressions. This confirms that by the thirteenth century, Old Catalan information focus was already postverbal, but that Old Catalan still allows for informational focus to occur preverbally in certain contexts associated with conservative syntax: embedded clauses and reported speech.

Additionally, the analysis presented points to one of the factors that contributed to the loss of V2 in Old Catalan: the loss of information focus in the left periphery and the specialisation of V-to-C for marked informational readings: veridicality. Narrative text, with its high affinity for the language of immediacy, XVS structures were already restricted to pragmatically restricted contexts within a non-V2 grammar where the preverbal position did not freely accept informationally new elements any longer, while Reported Speech (and embedded clauses) still exhibits a robust V2 grammar where information focus in the left periphery is possible and XVS is freely obtained.

It has been argued that the evidence presented from *Llibre dels Fets* contravenes the assumption that reported speech in medieval texts brings us close to orality and speech-like data: in this particular case, Narration is closer to spoken language (language of immediacy), as the text was, at least partly, dictated, while Reported Speech displays conservative features associated with epics throughout the Medieval Romance languages (texts that would have been delivered orally but that would have exhibited many features of the languages of distance). It is therefore possible to identify different layers of diachronic change within the same text.

This article shows the importance of approaching texts individually before interpreting their linguistic data diachronically. It also highlights the usefulness of the notion of orality applied to historical syntax and the importance of intra-textual analyses.

The analysis presented here does raise some key questions about the history of the Catalan language as well as the historical Romance languages as a whole. If the grammar competition outlined here is confirmed by examining further contemporary data, Catalan would have been the first language to lose the V2 grammar: French lost it by the sixteenth century (Wolfe 2022) and Italian by the sixteenth century (Poletto 2014). Whether changes in Catalan may have had

an influence on the loss of V2 in neighbouring Romance varieties, whether these changes were shared with Occitan (or at least Southern Occitan dialects, which have been shown to differ from northern varieties (Donaldson 2016; Wolfe 2018b)) or whether it was an independent change are matters that remain to be investigated.

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