Postverbal subjects in old Italo-Romance

Francesco Maria Ciconte

Department of Foreign Languages, University of Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico
Department of Humanities, University of Naples 'Federico II', Italy
Department of Languages, Literature and Communication, Utrecht University, The Netherlands
   < francesco.maria@upr.edu >

In the V2 syntax of old Italo-Romance, subjects can both be preverbal and postverbal in topical or focal function, except for unaccusative sentence-focus structures, where they are consistently postverbal. The VS order of presentational Foci is also found in classical and late Latin and in modern Italo-Romance, suggesting that patient/undergoer subjects are invariably postverbal over time. In the sentence-focus structure of some northern vernaculars, we document the emergence of an expletive subject pronoun, which, we claim, spells out anaphoric agreement (Bresnan & Mchombo 1987, Bentley 2018) with an implicit spatio-temporal Topic. In the written domain this Topic recurrently surfaces in the form of spatio-temporal adverbials, which provide the logodeictic coordinates in which all-new information sentences are embedded in narratives.

1. Postverbal subjects and non-canonicality in old Italo-Romance

In this paper we examine postverbal subjects in old Italo-Romance. Our analysis relies on the scrutiny of 31 edited texts (over 4000 pages), dating from the 13th to 15th century. To account for geo-linguistic variation, the corpus includes early Italo-Romance varieties from the North, Centre and South of Italy. All texts were read in full to ensure adequate interpretation of the examples in context. This also allowed us to familiarize ourselves with the stylistic features of each source, which proved to be decisive to keep distinct the vernacular, on the one hand, from the expressions modelled on the Latin literary canon, on the other hand. We selected texts with high frequency of direct speech, favouring dialogical narratives to plain expositions.[1]

Written data, in particular those from early sources, constitute fixed representations of a language at a given time. Thus, the extant written forms represent only partially the variation found in the spoken domain (Sornicola 2007: 558, 2013: 22). No grammaticality judgements are obtainable, due to the absence of the speaker/author, leaving some conjectures unconfirmed. Furthermore, written expressions lack intonational correlates, even more so in the early texts, where the punctuation, absent in the manuscript tradition, is established later by the first edi-

tors, in some cases arbitrarily. Therefore, any generalization is tentative. However, one can assume that "what has not yet been found is ungrammatical" (Benincà 2004: 247), especially if the interrogation of the data is carried out on relatively large corpora.

In the V2 syntax of the medieval vernaculars under consideration,[2] VS order is not exclusively restricted to marked or specialized constructions, and the subject can occur in the postverbal position in either focal (1a-b) or topical (1c-d) function, as shown in the examples below with unaccusative and unergative verbs.

(1)   old Tuscan

    a. *Allora andò   uno de'   dodici, il quale   avea…*
       then   go.PST.3SG one of-the twelve who   have.PST.3SG
       'Then one of the twelve (men) went, who had…' (*Diatessaron toscano*, 154, p. 332)

    b. *per loro parlò   uno advocato da   Volterra*
       for them speak.PST.3SG an advocate from Volterra
       'An advocate from Volterra spoke for them' (Dino Compagni, *Cronica*, II, 6, p. 159)

    c. *Li ambasciatori fecero   la   dimanda loro* […]
       the ambassadors make.PST.3PL the question their
       Andar   li   ambasciatori e   rinunziaro…
       go.PST.3PL the ambassadors and renounce.PST.3PL
       'The ambassadors addressed their question […]. The ambassadors went and renounced…' (*Novellino*, I, p. 122)

    d. *Quando Febus intese   la   buona volontà del   pagano* […]
       when Phoebus understand.PST.3SG the good will   of-the pagan
       parlò   Febus   col   pagano di molte aventure
       speak.PST.3SG Phoebus with-the pagan of many adventures
       'When Phoebus understood the good intention of the pagan […]. Phoebus spoke with the pagan about many adventures' (*Palamedés pisano*, 76-77, p. 137)

In the examples (1a-b), the indefinite subjects, *uno* 'one (man)' and *uno advocato* 'an advocate', are introduced in discourse for the first time. Thus, they are focal elements which are part of an all-new information sentence, i.e. they constitute with the verb a sentence-focus structure in the sense of Lambrecht (1994: 222).[3] By contrast, in (1c-d) the postverbal subjects, *li ambasciatori* 'the ambassadors' and *Febus* 'Phoebus', are clearly topical, as they are referents which have already been introduced in the preceding sentence. The evidence in (1a-b) and (1c-d) shows that the postverbal position is available not only to non-contrastive Foci, but also to Topics. In fact, topical subjects are found to be postverbal also in transitive predications, as shown below.

(2) old Tuscan
Capitando   Saturno   a   questo Iano[…], *fece   questo Saturno una*
happen.GER   Saturn   to this   Janus   make.PST.3SG   this   Saturn a
cittadella…
small town
'When Saturn happened to be with this Janus, this Saturn built a small town'
(Guido da Pisa, *Fatti d'Enea*, II, 33, p. 57)

The subject *Saturno* 'Saturn' is topical in its second occurrence, as it has already been introduced in discourse in the preceding text. Thus, the sentence is an unmarked predicate-focus structure (Lambrecht 1994: 222) with an established Topic.

The evidence above shows that, in the V2 syntax of early Italo-Romance, the postverbal position is not exclusively restricted to the encoding of subjects that exhibit non-canonical properties, namely the subjects of sentence-focus structures. Conversely, the preverbal position is not necessarily the default position of canonical subjects, namely the topical subjects of Topic-Comment sentences with transitive verbs.

As we shall see, however, subject placement is not unconstrained. With respect to the subject in Focus function, we observe a word-order difference between sentence-focus constructions with unaccusatives, on the one hand, and transitives/unergatives, on the other. In the former type of structure the subject is systematically postverbal, whereas in the latter the subject can be both pre- or postverbal. With respect to the subject in Topic function, we note a word-order difference between Aboutness and Referential Topics. The subject is invariably preverbal when it is an Aboutness (or Shifting) Topic, i.e. it is an active element of discourse that is newly introduced, newly changed or newly returned to (Givón 1983: 8, Cruschina 2015: 63). On the contrary, the subject is normally postverbal when it is a Referential (or Continuing) Topic (see (1c-d) and (2)), i.e. it is an element of discourse that is fully accessible, contextually given, and anaphorically linked with topics previously introduced into the discourse (Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl 2007, Cruschina 2011: 19).

The paper is structured as follows. We will first discuss intransitive predications, as non-canonical subjects typically occur in structures with unaccusative (section 1.1) and unergative (section 1.2) verbs. We will then examine transitive predications, showing that in sentence- and argument-focus structures the subject can be both pre- and postverbal (section 1.3). Since the subject is invariably postverbal only in sentence-focus structures with unaccusatives, in the remainder of the article we constrain the analysis to this verb class. We present three findings uncovered in the scrutiny of the texts. First, we observe that, in the written domain, sentence-focus structures are frequently introduced by

preverbal spatio-temporal adverbials. We argue that these logodeictic coordinates spell out the implicit Topic that presentative sentences presuppose (Benincà 1988, Saccon 1992, Tortora 2014, among others) (section 2). Second, we note that presentational Focus is also characterized by VS order in classical and late Latin and in modern Italian, suggesting that unaccusative subjects are invariably postverbal over time (section 3). Third, we document the emergence of an expletive subject pronoun in the sentence-focus structure of some northern vernaculars. We claim that the expletive spells out anaphoric agreement (Bresnan & Mchombo 1987, Bentley 2018) with an implicit spatio-temporal Topic (section 4). Finally, we draw some conclusive remarks (section 5).

1.1. Intransitive predications: unaccusatives

In this section we examine the position of the subject in sentences with unaccusative verbs. As anticipated at the outset, in the V2 syntax of medieval Italo-Romance, the subject can occur in the postverbal position in both Focus and Topic function, as shown by the examples below.

(3)   old Tuscan

    a. *venne   un matto   e   disse   loro…*
       come.PST.3SG a   crazy (man) and tell.PST.3SG to-them
       'There came a crazy man and told them…' (*Novellino*, XXVIII)

    b. *venne   il   beato   san Gregorio papa…*
       come.PST.3SG the blessed saint Gregor   pope
       'There came the blessed saint Gregor pope…' (*Novellino*, LXIX)

    c. *venne   il sire a doneiare e   domandò…*
       come.PST.3SG the sir   to court.INF and ask.PST.3SG
       'The sir came to court (the women) and asked…' (*Novellino*, LXI)

In (3a), *un matto* 'a crazy man' is introduced into discourse for the first time, as signalled by the indefinite article *un*, and is thus part of a sentence-focus structure. Likewise, the subject referent of (3b), although definite and probably known to the reader of the time, is nowhere mentioned in the tale, except occurring in this all-new information sentence. By contrast, in (3c) *il sire* 'the sir' is a referent that has already been introduced into discourse, and is here repeated after previous occurrences, which are lexically identical throughout the text. Put differently, the reference to *il sire* is not understood or rephrased, but is restated, thus bearing topical continuity.[4] The subject *il sire* is thus a Referential (or Continuing) Topic. Therefore, the sentence in (3c) is a predicate-focus structure with an established topical subject.

The examples in (3) shows that subjects that are within sentential Focus (3a-b) are postverbal, but so are subjects expressing a Referential Topic (3c) (see Benincà 2010: 41-42).

Focal and topical subjects can occur also in preverbal position, but under different pragmatic conditions, as shown below. To capture the discourse function of the subject, the examples are given in context.

(4)   old Tuscan

   a. *Polinicies* […] *arrivò*   *nella città d'Argis* […]. *E*   *chosì arrivato*
     Polynices   arrive.PST.3SG in-the city of-Argos   and thus arrived.M.SG
     e stando sotto un picciolo coperto di tetto, che pioveva, e
     and standing under a small   cover of roof that rain.PST.3SG and
     un chavaliere ch'aveva   *nome Tideo arrivò*   *quivi…*
     a knight   who-have.PST.3SG name Tideo arrive.PST.3SG here
     'Polynices arrived in the city of Argos […]. Whilst (he) had thus arrived, standing under a small roofed shed, for it was raining, there also arrived a knight there whose name was Tideo…' (*Chiose dette del falso Boccaccio*, 15-17, p. 205)

   b. *In questa stanza il conte d'Artese sconfisse*   *i Fiamminghi a*
     in this   stance the count of-Artese defeat.PST.3SG the Flemish people in
     Fornes, e lo re d'Inghilterra arrivò   *in Fiandra…*
     Fornes and the king of-England arrive.PST.3SG in Flanders
     'In this stance, the count of Artese defeated the Flemish people in Fornes, and the king of England arrived in the Flanders…' (Villani, *Cronica*, IX, 19, 13-15)

In (4a), the coordination of the subordinate (*E… arrivato*) and main (*e un chavaliere… arrivò*) clause is a case of para-hypotaxis, a frequent structure of early Romance, which establishes a relationship in meaning between dependent and main clause, the former referring cataphorically to the propositional content of latter. Since the coordinated clauses in (4a) share the same predicate (*arrivato, arrivò* 'arrived'), which is first introduced in the subordinate clause, the main clause is an argument-focus structure, where the new referent *uno chavaliere* 'a knight' is introduced in narrow focus.[5] By contrast, in (4b) the subject *lo re d'Inghilterra* 'the king of England' is a referent which has already been mentioned in book IX of the *Cronica*, figuring among the nobles at war. However, the coordinated clauses in (4b) do not exhibit Topic continuity, as *lo re* 'the king' breaks the local thematic chain with the previous subject *il conte* 'the count'. Therefore, the subject *lo re* is an Aboutness (or Shifting) Topic.

The examples in (4a-b) show that (non-contrastive) argument-focus subjects can be preverbal (4a), but so can subjects introducing an Aboutness Topic (4b). In fact, the latter type of Topic is invariably preverbal (Benincà 2006: 69, 2010: 40). We do not rule out the possibility for narrow-focus subjects to occur postverbally, but in our scrutiny we

did not find contexts in which unaccusative verbs followed by a subject could be unequivocally interpreted as an argument-focus structure. Rather, with this type of verbs the VS order with a focal subject seems to be solely associated with sentence focus.

The above correlation between pragmatic criteria and syntactic distribution of subjects is sketched below.

(5) V2 Clause Structure: Subject in unaccusative predications

Periphery	$X_{TOPIC/FOCUS}$	V…	
(X)	Aboutness Topic	V	Referential Topic
(X)	Argument Focus	V	
(X)		[V S]	Sentence Focus

The sketch above represents the positions in which the subject is found in a given discourse role. S indicates the subject of sentence-focus structures. The empty spaces indicate lack of attestations in the corpus. As illustrated in (5), topical and focal subjects can be both pre- and postverbal. Thus, in the V2 syntax of old Romance, the preverbal position is not the privileged position of the subject and VS order is not restricted to a single marked structure that deviates from a default word order.[6] In fact, VS is also found in the binary Topic-Comment articulation, albeit reversed, of categorical sentences (see (1c-d), (2), (3c)). VS licenses both predicate- and sentence-focus structure, although only the former is the pragmatic expression of the unmarked focus (Lambrecht 1994: 296). Interestingly, whilst in argument-focus structures the subject can precede the verb, in sentence-focus structures it is invariably postverbal.

In the early Italo-Romance vernaculars VS order is not as constrained as it is in modern Italian. Thus, the gradual increase of the information structure constraints on VS order in Italian and other Romance languages (Leonetti 2017) must have started at a later stage, i.e. after C15th, concomitantly with the loss of the V2 syntax.

1.2. Intransitive predications: unergatives

Predications with unergative verbs are characterized by the same correlation of pragmatic criteria and subject distribution attested for unaccusative verbs (see 5). In topical function, the subject is preverbal when it introduces an Aboutness Topic, but it is postverbal when it is a Referential Topic, as shown by the examples below.

(6) old Tuscan
 a. *Allora si levarono   i Fabii e   andarono al   senato.*
    then RFL stand-up.PST.3PL the Fabii and go.PST.3PL to-the senate

> *Il   consolo   parlò   per   tutti…*
> the   consul   speak.PST.3SG for   all
> 'Then the men of the Fabia family stood up and went to the senate. The consul spoke for all…' (*Deca prima di Tito Livio*, II, 48, 31-32)

b. *E   Socrate   rispose   alli   ambasciadori e   disse* […].
and Socrates answer.PST.3SG to-the ambassadors and say.PST.3SG
Dopo   il   pranzo parlò   Socrate alli   ambasciadori e
after the   lunch   speak.PST.3SG Socates to-the ambassodors   and
disse…
say.PST.3SG
'And Socrates answered to the ambassadors and said […]. After lunch Socrates spoke to the ambassadors and said…' (*Novellino*, LXI)

In (6a), the preverbal subject *il consolo* 'the consul' is an Aboutness Topic, as it breaks the local thematic chain with the previous subject, i.e. *i Fabii* 'the men of the Fabia family'. In (6a), the subject *Socrate* 'Socrates' is repeated after occurring in the previous sentence. Being a Referential Topic, the subject is placed in the postverbal position.

With respect to the subject in focal function, we were not able to find contexts with argument-focus structures. The available examples are sentence focus. In these structures, the subject can precede (7a-d) or follow (7e-g) – see also (1b) – the verb.

(7)   old Tuscan
a. *una boce gridò: « Non v'   appressate agl'   alberi…*
a   voice shout.PST.3SG NEG RFL go-near.IMP to-the trees
'A voice shouted: Do not go near the trees…' (Antonio Pucci, *Libro di varie storie*, 9, p. 88)

b. *una anima gridò: vedi   che…*
a   soul   shout.PST.3SG see.2SG that
'A soul shouted: you see that…' (*Ottimo Commento della Commedia*, 5, p. 61)

c. *et   uno parlò   e   disse…*
and one speak.PST.3SG and say.PST.3SG
'And someone spoke and said…' (*Novellino*, XXV, p. 189)

old Abruzzese
d. *Et   uno   parlò   fra   li   altri…*
and one (man)   speak.PST.3SG among the   others
'And a man spoke among the others' (*Cronaca aquilana*, LXXXI, 9, p. 17)

old Tuscan
e. *allora gridò   uno   de'   littori: « Addietro…*
then   shout.PST.3SG one   of-the lictors   back
'Then one of the lictors shouted: Step back…' (*Deca prima di Tito Livio*, III, 45, p. 308)

f. *Allora   gridarono   tutti: "Kirie   eleyson!"*
  then   shout.PST.3PL   all   Kýrie   eléēson
  'Then everybody shouted: Kýrie eléēson! (*Leggenda Aurea*, XXVI, p. 245)

g. *Allora piansero   tutti…*
  then   cry.PST.3PL   all (people)
  'Then everybody cried…' (*Leggenda di messer Gianni di Procida*, 20, p. 46)

In (7a-c), the subjects *una boce* 'a voice', *una anima* 'a soul' and *uno* 'someone' are non-presupposed referents of the discourse, which in fact bring an element of surprise to the narrative. The interpretation of the example in (7d) is a moot point. The subject *uno* 'a man' is an indefinite referent which is introduced into discourse for the first time. However, since the sentence is found in an on-going narration, the subject *uno* can also be interpreted as an Aboutness Topic that breaks continuity with the local thematic chain. In fact, the postverbal prepositional phrase *fra li altri* 'among the others', which makes reference to elements already introduced in discourse, suggests that *uno* is discourse linked (D-linked) in the sense of Pesetsky (1987), i.e. *uno… fra gli altri* 'one… among the others' implies the inclusion of the subject in a set of contextually determined entities. The example in (7d) may not be a sentence-focus structure after all. We argue, however, that an Aboutness Topic can be introduced as part of a sentence-focus structure. Although identifiable (in a contextually determined set of entities), the indefinite subject *uno* contributes new information to the proposition. Rather, the prepositional phrase *fra li altri* 'among the others' may be the right-dislocated Referential Topic which the sentence is about. Thus, D-linked elements can be sentence focus. In fact, in the example (7e) the postverbal subject *uno* (*de' littori*) 'one (of the lictors)' also appears to be D-linked, but it occurs in an unmistakably presentative sentence.[7] Whether an Aboutness Topic can be found in a sentence focus structure (or not) is an issue which deserves further investigation.

Below we represent the correlation between pragmatic criteria and syntactic distribution of subjects in unergative predications.

(8) V2 Clause Structure: Subject in unergative predications

Periphery	$X_{\text{TOPIC/FOCUS}}$	V…		
(X)	Aboutness Topic	V		Referential Topic
(X)	[S	V	S]	Sentence Focus

The SVX sequence of (7d) patterns with the sentence-focus SVO

order of transitive predications, with which unergative SV(X) constructions share the same pragmatic correlates. These will be discussed in the next section.

1.3. Transitive predications

In transitive predications, the predicate-focus structure exhibits the subject in both pre- and postverbal position. In this type of sentence, the distribution of non-focal subjects correlates with that observed in unaccusative and unergative structures, i.e. the Aboutness Topic subject precedes the verb (9a) and the Referential Topic subject follows it (9b).

(9)   old Roman
    a. *li   sollati   se   mormoravano*   […]. *Li   conestavili   todeschi*
       the soldiers RFL grumble.PST.3PL   the constables German
       demannavano   moneta…
       demand.PST.3PL   money
       'The soldiers grumbled […]. The German constables demanded money…' (*Cronica,* XXVII, p. 250)

    b. *Li   Englesi   se   fiongano* […]. *Una industria servano   li   Englesi…*
       The English RFL throw.3PL   a   trick   hold.3PL the English
       'The English throw themselves at war. The English hold a trick…' (*Cronica,* XIV, 128)

In (9a), the subject *Li conestavili todeschi* 'The German constables' breaks the thematic chain with the previous subject *li sollati* 'the soldiers', and is thus an Aboutness Topic. By contrast, in (9b) the subject *li Englesi* 'the English' is repeated to maintain topical continuity. Being a Referential Topic, the subject occurs postverbally. Note that in (9b) the non-contrastive focal object *Una industria* 'a trick' precedes the verb, yielding the OVS order frequently found in old Romance.

The evidence in (9) shows that transitive predications exhibit both SVO and OVS orders. Since we are concerned with postverbal subjects, in what follows we contrast the (O)VS order with patterns in which, under the same pragmatic conditions, the subject can equally occur in preverbal position.

In transitive predications with a topicalized object and a focal subject, the latter is found in both pre- and postverbal position, as is shown below.

(10)   old Neapolitan
    a. *uno   Iudice   Guido   de la   Colonna   de   Messina, homo de   approbata*
       a   judge   Guido   of the Colonna from Messina man of   approved

> *descriptione* […], *sì   l'ave   transontato in chesta presente forma*
> description   thus it-have.3SG translated in this   present form
> *latina.*
> Latin
> 'a judge Guido de la Colonna of Messina, a man of excellent character […],
> translated it (= the book) into its current Latin form (*Libro de la destructione de Troya*, 30-33, p. 47)

> old Tuscan
> b. *il   fedì   nel   petto, che non   avea   arme,   uno meser*
>   him rive.PST.3SG in-the chest that NEG have.PST.3SG weapons a   sir
>   *Filippo ungaro   e   poi lo prese   uno   per li capelli…*
>   Philip Hungarian and then him take.PST.3SG one (man) for the hair
>   'A certain Hungarian sir Filippo rove him in the chest, for (he) was not
>   armed, and then a man took him by the hair… (Villani, *Cronica*, XIII, 112, 23-25)

In (10a), the preverbal subject *uno Iudice…* 'a judge' conveys new information with respect to the 'book' (resumed by the object clitic *l'*) that has been translated into Latin.[8] Likewise, in the coordinated sentences of (10b), both postverbal subjects, *uno meser* 'a sir' and *uno* 'a man', are rhematic elements together with the verbs they follow.

Argument-focus structures, too, exhibit the focal subject in either pre- or postverbal position.

(11)   old Tuscan
    a. *Il   sole lo   conobbe   in ciò,* […]. *I sassi e   le   pietre lo*
       the sun him know.PST.3SG in this   the rocks and the stones him
       conobbero   in   ciò…
       know.PST.3PL in   this
       'The sun recognized him in this. The rocks and the stones recognized him in this'
       (Cavalca, *La esposizione del simbolo degli Apostoli*, I, 6, 33-35)

    b. *Suo mantello era   d'uno drappo fatto* […]   *e   lo fecero*
       his cape   be.PST.3SG of-a drape made.M.SG and it make.PST.3PL
       maestri di   nigromanzia in India…
       masters of   necromancy in India
       'His drape was made of a drape […] and masters of necromancy made it in
       India…' (Binduccio dello Scelto, *La storia di Troia*, CCLXXIV, 30-32)

In the second sentence of (11a), the subjects *I sassi e le pietre* 'the rocks and the stones' are the only focal elements that precede the verb *conobbero* 'recognized', which is already introduced in the previous sentence. In (11b), the coordinated sentences share the same predicate (*era fatto… fecero*), and the second subject, *maestri* 'masters', is introduced in narrow focus in postverbal position.

The distribution of narrow-focus subjects seems to correlate with their degree of referentiality within the context of the text. In (11a) the subject referents *I sassi e le pietre* 'the rocks and the stones' denote members or subsets of existing discourse groups, i.e., the natural elements that 'recognize' Christ (resumed by the clitic *lo*), and are in this sense definite. In (11b), the subject referent *maestri* 'masters' is not drawn from a set of context-identifiable members. Indefinite narrow-focus subjects of this kind are always postverbal, whereas their definite counterparts are in free variation between pre- and postverbal position, as is shown in the following examples.

(12)   old Lombard
    a. *Sancto Agostino   dixe   ke...*
       saint   Augustine   say.3SG   that
       'Saint Augustine states that...' (*Elucidario*, I, 64, 103)

    b. *Dixe   sancto Agostino   che...*
       say.3SG saint   Augustine   that
       'Saint Augustine states that...' (*Elucidario*, II, 31, 149)

The examples in (12) are taken from distant sections and do not constitute a thematic chain. The verb *dixe* 'states' is an established predicate, in that it serves as the formulaic expression with which a priest replies to his disciple throughout the text, citing various theological authorities. Thus, both (12a) and (12b) are argument-focus structures. The subject *Sancto Agostino* denotes the member of a set which is already existing in discourse (i.e. the cited theological sources), besides being identifiable by the shared knowledge of the interlocutors, and possibly the reader. Being definite, the narrow-focus subject can occur in both pre- and postverbal position.⁹

Examples of free variation such as that of (12a-b) are likely to illustrate the environment in which subjects started to undergo 'thematization' in first position, eventually leading to the grammaticalization of SVO order in modern Romance. This change might have first originated in contexts where a non-presupposed subject is nonetheless definite, i.e. specific (in the sense of Enç 1991) or identifiable, oscillating between rhematic and thematic interpretation.

Finally, in sentence-focus structures the subject can be both pre- (13a-b) and postverbal (13c). It is nonetheless important to capture the discourse role of the subject in the context of the narration.

(13)   old Roman
    a. *Uno Francesco   prese   la varva a questo Papirio e   disse...*
       a   French (man) take.PST.3SG the beard to this   Papirio and say.PST.3SG
       'A Frenchman took the beard of this Papirio and said...' (*Cronica*, XXVII, 28-29)

old Sicilian
b. *Dundi   unu franchiscu   sì   prisi   una fimmina toccandula…*
   thereafter a   French (man) thus take.PST.3SG a   woman touch.GER-her
   'Then a Frenchman took a woman by touching her…'
   (*Rebellamentu*, 44, 2, p. 39)

old Tuscan
c. *Una volta trovò   una volpe un muletto   in un bosco*
   one time find.PST.3SG a   fox   a   little mule in a   wood
   'Once upon a time, a fox found a little mule in a wood' (*Disciplina Clericalis*,
   1-2, p. 81)

Although (13a) is an independent sentence, starting with *Uno
Francesco* 'A Frenchman', it is found within the narration of a series of
events, as is suggested by the object *questo Papirio* 'this Papirio', which
refers to a character previously introduced in the story. If taken on its
own, the subject *Uno Francesco* is indefinite, and carries no presuppo-
sition. In fact, *Uno Francesco* can be construed as an Aboutness Topic
that breaks continuity with the local thematic chain to introduce the
informationally neutral Topic which the sentence is about. Assuming
that Aboutness Topics can be introduced as part of the Focus domain
(see section 1.2), the example (13a) is a sentence-focus structure. In
(13b) the subject referent *unu franchiscu* 'a Frenchman' is D-linked, in
that it is a member of an existing discourse set, namely the *franchiski*
'the French (soldiers)', who are introduced in the previous section of
the text (paragraph 43, p. 38). The sentence in (13b) brings surprise
and introduces a new course of events in the narration, because the
abrupt harassment of the French soldier against the woman causes the
riots of the people of Palermo against the French army. Thus, (13b) is
a sentence-focus structure with an indefinite D-linked Aboutness Topic
which is part of the Focus domain (see section 1.2). The sentence (13c)
sets the scene, introducing all-new information that does not rely on
an on-going narration. Rather, the adverbial *una volta* is the topical
(spatio-)temporal coordinate which is predicated of the event-reporting
content carried by the focal material that follows. We will return to
this point in the next section.

The distribution of subjects and their pragmatic correlates in transi-
tive predications is sketched below (14a). In (14b) we report the scheme
in (8) to highlight the similarity of subject distribution with unergative
predications. In (14c) we report the scheme in (5) to draw attention
to the fact that subjects are invariably postverbal only in unaccusative
sentence-focus structures.

(14) V2 Clause Structure: Subject in transitive and intransitive predications

	$X_{TOPIC/FOCUS}$		V...	
a. Transitive:	Aboutness Topic		V	Referential Topic
	Focal with predicate	Oclitic	V	Focal with predicate
	Argument Focus	Oclitic	V	Argument Focus
	[S		V	S] Sentence Focus
b. Unergative:	Aboutness Topic		V	Referential Topic
	[S		V	S] Sentence Focus
c. Unaccusative:	Aboutness Topic		V	Referential Topic
	Argument Focus		V	
			[V	S] Sentence Focus

The sketch in (14) shows that topical and focal subjects can be pre- and postverbal in both transitive and intransitive predications, although unaccusative narrow-focus subjects appear to be restricted only to the preverbal position. Since the V2 syntax of old Romance allows non-contrastive focal elements in the first position, argument-focus structures with a preverbal subject are expected. Interestingly, unaccusative subjects cannot be fronted in sentence-focus structures, which invariably exhibit the VS order. This type of subject can be said to have a non-canonical behaviour, in that its restriction to the postverbal position does not mirror the free variation of other types of Focus in V2 syntax.

Given that subjects are invariably postverbal only in sentence-focus structures with unaccusative verbs, in the remainder of this contribution we constrain the analysis to this verb class. First, however, we shall make some observations on 'presentative' or all-new sentences in the written domain of the early sources.

2. Postverbal subjects in the written domain of the early sources

In the written register the organization of discourse varies from that of the spoken domain. With respect to tethicity, for instance, VS order obtains differently in the written and spoken domain, being statistically more frequent in the latter (Lombardi Vallauri 2004, Sasse 2006: 269-270, among others). In written texts information is built (or retrieved) with poor or no reference to the extra-linguistic context, and it relies mostly on intra-textual deixis, or logodeixis (Fillmore 1975: 70). Thus, the linguistic environment that surrounds a portion of text is the main source of its meaning, and determines the informational role of the dis-

course referents. We refer to this environment as 'co-text' (Conte 1983: 96), i.e. the organized linguistic material that provides the interpretative features of a written text (Van Dijk 1977, Petöfi 1979, Conte 1988, Givón 1995, Salkie 1995, Andorno 2003, 2006).

Below we contrast two examples that exhibit VS and SV order with an indefinite subject, in (15a) and (15b), respectively. The co-text is key to capture the different construal of these sentences.

(15) old Venetan
a. *anche ven   uno   che à   nom Ganbaudo da Noenta*
   also   come.3SG one (man) who have.3SG name Ganbaudo da Noenta
   et   dis…
   and   say.3SG
   'There also comes a man whose name is Ganbaudo da Noenta…' (*Atti dei Podestà di Lio Mazor*, 24-25, p. 26)

   old Tuscan
b. *Uno borghese   di Bari andò   in romeaggio e   lasciò…*
   a   bourgeois (man) of Bari go.PST.3SG in pilgrimage and leave.PST.3SG
   'A bourgeois man from Bari went to pilgrimage and left…' (*Novellino*, IX, 1)

The example in (15a) is found in an on-going narration, but no presupposition is carried on from the co-text that precedes it. Rather, all-new, non-derivable information is 'presented' in contrast with the course of events established in the co-text, introducing an element of surprise in the narrative.[10] By contrast, (15b) is the opening line of the IX tale of the *Novellino*. Here, the co-text is being built, establishing a referent, *Uno borghese*, which is predicated of information that sets out the course of the narration. As such, the subject in (15b) is the Aboutness Topic of an informationally neutral Topic-Comment articulation. Note that in (15b) the verb is followed by other predicative material, i.e. *in romeaggio* 'in pilgrimage'. In our scrutiny, unaccusative verbs are never found to be the only predicative element if the subject is indefinite and preverbal, thus proving SVX order to be the expression of Topic-Comment articulations with a thematic subject.[11] By contrast, postverbal subjects can constitute a single rhematic unit with the unaccusative verb (16a-b).

(16) old Tuscan
a. *venne   una damigiella e   disse…*
   come.PST.3SG a   young lady   and say.PST.3SG
   'There came a young lady and said…' (*Tristano Riccardiano*, II, 20)

b. *E   andò   uno uomo di Dio, e   disse…*
   and go.PST.3SG a   man of God and say.PST.3SG
   'A man of God went and said…' (*Bibbia volgare*, 28, 3)

The evidence above suggests that only presentative sentence-focus structures exhibit a postverbal subject.

Presentative sentences introduce all-new, focal information that, whilst carrying no special presupposition, is brought about by implicit reference to the spatio-temporal coordinates of the discourse context. In the spoken domain, these coordinates need not be overtly expressed, as they are understood in the deixis of the communicative situation. Interestingly, they often surface in the co-text of the written texts. In particular, spatio-temporal adverbials such as *allora* 'then', *adunc(a)* 'then', *di ki* 'hence', *donde* 'thereafter/therefore', etc. are strikingly frequent in sentence-focus structures with unaccusative verbs.

(17) old Tuscan
    a. *Allora vennono   due valletti e   dissono…*
     then come.PST.3PL two servants and say.PST.3PL
     'Then there came two servants and said…' (Pieri, *Storia di Merlino*, XXXIX, 15)

    old Piedmontese
    b. *Adunc ven   un petit   olifant…*
     then come.3SG a   small elephant
     'Then there comes a small elephant…' (*Sermoni subalpini*, 10, 36)

    old Sicilian
    c. *Di   ki   vinni   unu missaiu   di curti di Ruma…*
     from here come.PST.3SG a   messenger of court of Rome
     'Hence there came a messenger of the court of Rome…' (*Rebellamentu*, 35, 5, p. 32)

    old Genoese
    d. *Donde   aven   grande   aflicion…*
     Thereafter happen.PST.3SG great   affliction
     'Thereafter there happened great pain…' (Anonimo Genovese, *Poesie*, 12, 480)

    old Neapolitan
    e. *Adunca vennero   tucti li citatini a vedere lo re   loro*
     then   come.PST.3PL all   the citizens to see.INF the king their
     'Then there came all the citizens to see their king' (*Libro de la destructione de Troya*, XXXV, 4-5)

The evidence from the early written texts thus supports the view that presentational VS constructions are predications of an implicit spatio-temporal Topic (Benincà 1988, Saccon 1992, 1993, Erteschik-Shir 1997, Pinto 1997, Tortora 1997, 2014, Manzini & Savoia 2005, Parry 2013, Corr 2016, Bentley 2018). Whilst in the spoken domain the implicit Topic need not be overtly expressed, its deixis being understood from the discourse context, in the co-text of the written texts, which lack

extra-textual reference, this is spelled out by spatio-temporal adverbials, which provide the coordinates in which all-new information is embedded.[12] Put differently, in the written domain the introduction of presentational Foci correlates with the explicit establishment of Topics in order to meet the conditions of textual coherence and cohesion, whereas in the spoken domain these conditions are met by the understood deixis of the discourse context. In this respect, (early) written texts are particularly revealing, in that they exhibit overt properties that may be phonologically null, or silent, in the spoken domain.

3. Unaccusative sentence-focus structures in old Italo-Romance

As we have seen, in the V2 syntax of old Italo-Romance, unaccusative sentence-focus structures invariably exhibit a postverbal subject. The information structure of this type of sentence interfaces with the semantic properties of the subject referent, which is characterized by low agentivity, and is non-identifiable and non-specific, and thus tends to be indefinite. The semantic properties of postverbal subjects of unaccusative verbs are also, of course, determined by the lexical-semantic properties of the verbs in this verb class (Perlmutter 1978).

The unaccusative verbs found in sentence-focus VS constructions belong to different Aktionsart types, which have all been associated with unaccusativity (Centineo 1986, Van Valin 1990, Cennamo 1999, Sorace 2000, Bentley 2006, Rosemeyer 2013): states (18a), achievements (18b) and accomplishments (18c).

(18)   old Lombard
    a. *e   stevano   tuti con lo   ventre in zoxo…*
       and stay.PST.3PL all with the belly in down
       'All (people) were face down…' (*Redazione lombarda del Purgatorio di S. Patrizio*, XVII, 8)

    old Sicilian
    b. *Et in una altra briga oy discordia   civili apparsiru   altri chosi*
       and in a   other fight or contention civil appear.PST.3PL other things
       maravillyusi.
       marvellous
       'And in another civil fight or contention there appeared other wonderful things.' (Accurso di Cremona, *Libru di Valeriu Maximu*, I, 4, 16-17)

    old Tuscan
    c. *negli anni   di Cristo circa IIII* […]*, scese   uno signore*
       in-the years of Christ circa 400   descend.PST.3SG a   sir

> *ch'ebbe   nome Alberigo re   de'   Gotti*
> who-have.PST.3SG name Alberigo king of-the Goths
> 'In the years of Christ around 400 […], there came down a sir whose name
> was Alberigo king of the Goths' (Villani, *Cronica*, II, 24, 9-12)

In the examples in (18), the subject immediately follows the verb, forming a tight predicative unit with it. In some diachronic analyses, V-S adjacency has been regarded as a case of (pseudo) Subject Incorporation (Mithun 1985, Bossong 1998, Sasse 2006), whereby patient subjects, i.e. subjects that fall into the macrorole of undergoer (Foley & Van Valin 1984), are incorporated to the verb to form a complex predicate. This process usually takes place in environments of V-S adjacency where arguments that are low in referentiality (are perceived to) act as predicates. However, in our scrutiny, we found examples in which the subject does not immediately follow the verb.

(19)   old Roman
> *dello mese de agosto, apparze   nelle parte de Lommardia una cometa*
> of-the month of August appear.PST.3SG in-the parts of Lombardy a   comet
> 'In the month of August, there appeared a comet somewhere in Lombardy'
> (*Cronica*, VII, p. 24)

In light of this evidence we assume that the postverbal subject need not be the only predicative element with the verb, as other focal material can intervene between the verb and the subject.

Sentence-focus structures exhibit the VS order also in classical and late Latin and in Modern Italian, suggesting that patient/undergoer subjects in sentence focus are invariably postverbal over time.

(20)   classical Latin
a. *Venerunt   Macedones   a   Philippo mille   et quingenti*
> come.PST.3PL Macedonians.NOM.PL from Philip   one thousand and five hundreds
> 'There came fifteen hundred Macedonians from (king) Philip' (Titus Livius,
> *Ab urbe condita*, 34, 26)

late Latin
b. *venerunt   harpyiae   inprovisae   de   montibus*
> come.PST.3PL harpies.NOM.PL unforseen.NOM.PL from mountains
> 'There suddenly came harpies from the mountains' (Tiberius Claudius Donatus,
> *Interpretationes Virgilianae*, I, 3, 5 p. 297 [C5th])

old Italo-Romance (Tuscan)
c. *vennero   alcuni cristiani e…*
> come.PST.3PL some   Christians and
> 'There came some Christians and… ' (*Leggenda Aurea*, LXIV, 4-5)

modern Italian
d. *Vennero   alcuni cristiani   e…*
   come.PST.3PL some   Christians   and
   'There came some Christians and…'

With the exception of the paraphrase in (20d), all the examples introduce all-new information with regards to the on-going narration.

Subjects also appear to be invariably postverbal in a subgroup of presentative sentences, namely existential constructions. These express a proposition about the existence or presence of someone or something in an implicit, i.e. semantically unspecified, spatio-temporal domain (see Bentley *et al.* 2015 and references therein). As shown in (21), the pivot, i.e. the existential noun phrase, is invariably postcopular.[13]

(21)   classical Latin
   a. *Erant   in quadam civitate rex   et   regina…*
      be.PST.3PL in one   town king.NOM.SG and queen.NOM.SG
      'There were in a town a king and a queen…' (Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, IV, 28)

      late Latin
   b. *Sunt   in suburbanis loca   publica*
      be.3PL in suburbs   places.NOM.PL public.NOM.PL
      'There are public places in the suburbs' (pseudo Agennius Urbicus, *Commentum de controversis*, p. 67 [C6th])

      old Italo-Romance (Tuscan)
   c. *Era   una Guasca   in Cipri…*
      be.PST.3SG a   Gascon (woman) in Cyprus
      'There was a Gascon woman in Cyprus…' (*Novellino,* LI, p. 238)

      old Italo-Romance (Sicilian)
   d. *In quilli paysi   ci fu   unu grandi gintilomu…*
      in those countries PF be.PST.3SG a   great   gentleman
      'There was a great gentleman in those countries' (*Conquesta,* I, 12, p. 4)
      modern Italian

   e. *Ci sono   molte persone in piazza*
      PF be.3PL many people in square
      'There are many people in the square'

Classical Latin is claimed to have been characterized by a default SOV order (Vincent 1988, Salvi 2005, Oniga 2004, Devine & Stephens 2006, Ledgeway 2012, among others). Starting from C2nd, late Latin texts exhibit verb-initial (V1) syntax, where elements that bear pragmatic salience can precede the verb, yielding recurrent instances of 'verb-medial' SVO or OVS orders (Herman 2000: 86, Oniga 2014,

Ledgeway 2017). This anticipates the V2 syntax of old Romance, where, at a late stage, subjects start to undergo 'thematization' in the first position (see 12a), leading to the grammaticalized SVO order of modern Romance. However, the evidence in (20-21) suggests that the VS order of unaccusative sentence-focus structure is constant over time, notwithstanding the typological changes that occur in the transition from Latin to modern Romance. In this transition, the reorganization of information structure interfaces with verb class and macro-role assignment. Thus, in unaccusative predications, the VS order of presentational Focus does not appear to be affected by these changes. Rather, in sentence-focus structures the subject is consistently postverbal throughout the transition from Latin SOV to early Romance V2 to modern Romance SVO.

4. Expletives and grammaticalization of subject agreement in northern varieties

In some early northern varieties, sentence-focus structures exhibit an optional expletive pronominal form in preverbal position. The following examples, taken from the same text, show the optionality of the expletive in similar presentational contexts.

(22) old Venetan
    a. *elo   li   vene   munegi incontra*
       EXPL to-him come.PST.3 monks   across
       'There came monks towards him' (*Navigatio Sancti Brendani veneta*, 13-14, p. 92)

    b. *e   vene   arquanti flantisi   e   toni*
       and come.PST.3 several   lightnings and   thunders
       'And there came several lightnings and thunders' (*Navigatio Sancti Brendani veneta*, 16, p. 236)

    c. *elo vene   una gran nivola blanca*
       EXPL come.PST.3 a   great cloud white
       'There came a great white cloud' (*Navigatio Sancti Brendani veneta*, 22-23, p. 130)

    d. *ora vene   uno frar de lo monestier*
       now come.PST.3 a   friar of the monastery
       'Now, there came a friar of the monastery' (*Navigatio Sancti Brendani veneta*, 2-3, p. 94)

In (22a) and (22c) the third person masculine singular pronoun *elo* is not co-referential with the postverbal subjects, i.e., respectively, the masculine plural *munegi* 'monks', and the feminine singular *nivola*

'cloud'. The pronoun *elo* is unequivocally a non-referential expletive, which, however, at this stage need not occur obligatorily, as shown in (22b) and (22d).

All the sentences in (22a-d) exhibit an invariant form of the unaccusative verb, *vene* 'came'. In the early northern varieties, verb morphology undergoes phonological erosion, resulting in syncretic forms that lack inflectional number features in the third person. This in turn correlates with the retrenchment of grammatical V-S agreement in these vernaculars (Bentley 2018). The emergence of the expletive in VS sentence-focus structures like (22a) and (22c) may be indicative of the lack of agreement for any feature, since the pronominal form neither agrees in number with the finite verb nor in number or gender with the postverbal subject. However, at this stage, focal and topical postverbal subjects are found in the same V-S agreement pattern with the syncretic verb form. Thus, the syncretic form of the verb does not differentiate between focal undergoer subjects (23a), on the one hand, and topical actor subjects (23b-c), on the other hand. Indeed, the expletive is only optional and subject clitics have not yet appeared.

(23) old Venetan

  a. *vene   altri frari incontra questi*
     come.PST.3 other friars towards these (monks)
     'There came other friars towards these monks' (*Navigatio Sancti Brendani veneta*, 1, p. 98)

  b. *e   trovà   li frari lo monestir de san   Abeo*
     and find.PST.3 the friars the monastery of saint Abba
     'And the friars found the monastery of saint Abba' (*Navigatio Sancti Brendani veneta*, 27-28, p. 88)

  c. *andà   innanti li santi abadi infina la gliesia*
     go.PST.3 ahead   the saint abbots up-to the church
     'The saint abbots went ahead up to the church' (*Navigatio Sancti Brendani veneta*, 13, p. 96)

In V2 syntax, VS order obtains in both sentence- (23a) and predicate-focus structures (23b-c), these being either transitive (23b) or unaccusative (23c) predications. In (23a), the focal undergoer subject *frari* 'the friars' cannot be said to fail (or not to fail) to control grammatical agreement more distinctively than the topical actor subject *li frari* in (23b) does (or does not). At this stage, unaccusative VS structures (23a,c) appear to be undifferentiated, at least formally, insofar as a Continuing/Referential Topic subject can follow the syncretic verb (23c) on a par with the subject

of sentence-focus structures (23a). However, this might have been the environment where the grammaticalization of subject agreement started (Bentley 2018). Two subsequent stages must be distinguished. First, there emerges an expletive, which spells out the implicit Topic that sentence-focus structures presuppose. This is testified by the early northern texts under examination, which date C14[th]. This type of agreement can be described as 'anaphoric', in that it involves agreement with an implicit, semantically unspecified, discourse-dependent antecedent (Bentley 2018, building on Bresnan & Mchombo's 1987, and references therein). Then, at a later stage, i.e. after C16[th], concomitantly with the loss of the V2 syntax, there emerge subject clitics (Haiman 1974, Benincà 1995, Poletto 1995, Parry 2013), which gradually become extended exponents of finite (person and number) agreement in most dialects (Rizzi 1986, Brandi & Cordin 1989, Poletto 2000, among others). This type of agreement is grammatical, in that it involves subject phi features. Diachronically, grammatical agreement is derived from anaphoric agreement (Givón 1976; Siewierska 1999; Corbett 2003; Mithun 2003, among others).[14]

The northern texts under examination testify to the earliest stage of the grammaticalization of subject agreement, when an expletive form starts to appear, though not consistently, to spell out anaphoric agreement with the implicit Topic of sentence-focus structures with a postverbal subject.

(24)   old Piedmontese
    a. *El   fo   un reis qui avea…*
       EXPL be.PST.3SG a   king who have.PST.3SG
       'There was a king who had…' (*Sermoni subalpini*, X, 28-29)

    b. *Anc no fo   hom qui la   poes   veeir*
       yet NEG be.PST.3SG man who her can.PST.SUBJ.3SG see.INF
       'There has not yet been anyone who has been able to see her' (*Sermoni subalpini*, X, 14)

       old Lombard
    c. *El   sera   gran guerre*
       EXPL be.FUT.3 great wars
       'There will be great wars…' (*Parafrasi*, 56[b], 20, p. 84)

    d. (*sul   sabion…*) *e   fo   gran piouei*
       on-the riverbank and be.PST.3SG great rains
       '(On the riverbank…) and there were great rains' (*Parafrasi*, 23[b], 35, p. 28)

       old Venetan
    e. *Ora elo   comenzà grandi flantisi   e   toni*
       now EXPL start.PST.3 great   lightnings and thunders
       'Now it started great lightnings and thunders' (*Navigatio Sancti Brendani*

veneta, 37, 3)

f. *Et   atanto comenzà   le   zostre del   cavalier*
and then   start.PST.3 the jousts of-the knight
'And then (it) started the jousts of the knight' (*Tristano veneto*, 14-15, p. 406)

g. *el   vene   da   zielo uno gran flantiso e   uno ton*
EXPL come.PST.3from sky   a   great lightning and a   thunder
'There came from the sky a big lightning and a thunder' (*Navigatio Sancti Brendani veneta*, 39, 18)

h. *da   diverse parte ne   vene   incontra molti   munegi*
from different parts INDE come.PST.3 towards many   monks
'From different places there came towards (him) many monks' (*Navigatio Sancti Brendani veneta*, 1, 19)

i. *elo   li   aparse   una isola piziola*
EXPL to-him appear.PST.3 a   island small
'There appeared to him a small island' (*Navigatio Sancti Brendani veneta*, 26-27, p. 180)

j. *un dì, sì   li   aparse   una nivola molto granda*
one day thus to-him appear.PST.3 a   cloud very   big
'One day there appeared to him a very big cloud' (*Navigatio Sancti Brendani veneta*, 29-30, p. 108)

As shown by the contrasted pairs of examples in (24), at this stage the emerging expletive form in preverbal position is not yet stable. Importantly, spatio-temporal reference (*anc, sul sabion, atanto, da diverse parte, un dì*) is explicit in the absence of the expletive, but need not be overtly expressed if the expletive occurs, suggesting that the expletive spells out anaphoric agreement with an implicit Topic that is non-referential and non-presupposed in the co-text. Observe also that we did not find this kind of expletive subject in the other information structure types in the early texts.

5. Conclusions

In this paper we have examined postverbal subjects in old Italo-Romance. Since the V2 syntax of old (Italo-)Romance is characterized by a pragmatically motivated variability in word order, subjects can occur in pre- and postverbal position in either focal or topical function. Thus, we outlined and compared the word order patterns licensed by the V2 syntax in order to single out those in which the subject is postverbal under pragmatic and semantic conditions that cannot be met if the subject is in preverbal position. The evidence suggests that subjects are

obligatorily postverbal only in sentence-focus structures with unaccusative verbs. To occur postverbally in these constructions, the subject referent must carry no presupposition and must be low in agentivity, non-identifiable and non-specific, whether formally indefinite or definite.

Since we dealt with written sources, we captured the discourse role of the postverbal subject within its co-text. Our findings indicate that VS presentational Focus structures frequently exhibit preverbal spatio-temporal adverbial forms that provide the logodeictic coordinates in which all-new information is embedded within on-going narrations. This supports the view that sentence-focus structures are predications of an implicit spatio-temporal Topic. Whilst in the spoken domain the Topic is presupposed and understood in the discourse context, this is overtly spelled out in the written domain, which lacks extra-textual reference.

We also noted that the sentence-focus structures with unaccusatives exhibit VS order in classical and late Latin and in modern Italo-Romance, suggesting that patient/undergoer subjects are invariably postverbal over time, notwithstanding the typological changes that affect the default word order in the transition from Latin SOV to early Romance V2 to modern Romance SVO.

Finally we documented the emergence of a preverbal expletive form in the presentative sentences of some northern Italo-Romance vernaculars. Even though, at this stage, the expletive does not occur obligatorily, we claimed that the non-referential pronominal form spells out anaphoric agreement with the implicit Topic that sentence-focus structures presuppose.

Notes

[1]   We searched for question-answer sequences that could provide diagnostics of Focus domain, but this was not always an effective method. With respect to narrow-focus subjects, for example, we were only able to find elliptical replies to *wh*-questions, e.g. *Domandà chi rivà, dis: li fanti deli prediti Pero et Saracho* '(He) asked who arrived, (he) said: the infantry men (guards) of the above-mentioned Pero and Saracho' (*Atti dei Podestà di Lio Mazor*, 9-10, p. 18 [old Venetan]).

[2]   In a well-established line of research, the early Romance varieties are claimed to have been characterized by a 'verb second' (V2) syntax. For Romance in general, see Benincà (1984; 1995; 2006), Salvi (2001; 2004; 2016: 997-1012), Ledgeway (2011: 405-409; 2012: 140-180), Wolfe (2018). For old Italian, i.e. Tuscan, see Vanelli (1986; 1999), Fesenmeier (2003), Poletto (2006; 2014), Benincà & Poletto (2010: 28-75); for French, see Adams (1987), Vance (1997), Labelle (2007); for Spanish and Iberic varieties, see Salvi (1990), Fontana (1993), Sitaridou (2011); for Portuguese, see Ribeiro (1995), Fiéis (2002). With regards to Romanian, the available texts do not seem to be to characterized by a V2 syntax, although this may be due to their relatively late chronology (see Alboiu *et al.* 2014, Nicolae & Niculescu 2015, Hill &

Alboiu 2016). Finally, we should point out that most studies on early Italo-Romance focus on Tuscan (see, for example, Salvi & Renzi 2010), although there are some exceptions. See Poletto (1995) for the north-east varieties, Ledgeway (2007; 2008; 2009) for Neapolitan, Wolfe (2014) for Sicilian (and Sardinian), Ciconte (2018) for a comparative analysis of Italo-Romance varieties.

[3]   In the article we adopt Lambrecht's (1994: 222) terminology to distinguish three types of Focus structure. Precisely, we use the term 'sentence focus' to refer to "the event reporting or presentational sentence type, in which the focus extends over both the subject and the predicate". The term 'predicate focus' indicates "The unmarked subject-predicate (topic-comment) sentence type […], in which the predicate is the focus and in which the subject (plus any other topical elements) is in the presupposition". Finally, the term 'argument focus' designates the identificational sentence type, "in which the focus identifies the missing argument in a presupposed open proposition". The latter Focus type is also often referred to as 'narrow focus'.

[4]   After being introduced as the main character of the tale, *il sire* occurs repeatedly: *et havvi un sire che si chiama messer Ruberto* […]. *Il sire lo spiò; fecelo ammazzare* […]. *Dopo il mangiare venne il sire a doneiare e domandò* […]. *Allora rispuose il sire* […] 'And there is a sir called lord Roberto […]. The sir spied on him; (the sir) got him killed […]. After dining, the sir came to court (the women) and asked […]. Then the sir replied […] (*Novellino*, LXI).

[5]   Note that in early Italo-Romance the conjunction *e* preserves, among other uses, the focalizing function of Latin ET (≈ ETIAM) 'also'. The propositional content of (4a) can in a nutshell be rephrased as 'Polynices arrived and so did (arrive) a knight'.

[6]   The first position can be taken by any syntactic category bearing pragmatic relevance. In transitive predications, topical (non-dislocated) and focal (non-contrastive) objects can also be preverbal, as can any predicative PP, AdjP, AdvP, etc. Here we are not concerned with the Periphery, which hosts circumstantial dislocated elements. We should mention that Cartographic studies posit that the V2 system overlaps with an underlying [SVOX] default order, from which the verb is attracted to the sentence-initial position, i.e. it moves from its original position in the VP to the Head of CP, that is, the C° complementizer position (Benincà 2006, Poletto 2014, among others). Under this analysis, VS with a Referential Topic is an unmarked result of verb movement. However, in some typological accounts the notion of 'markedness' has been questioned, in particular with regards to VS order and theticity (Matras & Sasse 1995, Sasse 2006, Sornicola 2006: 357-544).

[7]   We of course found D-linked Aboutness Topic subjects which are not part of the Focus domain: *«Voi siete quelli che...». Allora l'uno parlò e disse...* 'You.PL are those who... Then one (of them = *Voi*.you.PL) spoke and said...' (*Novellino*, XVIII, p. 71). This is a predicate-focus sentence, but note that the subject, *l'uno*, is definite.

[8]   Examples of informational (non-contrastive) focal subject in preverbal position are found also in other texts, e.g. in old Lombard: *un de vu sì mi dé traire* 'One of you must drag me' (Barsegapé, 892 [Rohlfs 1969: 166]). With regard to the particle *sì*, there are diverging analyses. One view takes *sì* to be a Topic marker (Benincà 1995: 323, Vance 1995: 184, Salvi 2001: 1, Poletto 2005: 225). Yet this analysis does not account for examples such as that in (10a). Note that any kind of focal material can co-occur with *sì*, e.g. *cum gran furor si lo domanda* '(He) asked him with great fury' (Lorck, 76 [Rohlfs 1969: 166], old Lombard). Here we follow Ledgeway 2008, who claims that *sì* does not express a full phrasal category. Rather, *sì* merges directly in C°, spelling out a V2 requirement.

[9]   The examples in the text are numerous, exhibiting both preverbal subjects, e.g. *Ezechiel profeta dixe, sancto Polo dixe, Santo Agustino dixe, Lo Evangelio dixe*, and post-verbal ones, e.g. *Dixe Beda, Ma dixe santo Ambrosio, dixe Criste*, etc.

[10]   In (15a) the predicate *ven* is not previously established and the adverb *anche* has scope over the sentence.
[11]   Whilst we find examples of [SVX] order, e.g. *Un bunfone venne ad uno re...* 'A buffoon came to a king...' (*Disciplina Clericalis*, 10, p. 80 [old Tuscan]), the hypothetical [SV] order is never attested on its own if the subject is indefinite, e.g., hypothetically, **Un bunfone venne* 'There came a buffoon'.
[12]   The coordinates are normally temporal rather than spatial because narratives are concerned with progression in time rather than happening in space. However, note that many temporal adverbs derive from locative etyma, e.g. *donde* < Latin DE UNDE 'from here/thereafter/therefore/then'.
[13]   The pivot exhibits morphosyntactic characteristics associated to subjecthood, e.g. agreement, but it is semantically a predicate (Francez 2007).
[14]   Synchronic tension between anaphoric agreement and grammatical agreement is still found in the VS structures of the northern Italo-Romance varieties (Bentley 2018).

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