

OUT OF SCOPE? – INDEFINITE NOMINAL SUBJECTS AND OBJECTS  
PRECEDING THE NEGATIVE MARKER IN MIDDLE WELSH

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ABSTRACT

While the diachronic development of negation in Welsh has been subject to extensive research (see Willis 2006, 2013, in particular), Middle Welsh negative (matrix) clauses are under-researched in a synchronic perspective (Poppe in press). There is no consensus on syntactic analyses of verb-second negative matrix clauses, especially those with subject-verb and object-verb order. In (Modern) Irish, native speakers generally interpret comparable “Narrative Fronting” constructions with scope of negation over a fronted indefinite. However, in Middle Welsh, instances of wide-scope indefinites can be found, while scope relations are potentially ambiguous in others. For object-verb clauses, matters are further complicated by the occasional presence of an additional object clitic. This chapter draws attention to such arguably challenging Middle Welsh examples and discusses possible interpretations of indefinites with respect to the notion of topicality, as well as complexities of their related syntactic analyses. With an attempt to relativize apparently conflicting views in previous research, potential syntactic structures are specified, primarily with respect to non-topical indefinites that, at least on the surface, appear to be out of scope. For these (and other phrases occurring in this construction, occasionally also definites), a syntactic derivation is formulated, which can arguably be compared with certain Focus Fronting constructions in other languages.

**Keywords:** negation, Middle Welsh, word order, indefinites, topicality, Focus Fronting.

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

In Middle Welsh, there are instances of indefinite subject and object phrases that appear outside their regular post-verbal position in finite negative clauses, to the left of the morphological negative marker. While negative verb-second clauses are rather rare anyway (cf. Willis 1998: 94, and Schumacher 2011: 203), those involving indefinite preverbal arguments are even rarer and exhibit some syntactic complexities.

We will start with a brief sketch of the properties of finite negation in Middle Welsh (section 2), and then give an overview of previous research and seemingly contradictory views on the syntax of verb-second negative main clauses, also with reference to Irish (section 3). Then, topicality of indefinites will be discussed (section 4). After a consideration of examples involving preverbal quantified phrases (section 5), we will address further complexities of (previous) syntactic analyses (section 6), and finally formulate a potential syntactic structure for non-topical examples (section 7), which is further described as a type of Focus Fronting (section 8).

## 2. Negation of finite clauses in Middle Welsh

The negative marker in Middle Welsh is preverbal and has the forms *ny/nyt*, the latter before vowels (e.g. *nyt* before *argybedu* in (1)) (Evans 1964: 61). Originally, there was a distinction between matrix and relative clauses, as the negative marker had different forms before vowels, relative *ny* vs. matrix *nyt*, and caused different initial mutations, soft mutation in a relative clause vs. aspirate mutation in a matrix clause. But those distinctions were soon lost, so for the most part, Middle Welsh has *ny(t)* with mixed mutation<sup>2</sup> both as matrix and relative negative marker (cf. Schumacher 2011: 149–150). Note subordinate negative marker *na(t)* in (2), which could infrequently occur also in Middle Welsh relative clauses and came into general use as a relative marker in Modern Welsh (cf. Borsley et al. 2007: 335).

<sup>1</sup> This chapter is roughly based on a paper given at the “Nominal Syntax in the Medieval and Early Modern Celtic Languages” conference in Göttingen, 27–28 October 2023. I would like to express my gratitude to the audience for discussion, to an anonymous reviewer for helpful comments and suggestions, to Erich Poppe for his constant support, and, in particular, to Elliott Lash for giving me the opportunity to participate in this event and for detailed remarks and editorial advice. Research for this chapter was undertaken within the Marburg/Bonn project “Early Modern Cultures of Translation in Wales: Innovations and Continuities”, led by Elena Parina and Erich Poppe, as a part of the DFG Priority Programme 2130 “Cultures of Translation in the Early Modern Period”. Although the chapter’s title does not indicate any relations to Early Modern Welsh translations, the observations and suggestions made in this chapter can be expected to apply also to, and are also underpinned by considering examples from, such texts.

<sup>2</sup> Note aspiration /k/ > <ch> /x/ in *ny chrogleissa* in (1).

- (1) *Yghyfeir arall yn yn tir ni nyt argybeda*  
 in\_area other in 1PL.POSS land 1PL NEG hurt.PRES.3SG  
*neb ry6 wen6yn. ny chrogleissa llyffan. ny*  
 any kind poison NEG croak.PRES.3SG frog NEG  
*ch6ibana seirff ymy6n llysseu*  
 hiss.PRES.3SG snake.PL inside grass.COL  
 ‘In another region in our land, no kind of poison hurts, no frog croaks, no snakes hiss on (the) grass’ (Luft et al. 2013, LIA: 139r6-8)
- (2) *megys na rymhaa nep ry6 vedyginyaeth*  
 just as NEG.SUB avail.PRES.3SG any kind medicine  
*y iachav y weli*  
 to heal.VN ART wound  
 ‘just as no kind of medicine avails to heal the wound’ (Luft et al. 2013, LIA: 40r2-3)

Examples<sup>3</sup> (1) and (2) show indefinite subjects appearing in regular verb-subject order in the scope of negation. Note regular lack of verbal agreement with the plural subject phrase *seirff* ‘snakes’ in post-verbal position in (1), as is the rule with all verb-subject clauses in Middle Welsh, although there are occasional instances of agreement (cf. Schumacher 2011: 198-199, 203). In negative subject-verb matrix clauses and also in negative relative clauses with subject antecedent, full person-number agreement is generally expected (cf. Borsley et al. 2007: 306, 355), as in (3).<sup>4</sup>

- (3) *g6edy dydbra6t y rei da a wyl y rei*  
 after day\_judgment ART ones good PRT see.PRES.3SG ART ones  
*dr6c yn y poennyev. Y rei dr6c hagen*  
 bad in POSS.3PL pain.PL ART ones bad however

<sup>3</sup> Word boundaries in text examples are adapted. Translations from Middle (and Early Modern) Welsh are mine, RS, unless stated otherwise. Additional glosses used: AUX = auxiliary, COL = collective number, CONJ = conjunction, DEM = demonstrative, INF = infinitive, NEG.SUB = subordinating negation, PROG = progressive marker, Q = interrogative particle.

<sup>4</sup> (3) is quite interesting in that there is no number agreement between verb in the positive clause and preceding topical subject phrase. In general, subject-verb matrix clauses with topical subjects are expected to show agreement in Middle Welsh (cf. Borsley et al. 2007: 306). However, Plein (2018) shows that some positive clauses with a singular ‘default’ verb after a plural subject can be analysed as contrastive topic constructions, as in (3), where *y rei da* ‘the good ones’ appear in contrast with *Y rei dr6c* ‘the bad ones’. Apart from that, note that a 3rd person plural subject pronoun *6y* follows the finite negative verb, which seems to suggest that the preverbal phrase *Y rei dr6c* ‘the bad ones’ is in a dislocated position, cf. also Sackmann (2017: 43–44) and Poppe (in press).

*ny welant by y rei da o hynny allan vyth.*  
 NEG see.PRES.3PL 3PL ART ones good from DIST out ever  
 ‘After the Day of Judgment, the good ones will see the evil ones in their  
 torments. The evil ones, however, (they) will not see the good ones ever  
 henceforth.’ (Luft et al. 2013, LIA: 50v12-15)

However, lack of agreement is also found (e.g. (10 ponizejbelow), and for relative clauses, Schumacher (2011: 149–151) takes that to be the rule. Accordingly, there is no complete agreement on verbal agreement in Middle Welsh.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. The verb-second puzzle

Most negative matrix clauses in Middle Welsh have verb-initial word order. There is no general consensus on the syntactic structures found with verb-second negative main clauses.<sup>6</sup> Adverbial elements, especially sentential adverbial phrases are considered to be fronted on a regular basis (Watkins 1997: 195), as is the case in (1). For the rare instances of negative subject-verb and object-verb orders, Schumacher (2011: 203) suggests cleft constructions or left dislocations, as do Watkins (1990, 1993) and Isaac (1996). Consider (4), with an indefinite nominal *attep/atteb* ‘answer’ preceding the verb as a direct object, or, coindexed with it.

- (4) a. *ac attep ny chauas ef genthi hi*  
 CONJ answer NEG get.PRET.3SG 3SM from.3SF 3SF  
*yn hynny*  
 in DIST  
 ‘But he did not get an answer from her by then.’ (Luft et al. 2013, WB: 3r10.11-12)
- b. *ac atteb ny-s kauas ef (...)*  
 CONJ answer NEG-3SG/PL get.PRET.3SG 3SM  
 ‘But he did not get an answer (...)’ (Luft et al. 2013, RB: 176r714.21)

This example is relatively much-discussed: Watkins (1993: 121) (implicitly) regards (4a) as a cleft construction and considers (4b) to be a left-dislocation structure, and, the preferred reading, stating that the object clitic confirms the left

<sup>5</sup> See also Plein (2018: 20–22). Possibly, the scarceness of relevant negative subject-verb relative clauses is responsible for the disagreement on that matter: Plein’s (2018: 212–213) corpus has only seven examples, with 3 out of 7 (43%) showing agreement; LIA has agreement in 12 out of 18 (66.67%) examples (Sackmann in preparation).

<sup>6</sup> See Poppe (in press) for an overview of positive and negative verb-second orders in Middle Welsh, also with reference to information structure.

dislocation interpretation. However, ‘double’ object marking can appear both in negative object relative clauses and negative matrix clauses (cf. Evans 1964: 64, Borsley et al. 2007: 309–310, 335).<sup>7</sup> This means that for certain object-verb clauses, we should assume that there is virtually no formal distinction between an original cleft structure or a left dislocation.

Borsley et al. (2007: 309–310) argue that the fronted element is within the clause boundaries and topicalized rather than left-dislocated, since a non-referential quantified phrase as in (5) may occur in such a position. As an object pronoun cannot resume a non-referential phrase, they deduce that such a clitic is an “optional” agreement marker, considering fronting in negative main clauses “optional”, as well (cf. Willis 1998: 95–97).<sup>8</sup>

- (5) (...) *eissyoes dim o seint greal ny-s*  
           however anything of Holy Grail NEG-3SG/PL  
       *g6eles ef.*  
       see.PRET.3SG 3SM  
       ‘(...) however, he did not see the Holy Grail at all.’ (Luft et al. 2013, Pen11: 27r14-15, Borsley et al. 2007: 310, their translation, annotation modified)

Mac Cana (1991: 62–64) takes yet a different view, deeming the negative verb-second Middle Welsh example (4a) and similar ones to be parallel to a construction in medieval and Modern Irish which, according to him, has the object or subject as a true grammatical argument in a non-relative structure. It is important for the discussion that is to follow that he disagrees with a topicalization analysis and describes the Irish construction as a “familiar type of marked negative statement in which emphasis is expressed by inversion of subject/object and verb” (Mac Cana 1973: 102).

Before returning to the Middle Welsh examples and to the question how, or whether, the different points of view could be reconciled, it is essential to have a closer look at the Irish construction mentioned by Mac Cana (1973, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> Consider the negative object-relative clause with clitic -s in (i):

(i) *Velle ymplith y rei dr6c y mae rei a*  
       likewise among ART ones bad PRT be.PRES.3SG some.PL PRT  
       *6dant y pethev ny-s g6yr ereill. kan-ny*  
       know.PRES.3PL ART thing.PL NEG-3SG/PL know.PRES.3SG other.PL since-NEG  
       *wybydant 6y pob peth.*  
       know.HAB.3PL 3PL every thing

‘Likewise, among the bad ones there are some who know the things others do not know (them), since they do not know everything.’ (Luft et al. 2013, LIA: 52r22-24)

<sup>8</sup> An anonymous reviewer points out that further research would be desirable since object doubling may also occur with a postverbal nominal object and in positive clauses (for examples, see Evans 1964: 56–57).

- (6) a. *Ní-or bhain sé aon deor amháin as an chorn*  
 NEG-PRF<sup>9</sup> take.PAST 3SM one drop alone out of ART cup  
 ‘He didn’t take a single drop out of the cup.’ (McCloskey 1996: 78, his translation, annotation modified)
- b. *Aon deor amháin ní-ór [sic] bhain sé as an chorn*  
 one drop alone NEG-PRF take.PAST 3SM out of ART cup  
 ‘Not one drop did he take from the cup.’ (McCloskey 1996: 78, his translation, annotation modified)

For Modern Irish, McCloskey (1996: 78) notes regarding this so-called “Narrative Fronting”<sup>10</sup> “that there is no difference in literal meaning between the variants in which fronting has applied and those in which it has not”, i.e. (6a) and (6b) “are identical in terms of their truth conditions and presuppositions”. Furthermore, the scope relations can be considered identical as well since “the vastly more prominent reading (and for most speakers the only reading available) is one in which negation takes scope over the fronted indefinite”<sup>11</sup>. It should be noted that not only indefinites may occur in this construction, but definite phrases as well (as in Middle Welsh (21) below)<sup>12</sup>. We may find Narrative Fronting also in embedded contexts, such as (7). For Middle Welsh, there seem to be extremely few such examples, an eligible one being (8)<sup>13</sup>.

- (7) *Thuig sé láithreach dá n-osclódh sé a bhéal greim nach bhfaigheadh sé*  
 realize.PAST 3SM immediately if open.CND 3SM POSS.3SM mouth bite NEG.SUB get.CND 3SM  
 ‘He realized at once that he wouldn’t get a morsel if he opened his mouth.’ (McCloskey 1996: 79-80, his translation, annotation modified)

<sup>9</sup> The gloss PRF follows Ostrove’s (2013: 15) proposal that “the modern orthography of Irish is misleading, and the element *-r* is not a manifestation of complementizer agreement with tense, but rather continues to be a perfective verbal prefix”.

<sup>10</sup> I adapt this label also for the comparable Middle Welsh examples.

<sup>11</sup> Note that items like *aon* ‘one, any’, or *ar bith* ‘any’ (lit. ‘on world’) in (20) below can be analysed as negative polarity items (NPIs) (cf. McCloskey 1996: 87). Note Welsh *en y byd* ‘in the world’ in (12) and see Willis (2013: 287–288) for a reinforcing use of ‘world’ in the Celtic languages.

<sup>12</sup> McCloskey (1996: 77, note 17) notes that “[i]n the most formal registers (...), one occasionally encounters examples not involving an indefinite”.

<sup>13</sup> Since at this point no syntactic analyses have been assigned to the examples yet, the base position of the fronted phrase is not indicated (e.g. by a trace).

- (8) *a diogel yŷ yt. neb dyn na*  
 CONJ doubtless COP.PRES.3SG to.2SG any person NEG.SUB  
*digaŷn dyŷedut y lleŷenyd ysyd yno.*  
 can.PRES.3SG say.VN ART joy be.PRES.3SG.REL there  
 ‘And it is doubtless to you that no person can tell the joy that is there.’ (Luft  
 et al. 2013, LIA: 111v13-14)

As syntactic derivation, McCloskey (1996: 64, 84) suggests adjunction of the indefinite to the highest inflectional projection at Surface Structure with subsequent lowering of the negative marker in C at Phonological Form (PF) to attach to the verbal complex, arguing that “the mechanisms which license Negative Polarity Items and which determine scope-interactions are blind to the application of C-lowering” (McCloskey 1996: 94). In this approach, negation c-commands the indefinite at Surface Structure as in Figure 1. C-lowering, then, applies in the derivation of PF from Surface Structure (McCloskey 1996: 93).

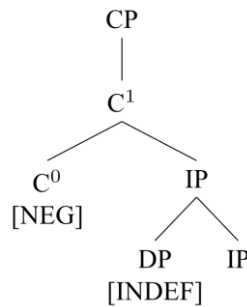


Figure 1. Negative Narrative Fronting before C-lowering (after McCloskey 1996: 85).

Before addressing further details, and complications, of this derivation (in section 6 below), we will turn to interpretational possibilities of preverbal indefinites in their textual contexts, primarily in relation to the notion of topicality.

#### 4. Indefinites and topicality

What Irish *greim* ‘bite’ in (7) and *aon deor amháin* ‘a single drop’ in (6) have in common with phrases like *neb ryŷ wenŷyn* ‘any kind of poison’ and *seirff* ‘snakes’ in Middle Welsh (1) is the mere existential reading (e.g. ‘It is not the case that any snakes hiss in the grass’). Such a non-referential indefinite does not really qualify as a topic.

However, specific or generic indefinites can be topical (cf. von Heusinger and Özge 2021: 112). (9) has a generic indefinite *Amus* ‘warhorse’ in preverbal

position. Here, the indefinite occurs in a law text passage that describes values of different kinds of horses. Note that the temporal prepositional phrase *en try thymhaur* ‘in three seasons’ contains a specific indefinite, denoting three particular seasons, which are specified in the subsequent context.

- (9) *Amus en try thymhaur ny chyll*  
 warhorse in three season NEG lose.PRES.3SG  
*na-y werth na-y ureynt er pory allan*  
 CONJ-POSS.3SM value CONJ-POSS.3SM rank for graze.VN outside  
 ‘In three seasons, a warhorse loses neither its value nor its rank for grazing outside’ (Isaac and Rodway 2002, CT: 50v)

Furthermore, in certain contexts, a non-specific indefinite can be interpreted as a topic, if discourse-linked. This interpretational possibility is discussed by von Heusinger and Özge (2021: 118) in their study of indefinite topics (mainly in Turkish); they state “that an indefinite has two main parts – the description and the referent, both of which can be discourse-linked”, and that the description is most relevant with “conceptual relations (inferability, bridging)”, whereas “partitivity (contextual relations) primarily involves the referent”. Accordingly, two types of discourse-linked non-specific indefinites are distinguished: (i) partitive indefinites, which are contextually linked to an already introduced set, and (ii) inferable indefinites, which are conceptually linked (von Heusinger and Özge 2021: 113–114)<sup>14</sup>.

A partitive indefinite *Rey or egneyt* ‘some of the judges’ can be found in (10). The indefinite denotes a subset of a contextually present superset of judges. Furthermore, note the rather rare instance of a 3rd singular default verb (*ny at*) after a plural subject phrase, which excludes a left-dislocation analysis.

<sup>14</sup> They further note that “[c]ontextual or partitive linking must be established using information from the linguistic and situational context”, while “[c]onceptual linking, i.e. using lexical relations or other lexically induced inferences is based in our linguistic knowledge and does not need additional information” (von Heusinger and Özge 2021: 122). Consider the following examples:

ii.a Many protesters entered the hall. Two students approached the stage. (von Heusinger and Özge 2021: 119)

ii.b The Ecological Life Initiative announced at the arranged press conference that the factors causing the increase in **cancer** cases will be investigated. After the conference the initiative commissioned **an oncologist** in the area. (von Heusinger and Özge 2021: 121)

In (ii.a), there is a membership relation in that a partitive indefinite *Two students* is selected as discourse referent out of the previously introduced set of protesters. Thus, the referent of the indefinite is discourse-linked. In (ii.b), in turn, *cancer* serves as a discourse-linking anchor expression for the inferable indefinite *an oncologist*. Here, the indefinite’s descriptive content is linked to the lexical semantics of the anchor (cf. von Heusinger and Özge 2021: 119–121).



- (10) *Rey o-r egneyt ny at guat*  
 some.PL of-ART judge.PL NEG allow.PRES.3SG denial  
*en erbyn henne*  
 against DIST  
 ‘Some of the judges do not allow a denial of that’ (Isaac and Rodway 2002, CT: 17r)

- (11) *A allant wynteu pob peth o-r a*  
 Q can.PRES.3PL 3PL every thing of-DEM PRT  
*uynnont. Da ny-s mynnant. ac ny-s*  
 want.PRES.SBJ.3PL good NEG-3SG/PL want.PRES.3PL CONJ NEG-3SG/PL  
*gallant. Ar drwc hagen y maent graff.*  
 can.PRES.3PL on evil however PRT be.PRES.3PL keen  
 ‘(Pupil:) Can they [i.e. the devils] (do) everything they want? (Master:) Good they do not want and cannot do. On evil, however, they are keen’ (Luft et al. 2013, LIA: 9v22-24)

In (11), *da* ‘good (things)’ can be analysed as an inferable indefinite since this passage of *Ystoria Lucidar*, a religious treatise in dialogue form, is about free will, and the discourse-active devils evoke the concepts of Good and Evil. Another point in favour of a topical interpretation of *da* ‘good’ is the immediate contrast with *drwc* ‘evil’, and both concepts can be regarded as partial (contrastive) topics out of a superset *pob peth* ‘everything’. Apart from that, note the presence of 3rd person object clitic *-s*, which is insensitive to gender and number. Now consider non-topical (12) and (13).

- (12) *a diben en y byd ny welei arnadt.*  
 CONJ end in the world NEG see.IMPF.3SG on.3PL  
 ‘and he did not see an(y) end in the world on them’ (Isaac and Rodway 2002, Pen6: 4)

In (12), the preverbal object is a non-topical NPI, and as such expected to be in the scope of negation. This passage is from the Third Branch of the *Mabinogi*: Pryderi, one of the protagonists, has gone to a strange castle where there has not been any building before, trying to find his mother Rhiannon. He then sees a basin with four chains extending into the air. An ‘end’ (*diben*) is not part of a contextual superset and is not conceptually linked to ‘the air’ or some other item in discourse.<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, the indefinite has an existential interpretation in the scope of negation (~ ‘and he saw no end at all (...)’).

<sup>15</sup> *diben* could also mean ‘purpose’, in which case the indefinite would be unlinked as well.

- (13) *kyhung vn asgurn enda6 na menwes 6n ewin*  
 joint one bone in.3SM CONJ womb one nail  
*yg kyuoethach lle a bei uwy no*  
 let alone place PRT COP.3SG.IMPf.SBJ big.CMP than  
*h6nn6 nyt oed ar ny bei gyfla6n*  
 DIST NEG be.IMPf.3SG DEM NEG COP.IMPf.SBJ.3SG full  
*o gareat e 6orwyn.*  
 of love ART girl  
 ‘Not a single bone’s joint in him, nor a single nail’s bed, let alone a (body)  
 part that was larger than that, existed, which was not full of love for the girl’  
 (Isaac and Rodway 2002, Pen16: 42v)

(13) demonstrates that Narrative Fronting may involve a very heavy phrase. Note further that the existential indefinites with quantified possessors conceivably contribute to a scalar reading, ‘Not (even) a single bone’s joint (...)’. Now that we have viewed a few topical and non-topical indefinites in Middle Welsh, it is argued that some examples can be ambiguous, allowing for either a topical or a non-topical reading. This is the case for (4), given with some more context in (14). Recall that the variant from a different manuscript in (14b) deviates from (14a) in that the former has a 3rd person object clitic.

- (14) a. *a farabyl a dŷ6ot ef 6rthi hi*  
 CONJ word PRT speak.PRET.3SG 3SM to.3SF 3SF  
*a-r eil a-r. trydŷt. ac attep*  
 CONJ-ART second CONJ-ART third CONJ answer  
*nŷ chauas ef genthi hi yn hŷnnŷ*  
 NEG get.PRET.3SG 3SM from.3SF 3SF in DIST  
 ‘And he spoke a word to her, and a second and a third. But he did not get  
 an answer from her by then’ (Luft et al. 2013, WB: 3r10.9-12)
- b. *ac atteb ny-s kauas ef (...)*  
 CONJ answer NEG-3SG/PL get.PRET.3SG 3SM  
 ‘But he did not get an answer’ (Luft et al. 2013, RB: 176r714.21)

- (15) a. INDEF > NEG answer > did not get ‘An answer he did not get’  
 b. NEG > INDEF did not get > answer ‘No answer did he get’

Since *atted/attedb* ‘answer’ in (14) is not an NPI, it can freely appear out of scope of negation. This results, at least in theory, in ambiguous scope relations, cf. (15). Option (15a) would come along with an interpretation as an inferable indefinite, referring to the concept of *answer* (virtually, ‘something of the type *answer*’),

evoked in a conversational situation, whereas option (15b) should receive a purely existential-quantificational reading ('an(y) answer'). A specific interpretation ('A certain answer he did not get') seems to be no less odd than a generic reading ('It is a property of an answer that he did not get it'). In light of the discussion of 0 powyżej, it is most probable that Watkins (1993) argues for left dislocation because a topical reading (15a) was salient to him, whereas Mac Cana (1973, 1991) interprets the preverbal indefinite as existential, reading (15b).<sup>16</sup>

If we analyse clitic *-s* in (14b) as a genuine pronominal object in a left-dislocation structure, *it* in a literal reading 'An answer, he did not get it' is not coreferential with the preverbal indefinite in that it could be understood as referring to a (specific) entity, 'a certain answer', but would indicate the same descriptive content, i.e. that of *an answer*.

In this respect, the anaphoric relation can be said to be one of "substitution", which Kunz and Steiner (2013: 208) describe as "a process of substituting words by other (semantically weaker) words usually having the same structural function", further noting that "nominal substitution usually involves type reference or co-denotation, rather than instantiated co-reference".<sup>17</sup>

Accordingly, a pronoun coindexed with 'an answer' as a conceptually linked indefinite substitutes the type denoted by the noun (corresponding to nominal substitution with *one* in English 'As for an answer, he did not get one'). I would suggest that in this case, Middle Welsh *-s* can be compared to French *ce* in examples like (16):<sup>18</sup>

- (16) *Des pommes, c'est bon.*  
 of.the apples it-is good  
 'Apples are good.' (Rowlett 2007: 135, his annotation and translation)

Rowlett (2007: 134–135) describes *ce* as "a generic proform" that "bears no inherent gender, number or person features and therefore generally triggers default agreement", as in (16), where "both the verb and the AP\* [i.e. adjectival predicate, RS] are (M.)SG.", since "*ce* denotes the abstract notion of apples, rather than any particular apples". In a left-dislocation interpretation, an object clitic in

<sup>16</sup> Naturally, more such potentially ambiguous examples exist, but there is no room for their in-depth treatment in this chapter.

<sup>17</sup> Kunz and Steiner (2013: 207) define "co-reference" as "reference to individuated and contextually updated/enriched discourse referents", and "type-reference" as "reference to class, rather than to individuals".

<sup>18</sup> Cf. also German 3rd singular neuter pronoun *es* as in *Mein Bruder ist ein Held/mutig. Aber ich bin es nicht.* [POSS.1SG brother COP.PRES.3SG a hero/brave but 1SG COP.PRES.1SG 3SN NEG] 'My brother is a hero/brave. But I am not.' (Kunz and Steiner 2013: 213, note 5, annotation and translation added).

(14b), or in (11) above, could arguably be analysed in a similar manner, denoting the “abstract notion”, or descriptive content, of the indefinite.

With such an interpretation, it might be conceivable that the indefinite need not be associated with an argument status at all but could be treated as a predicative expression, in which case we could potentially have a cleft-like structure, e.g. ‘(It is) an answer, he did not get it’ rather than object extraction ‘[An answer]<sub>i</sub> he did not get *t<sub>i</sub>*’ (or a reduced cleft ‘(It is) [an answer]<sub>i</sub> (what<sub>i</sub>) he did not get *t<sub>i</sub>*’). However, a predicative interpretation with an example that lacks an object clitic would probably have to include a null indefinite argument or NP-ellipsis (‘(It is) an answer, he did not get \_’). Such an approach will not be followed further here for lack of space, and because this chapter’s focus is on the syntax of non-topical indefinites, but it may be noted that a similar one has been made, for instance, for topicalized bare plurals in Spanish (Laca 2013).

Now recall that Borsley et al. (2007) and Willis (1998) generally rule out a left-dislocation analysis due to the clitic’s cooccurrence with non-referential quantified phrases, which we shall examine in the following section.

## 5. Quantified phrases

An object clitic in examples involving quantified phrases is a different matter, since with these, a topical reading is not readily acceptable, consider (5), reproduced here in (17).

- (17) (...) *eissyoes dim o seint greal ny-s*  
           however anything of Holy Grail NEG-3SG/PL  
           *g6eles ef.*  
           see.PRET.3SG 3SM  
           ‘(...) however, he did not see the Holy Grail at all’ (Luft et al. 2013, Pen11:  
           27r14-15, Borsley et al. 2007: 310, their translation, annotation modified)

As we can infer from their translation, Borsley et al. (2007: 310), corresponding to Willis (1998: 96), take (17) to involve a non-topical existentially quantified phrase. However, this example is special, since the preverbal phrase contains an already discourse-established referent (‘(the) Holy Grail’) which can potentially receive a contrastive topic reading in the context (cf. Poppe in press). In this respect, it seems possible that here we may treat *dim* as a nominal ‘a thing, a bit’,<sup>19</sup> and accordingly, the clitic as substituting the descriptive content of a discourse-linked indefinite ‘a part/bit of the Holy Grail’ as a whole, in a reading ‘As for a part of the Holy Grail, he did not see such a thing’, or more explicitly,

<sup>19</sup> For different uses and the further diachronic development of *dim*, see Willis (2006, 2013).

‘(Lancelot indeed perceived the candlestick.) Yet, (as for) a (theoretically perceivable) part of the Holy Grail, he did not see (the like of) it’. This suggestion may seem a bit far-fetched but in light of a conceivable contrastive topic interpretation, it constitutes an at least marginally possible alternative to a non-topical reading.<sup>20</sup> At any rate, (18) is a different case:

(18) *Dim o-r gennyat heb hi ny-s keffy di.*  
 anything of-ART permission said 3SF NEG-3SG/PL get.PRES.2SG 2SG  
 ‘“You shall not have any permission,” she said.’ (Luft et al. 2013, Pen11: 35r15, Willis 1998: 96, his translation, annotation modified)

- (i) ??QUANT > NEG ??‘For any (part) *x* of the permission, it is the case that you will not get *x*’
- (ii) #INDEF > NEG #‘For *x*, it is the case that you will not get *x*’, with *x* = (something of the type) *a part/bit of the permission*
- (iii) NEG > QP ‘It is not the case that you will get any (part) *x* of the permission’

While (17) might have a contrastive topic reading, (18) does not really allow for such an interpretation, since a literal partitive reading (i) ‘any of the permission’ is more than odd as the abstract noun ‘permission’ cannot be divided into (theoretical) parts, and a reading (ii) with *dim* as a topical indefinite noun ‘something/a bit of the permission’ is absurd, because there are no contextual

<sup>20</sup> Note that (5)/(17), (18) and (19) are found in a specific text translated from Old French, *La Queste del Saint Graal*. Therefore, influence from constructions in the source material, or in the source language, may be imaginable. In this regard, it may be noted that the parallel passage to (5)/(17) has a topical reading in the Old French text, (iii), although involving a different construction:

(iii)(...) *et voit le chandelabre devant l’ autel, mes*  
 and see.PRES.3SG ART candlestick before ART altar but  
*de ce qu’ il plus voudroit veoir ne voit*  
 of DEM what 3SM more want.CND.3SG see.INF NEG see.PRES.3SG  
*il riens, ce est dou Saint Graal (...)*  
 3SM anything DEM be.PRES.3SG of-ART Holy Grail

‘(...) and sees the candlestick before the altar, but **of that which he would rather want to see** he does not see anything, that is, of the Holy Grail (...)’ (Pauphilet 1923: 61.10–12).

Here, the preverbal topical phrase is headed by preposition/partitive determiner *de*, while quantification is expressed post-verbally under negation (like in the English translation ‘of what he wants to see, he sees nothing’). In general, topicalization that involves a quantifier phrase seems to be less easily acceptable, ??‘yet, something of the Holy Grail he didn’t see’ vs. ‘yet, of the Holy Grail he saw nothing/he didn’t see anything’, although acceptability apparently varies cross-linguistically, cf. German ‘doch etwas vom Heiligen Gral(, das) sah er nicht’ [but something of-ART Holy Grail (3SN) see.PAST.3SG 3SM NEG] vs. ‘doch vom Heiligen Gral sah er nichts’ [but of-ART Holy Grail see.PAST.3SG 3SM nothing].

conditions that could promote ‘the permission’ as a salient topic (and still less as a contrastive topic).<sup>21</sup>

It should be noted that according to Willis (2013: 288), *dim o* “spread from partitive contexts to being a more general way of marking a direct object in the scope of negation (...)” and “[t]hat no partitive meaning is any longer conveyed is clearest when the object is a singular pronoun”, as in (19) (cf. also Borsley et al. 2007: 312).

- (19) A        *mi*     *a*        *wnn*                    *na*            *wrthyt*  
          CONJ   1SG   PRT   know.PRES.1SG   NEG.SUB   reject.PRES.3SG  
          *ef*        *dim*            *ohonat*    *ti*  
          3SM    anything   of.2SG   2SG  
          ‘And I know he will not reject you (...)’ (Luft et al. 2013, Pen11: 29r1-2,  
          Willis 2013: 288, his translation, annotation modified)

Such an idiomatic use of *dim o* apparently involves scope of negation over the quantified phrase. This complicates a syntactic analysis of examples that have the phrase in preverbal position.<sup>22</sup> With a non-topical reading, clitic *-s* can probably be described as an object agreement clitic, as argued by Willis (1998) and Borsley et al. (2007) (see above).<sup>23</sup> However, the matter is further complicated by the fact that the preverbal phrases in (17) (‘any/something of the Holy Grail’) and (18) (‘any/something of the permission’) are rather complex since they quantify over discourse-linked definites. Apart from that, few similar examples seem to exist and I have not yet come across any other that involved a structure *dim o* + DP + negative marker + clitic + verb outside this particular text, which suggests that they are actually special cases.

<sup>21</sup> The immediate context in short: Perceval asks permission from his aunt to leave but she wants him to stay longer.

<sup>22</sup> It might be marginally possible that the example contains two separate utterances, with actual negative use of *dim* as part of an exclamation, ‘No[ne of the] permission! You won’t get it!’ (in which case the pronoun *it* would be coindexed with ‘the permission’, not with the whole quantified phrase). However, an interpretation with *dim* as inherently negative ‘none, nothing’ does not seem very likely here. In any case, a single sentence interpretation corresponding to an existential reading, (18iii), seems to make the most sense (‘You will get no[ne of the] permission (at all)!’).

<sup>23</sup> Agreement clitics are not uncommon cross-linguistically. For instance, Floricic (2013: 272–277) gives some Italian examples involving a preverbal (non-topical, and of course, non-referential) negative indefinite with coindexed clitic, in his view pointing towards an over-generalization of a topical structure, in which “clitic resumption can be said to have become a purely formal *mechanism* [emphasis in the original, RS] dissociated from any referential property” (Floricic 2013: 277). With reference to Auger (1994: 22), Rowlett (2007: 138, note 64) similarly notes that existential indefinites cannot be dislocated in Contemporary French, but that some varieties with subject doubling allow constructions like *Personne il m’aime* [nobody 3SM 1SG like.PRES.3SG] ‘Nobody likes me’, “crucially because topicalisation isn’t involved”.

Primarily based on (17) and (18), Willis (1998) posits a general *wh*-movement/topicalization construction for negative verb-second clauses and rules out a dislocation analysis (cf. also Borsley et al. 2007). While Willis (1998) and Borsley et al. (2007) do not interpret these two examples as topicalizations as understood in an information-structural meaning of the term, e.g. promoting a phrase as “a starting point from which a comment can be developed” (Floricio 2013: 259), it is clear that existentially quantified phrases that are not discourse-linked, as *neb dyn* ‘any person’ in (8), cannot be topics (consider #*Let me tell you something about an unspecified person*).

Indeed, we could still argue for a (focal) *wh*-construction if we treat the quantifier as a wide scope ‘free choice’ item, which would mean that it would be in fact out of scope of negation, since with a universal-like/‘free choice’ interpretation, a scope relation QUANT > NEG can be considered semantically equivalent to wide scope of negation (e.g. (18i) as ‘(It is) ANY (theoretically existing part you might pick of the) permission (that) you won’t get’ vs. (18iii) as ‘You will not get any [of the] permission’).<sup>24</sup>

Yet, given the increasing development towards the inherently negative semantics which items like *dim* possess in the present-day language (see, for instance, Willis 2013), it would be remarkable to witness a rather conservative (free-choice) wide-scope use of *dim* combined with a basically negative idiomatic expression.<sup>25</sup> Apart from that, ordinary focus-constructions have overt cleft markers in embedded contexts (Borsley et al. 2007: 307), which makes them different from instances of embedded Narrative Fronting as in (8).<sup>26</sup>

## 6. (Further) complexities of syntactic analyses

As we have seen in the previous section, it is not easily possible for quantified phrases to receive a topical interpretation. This restricts the potential syntactic structures of such examples, as well as of those that involve preverbal non-topical indefinites. In this section, we will examine previous syntactic analyses in greater detail in order to sort out what syntactic properties a non-topical Narrative

<sup>24</sup> In Japanese and Korean, NPIs have been analysed as ‘strong’, i.e. out-scoping negation (Sells 2022).

<sup>25</sup> This could potentially be a strong argument against an interpretation of *dim* as a topical indefinite in (5)/(17).

<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, with a wide-scope (free-choice) interpretation, (8) should be expected to have a corresponding structure, as in notional (iv), with a cleft marker (here *panyw*, glossed ‘that’) and the negative marker heading a relative clause:

(iv) *a	<i>diogel</i>	<i>y6</i>	<i>yt.</i>	<i>panyw</i>	<i>neb</i>	<i>dyn</i>	<i>ny</i>
	CONJ	doubtless	COP.PRES.3SG	to.2SG	that	any	person
	<i>diga6n</i>	<i>dy6edut</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>lle6enyd</i>	<i>ysyd</i>		<i>yno.</i>
	can.PRES.3SG	say.VN	ART	joy	be.PRES.3SG.REL		there

‘And it is doubtless to you that (it is) ANY person (whatsoever) (who) cannot tell the joy that is there.’

Fronting construction should possess. McCloskey (1996) and Willis (1998) make several points, see Table 1:

Table 1. Syntactic properties of a finite negative clause with preverbal subject or object according to McCloskey (1996: 81–83; 91–92, note 32; 96) vs. Willis (1998: 95–97; 199)

McCloskey (1996)	Willis (1998)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– finite negative marker in C</li> <li>– strict c-command of negation (excludes m-command and Spec-head agreement)</li> <li>– discards <i>wh</i>-movement/topicalization to SpecCP, as he deems that licensing of NPIs is not possible in that position and there are examples with SpecCP already occupied</li> <li>– excludes movement into SpecNegP, supposing that a NegP occurs among lower inflectional heads and disallows indefinites in its specifier position</li> <li>– assumes that an indefinite/NPI moves to SpecIP, i.e. between negative marker in C and verb in I</li> <li>– posits post-syntactic lowering of the negative marker in C to the verbal complex in I</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– finite negative marker in C</li> <li>– posits a general <i>wh</i>-construction involving cyclic movement</li> <li>– optional object agreement clitic</li> <li>– rules out movement of a phrase between C and finite verb</li> </ul>

Among other reasons for the view that c-command must be the licensing mechanism for NPIs, McCloskey (1996: 88) puts forward the argument that NPIs are never licensed in subject position in (Standard) English, e.g. *\*Anybody didn't ever speak to me*. However, NPIs are found in such positions in some other languages, including Hiberno-English, as in *Any country couldn't stand it (...)* (Duffield 1995: 202), cf. below.

The fact that McCloskey (1996) excludes SpecCP as a landing site for the indefinite in Narrative Fronting is in direct opposition to Willis's (1998) movement approach. Yet, McCloskey (1996: 78, note 18) notes the possibility of movement with scope reconstruction but argues that a wide-scope reading (e.g. a topical or a universal-like one) of the indefinite “which is in fact virtually unavailable (...) should be the more salient of the two possibilities”.<sup>27</sup> Apart from

<sup>27</sup> It should be noted that, according to Zeijlstra (2022: 108), a universal quantifier like *every* can reconstruct in the scope of negation, as in (v.a), but an existential cannot, (v.b).



that, he presumes that licensing of NPIs should fail under reconstruction (McCloskey 1996: 90, note 30).

In addition to McCloskey's (1996) points, there is one further argument against a movement operation to SpecCP that has not been properly formulated so far (although alluded to by Mac Cana (1973, 1991), see section 3): If Narrative Fronting would behave similarly to other argument extractions (e.g. as in *wh*-constructions), we could probably expect the negative marker to be subordinate, as with the subject extraction in (20). On the contrary, however, Irish examples like (6b) clearly have matrix negation.<sup>28</sup>

- (20) *fear ar bith nach ndéanfaidh an méid sin*  
 man on world NEG.SUB do.CND ART amount DIST  
 'any man who wouldn't do that much' (McCloskey 2001: 93, his translation, annotation modified)

Although we could claim that *ny(t)* in the Middle Welsh Narrative Fronting examples in question might actually be the relative marker (see section 2), this does not explain the situation in Irish. D'Antuono (2024: 32) notes for Irish that "when the left periphery is activated in some way (...), then the complementiser takes one of the  $\bar{A}$ -forms" (as in (20)), which apparently sets the Narrative Fronting construction apart from what usually happens with an "activation of the left periphery"/interaction with SpecCP. Accordingly, we could assume that the type of construction we are looking for does not trigger the subordinate negative marker since the phrase(s) do(es) not cross C. However, this hypothesis must remain as such for the time being.

Having argued against filling of SpecCP, the derivation proposed by McCloskey (1996) could in principle be transferred to the Middle Welsh examples, especially in view of the comparable (morphophonological) properties of the negative marker and the finite verb (cf. Willis 1998: 199). However, there is yet another complication. While McCloskey (1996: 83) largely bases his derivation on the property that Narrative Fronting involves an indefinite, we come across examples like Middle Welsh (21), which include

- 
- (v) a. Every boy didn't leave  $\forall > \neg; \neg > \forall$   
 b. A boy didn't leave  $\exists > \neg; * \neg > \exists$   
 (Zeijlstra 2022: 108, his emphasis)

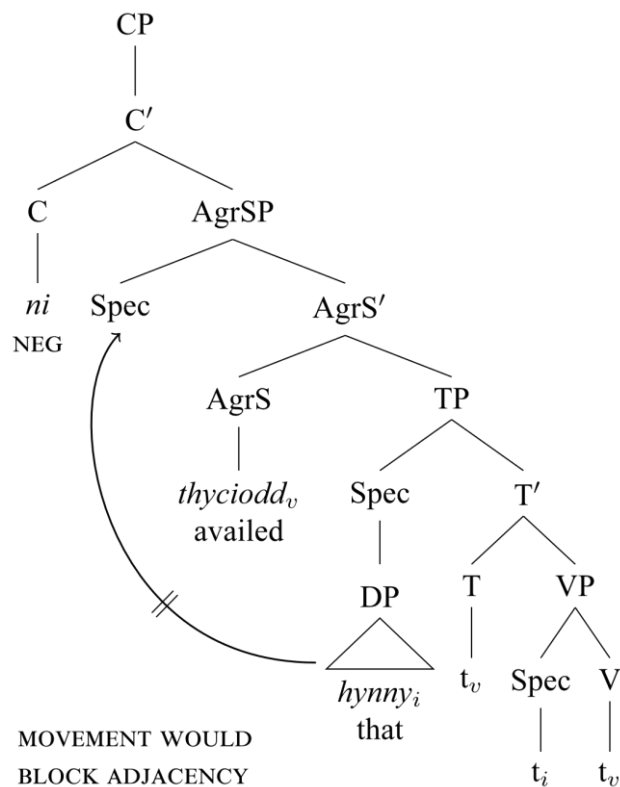
This means that (v.a) allows two possible readings, 'For every boy *x*, *x* did not leave' ( $\forall > \neg$ ) and the more salient 'It is not the case that every boy left (but some boys did)' ( $\neg > \forall$ ), whereas (v.b) has a reading 'There is a boy who did not leave' ( $\exists > \neg$ ) but not \*'It is not the case that a(ny) boy left' ( $*\neg > \exists$ ) with scope reconstruction.

<sup>28</sup> Duffield (1995: 23, 186) also shows this structural difference between relative constructions and Narrative Fronting.

(referential) definite DPs in the preverbal phrase, here in coordination with two indefinites on each side.

- (21) *pan doeth e-r gaer na dyn na mil na-r*  
 when come.PRET.3SG to-ART fort CONJ man CONJ beast CONJ-D  
*baed na-r kwn na thy nac anned ny welei*  
 boar CONJ-ART dog.PL CONJ house CONJ abode NEG see.IMP.3SG  
*en y gaer.*  
 in ART fort  
 ‘When he came to the fortress, neither man nor beast nor **the boar** nor **the dogs** nor house nor abode did he see in the fortress.’ (Isaac and Rodway 2002, Pen6: 4)

Figure 2. Movement between negative marker and verb is rejected (after Willis 1998: 199)



Beyond that, it is challenging to advocate a post-syntactic movement operation that involves earlier raising of a phrase somehow between negative marker and

verb. Willis (1998) justifiably dismisses potential movement between negative marker (taken to be in C) and finite verb, cf. also Figure 2.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, we shall pursue a different approach.<sup>30</sup>

## 7. Potential syntactic structures

Now that we have dealt with topical/non-topical interpretations of indefinites (and a certain clitic), and previous statements regarding potential syntactic derivations, what could the syntax of our examples look like? To identify syntactic structures for a wide-scope topical reading of the indefinite is not an extremely difficult matter, since we could assume a *wh*-construction<sup>31</sup>, or a left-dislocation<sup>32</sup> structure, in which the coindexed pronoun could be regarded as a substitute for the indefinite's descriptive content.

The syntactic structure of the non-topical readings, in turn, may neither involve left-dislocation nor, or only with difficulty, movement to SpecCP. Let us start with McCloskey's (2017) revised version of the clause structure in Irish, Figure 3. The position to which the indefinite in McCloskey's (1996) proposed derivation is assumed to raise could be identified as SpecTP. However, the

<sup>29</sup> Already McCloskey (1996: 76, 99) himself mentions potential deficiencies of a C-lowering operation. Ostrove (2013: 11) deems it "illegitimate under modern theoretical assumptions". Concerning a notional lowering of the preverbal clausal negator in Romance to prevent potential intervening of adverbials, Roberts (2019: 579) states that "such an operation is conceptually unattractive, and is only motivated by the need to save this analysis."

<sup>30</sup> McCloskey (1996: 93, note 35) mentions the further possibility that Narrative Fronting could be a mere spell-out phenomenon, in which case, fronted NPIs could be licensed either way by c-commanding clausal negation. However, he adduces ample evidence that we are dealing with  $\bar{A}$ -chains, e.g. in case of resumptives within PPs.

<sup>31</sup> For the present purpose, it does not matter much whether a *wh*-construction involves a gap or resumption. At least, we may note that (10) is a conceivable example of a subject extraction construction involving a gap/movement. For Modern Welsh relative clauses, Borsley et al. (2007: 141) state that negative *wh*-constructions on object position have both options. Willis (2011: 214–217) actually allows for mixed movement and resumptive derivations, suggesting that some constructions, including relatives with *na(d)*, actually block movement but allow for a *wh*-element to be inserted.

<sup>32</sup> There are unambiguous left dislocations, at least for definite DPs, as in (vi), which has a demonstrative modified by a relative clause in clause-external position, with a full DP coindexed demonstrative in the embedded clause (also cf. (3)):

(vi) A	[r	hynn] <sub>i</sub>	a	vynno	du6	y	vot	
	CONJ	ART	PROX	PRT	want.PRES.SBJ.3SG	God	POSS.3SM	be.VN
	<i>megys</i>	<i>nef.</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>dayar.</i>	<i>ny</i>	<i>ellir</i>	<i>gochel</i>	<i>na</i>
	like	heaven	CONJ	earth	NEG	can.PRES.IMPS	avoid.VN	NEG.SUB
	<i>del</i>		<i>hynny</i> <sub>i</sub>	(...)				
	come.PRES.SBJ.3SG		DIST					

'But that<sub>i</sub> which<sub>i</sub> God wants to exist, like heaven and earth, one cannot avoid that [those (things)]<sub>i</sub> do not (simply) come (...)' (Luft et al. 2013, LIA: 31v4–6).

polarity projection, PolP, now included in the tree, deserves closer attention.<sup>33</sup> We will adapt this clause structure for our Middle Welsh verb-second negative clauses.<sup>34</sup>

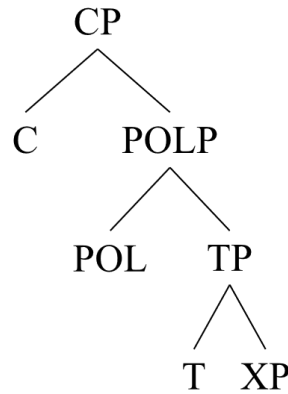


Figure 3. The higher clausal projections in Irish (after McCloskey 2017: 116).

For the non-topical Narrative Fronting examples, we would have to ensure in some way that the indefinite is still in the scope of negation. With this in mind, I suggest to inspect Negative Inversion in English (like in *No answer did he get*), which Culicover ([1992] 2013: 213–214; 218; 219, note 14) associates with substitution into SpecPolP, an  $\bar{A}$ -movement operation that can be considered different from *wh*-movement and topicalization. He further notes that the polarity head Pol may be (phonologically null) NEG and may agree under Spec-head agreement with a negative phrase (he labels “NegP”) moved to SpecPolP. Consider (22a), with a conceivable (simplified) example (22b):<sup>35</sup>

- (22) a. [PolP [Spec NegP] [Pol NEG]+Infl<sub>i</sub> [IP...*t<sub>i</sub>*...]] (Culicover 2013: 224)  
 b. [PolP [Spec No answer] [Pol NEG]+did [IP he get]]

<sup>33</sup> McCloskey (2023: 32–33) actually analyses Narrative Fronting as movement to SpecPolP with post-syntactic lowering of C.

<sup>34</sup> For Middle Welsh (and the other medieval Brythonic languages), Eska (2020: 10) suggests a ‘relaxed’ verb-second clause structure (for positive matrix clauses), with a highly articulated left periphery, [FrameP [ForceP [AbTopP [ContrTopP [FocP [FamTopP [FinP ...]]]]]]]. Although such a more elaborate model does not seem to be requisite for the current pursuit, it should be noted that in Eska’s (2020) analysis, finite verb and preverbal particle are in Fin, not in the high Force head generally equated with C.

<sup>35</sup> For concise definitions and explanations of the terms used in the following, I refer the reader to Culicover (2013) and de Vos (2014).

- (23) i. Move  $\alpha$  moves a constituent into SpecPolP  
 ii. the constituent agrees with Pol  
 iii. Infl adjoins to Pol in order to bind the morpheme Pol  
 (after Culicover 2013: 226)

For matrix clauses in English, the operation works as described in (23). Admittedly, we do not find negated phrases in our Middle Welsh (and Irish) examples, but indefinites and NPIs. Still, we could posit a roughly similar structure, i.e. negative marker in the polarity head Pol with adjoined finite verb, and the preverbal phrase in the specifier position SpecPolP. Accordingly, a rough schematic structure paralleling (22) could look as in (24) for the relevant parts of the Middle Welsh examples (12) and (8), which involve preverbal NPIs:<sup>36</sup>

- (24) a. [<sub>PolP</sub> [<sub>Spec</sub> *diben en y byd*] [<sub>Pol</sub> *ny*]+*welei* [<sub>TP</sub>...]]  
 b. [<sub>PolP</sub> [<sub>Spec</sub> *neb dyn*] [<sub>Pol</sub> *na*]+*digaŵn* [<sub>TP</sub>...]]

For such a derivation, it is essential that the negative marker is in Pol, which can arguably either be base-generated in this position or moves there from a lower negative projection (NegP). While more recent research on Modern Irish<sup>37</sup> does without a NegP in the inflectional layer (e.g. D'Antuono 2024, McCloskey 2017, but cf. Duffield 1995, Ostrove 2013), Willis (2012: 98) posits that the negative marker is the head of a NegP (below T) and moves, along with the finite verb, to C in Middle Welsh.<sup>38</sup> The possibility that Narrative Fronting could be movement of a phrase to SpecNegP, mentioned in Table 1, can probably be dismissed because of the high position of the finite verb, as McCloskey (1996: 83) observes, deeming it unlikely that this construction “could be analyzed as movement into the SPEC of NEG position, or indeed as movement into any of the specifier-positions associated with lower inflectional heads”.

Although suggesting Pol as position for the negative marker is in direct contradiction to “the observation that in morphophonological terms negation in finite clauses is clearly in C” (McCloskey 2017: 114, cf. Willis 1998: 95), there is previous research with a similar proposal: Duffield (1995: 83, 104, 201–202) actually analyses Narrative Fronting in Irish as A-movement to SpecTP, with the negative marker having moved to T (independently from the verb) in matrix

<sup>36</sup> Note that the label “TP” instead of “IP” is used, following McCloskey (2017).

<sup>37</sup> In order to account for different scope relations in Old Irish, Lash (2014) posits a NegP with a negative scope-taking operator in a lower position and a PolP hosting preverbal negation in the C-domain.

<sup>38</sup> For Modern Irish, Stowell (1989: 323) similarly assumes that the negative marker “is carried to COMP by INFL-to-COMP movement”, supposing “that sentential negation universally originates within IP at D-structure”.

clauses out of a NegP below TP. Although this analysis seems to be promising, it does not include the embedded construction (e.g. (7)), as Duffield (1995: 183) takes embedded negation to be base-generated in C.

In the following paragraphs, I will show that there are indeed some further indications that the finite negative marker is lower than C, at least in some constructions in earlier Welsh. Early Modern Welsh (25) shows that a phrase could appear between a complementizer (here, *megys* ‘just as’, cf. (2) above) in C and negative marker + finite verb (*nad* + auxiliary *wy*). This suggests that the finite negator is not in complementizer position.

- (25) *Canys megys o-’r nailh rhan nad wy*  
 since just as of-ART one part NEG.SUB be.AUX.PRES.1SG  
*drwy henwi na dyfalu, yn hynodi*  
 through name.VN CONJ nickname.VN PROG denote.VN  
*Lloegr yn y rhan honno o-’m adroddiad:*  
 England in ART part DIST of-POSS.1SG description  
*felhy o’ rhan arallh (...)*  
 likewise of part other  
 ‘Since, **just as**, on the one hand, I am **not**, by naming or nicknaming,  
 denoting England in that part of my account, likewise, on the other hand  
 (...)’ (Holland 1604: 10.9-11)

Naturally, a single example cannot form the basis for such a proposal. Further evidence comes from coordination contexts: McCloskey (2017: 107–108; 108, note 3) observes that in (26), the non-finite coordinate constituent with *gan* at its left edge is a complement of conditional marker *má* in C, which means that coordination must be below C, at the level of PolP. Based on examples like (26), McCloskey (2017: 116) posits that non-finite negator *gan* occupies Pol in Irish. As a matter of fact, we find comparable examples in Middle Welsh but with a finite negative conjunct, see (27) and (28).<sup>39</sup>

- (26) *Má chailleann tú agus gan eisean do mharbhadh (...)*  
 if lose.PRES 2SG CONJ NEG 3SM POSS.2SG kill.VN  
 ‘if you lose and he doesn’t kill you’ (McCloskey 2017: 107, his translation,  
 annotation modified)

<sup>39</sup> For Early Modern Welsh, Poppe (2022) investigates patterns of clausal coordination in Bible passages in comparison with the corresponding structures in the Hebrew and Greek parallel passages, also including examples with non-finite negator *heb*, which can be regarded structurally similar to Irish (26).

- (27) *o byd da eu buched. ac na*  
 if COP.HAB.3SG good POSS.3PL life CONJ NEG.SUB  
*dyscont yn da (...)*  
 teach.PRES.SBJ.3PL PRED good  
 ‘if their life is good and they do not teach well (...)’ (Luft et al. 2013, LIA: 36v13-14)

- (28) *Y rei dr6c yssyd dlodyonn yn wastat.*  
 ART ones bad COP.PRES.3SG.REL poor.PL PRED constant  
*Am vot bar du6 arnadunt. Ac na mynnant da.*  
 for be.VN wrath God on.3PL CONJ NEG.SUB want.PRES.3PL good  
 ‘The bad ones are continually miserable because God’s wrath is upon them and they do not want good’ (Luft et al. 2013, LIA: 29r10-12)

While in (27), complementizer *o* ‘if’ takes a positive finite clause and a negative finite one as its complements, in (28), a negative finite clause follows a non-finite positive one, both being complements to *Am* ‘for, because’. These examples demonstrate that in such coordination contexts, the finite negative marker in Middle Welsh may be analysed as occupying Pol rather than C.

Now, if we allow for the possibility that the finite negative marker could be in Pol also outside of coordination contexts, a derivation similar to the one suggested by Culicover (2013) for English Negative Inversion could plausibly generate a Narrative Fronting construction. Still, there are some issues that remain to be resolved: (i) we have to talk about what happens to C if the negative marker is in Pol, (ii) scope of negation over a fronted indefinite or NPI should be explained, and (iii), we should discuss what exactly triggers the movement operation in the first instance.

As for (i), while McCloskey (2017: 107–108, 114) takes C to be empty in non-finite clauses in general and posits a close agreement relation between the C head and Pol, the simplest approach would be that C can be empty also in (some) finite clauses.<sup>40</sup>

The question about scope of negation, (ii), has been central to the discussion of Narrative Fronting in McCloskey (1996), who posited strict c-command as licensing mechanism of an NPI. However, I will follow Alqassas (2021: 79–81), at least on a provisional basis, who argues that the Spec-head relationship

<sup>40</sup> For negative finite clauses in Irish, McCloskey (2017: 113–116) posits that a null polarity head agrees with the negative marker in C with respect to the features [NEG] and [FIN], with an uninterpretable negative feature [*u*NEG] on the negative complementizer and a semantically active interpretable feature [*i*NEG] on Pol. Concerning Modern Welsh, Roberts (2019: 391) similarly states that the polarity head Pol is null and that “negative complementizers such as *nid* and *nad*, as well as the preverbal negator *ni* (...) may be analysed as C-elements which Agree with Pol”.

Alternatively, we could simply posit an abstract operator with an interpretable *[iNEG]* feature in a higher projection, as suggested by Zeijlstra (2022: 108) for cases where an NPI precedes the negative marker in other languages. While it would not be easy to argue for this in a clause structure as in Figure 3 (unless the negative operator could occupy C), such an option would well be feasible in a cartographic framework, especially in Poletto's (2020) proposed model (for Romance) with four different positions where negation can appear, (29). In such a model, the position of our PolP could roughly be identified with the IP field above TP, so a negative operator could potentially appear in a higher projection.

(Poletto 2020: 144)

McCloskey (2023: 19) connects the construction's “‘emphatic’ character” with “scalar implicatures of a familiar kind in that the use of such a structure evokes alternatives to the proposition actually expressed”, and states that this proposition “is presented as being (...) at the extreme high-point of a scale of salient alternatives” (McCloskey 2023: 20). Noting that many NPIs are “lexically specified as representing minimal elements on the quantity-scale implicitly defined by those alternatives” and that “they are in their lexical definition alternative-evoking and minimal” (McCloskey 2023: 22), he arrives at the description of Narrative Fronting in (30).

(McCloskey 2023: 23)

42 Although NPIs may be regarded as having a(n uninterpretable) feature [NEG], it would be difficult to argue for such a feature in (bare) indefinites and even more so in definite phrases, such as in Middle Welsh (21).



While McCloskey (2023: 31) understands Narrative Fronting as “a probe-goal interaction between a negative head and a phrase in its local domain which bears the ALT-feature” in which “the target phrase is raised to the specifier position of the polarity head”, it is difficult to argue for an alternative-evoking [ALT] feature in ‘bare’ indefinites (and definites). For instance, NPIs such as *aon deor amháin* ‘a single drop’ in (6) indeed evoke alternatives on a scale (e.g. ‘a single drop’, ‘two drops’, ‘many drops’, etc.), but an indefinite like *attep/atteb* ‘an answer’ in (14) does not evoke a set of (scalar) alternatives (e.g. ‘a single answer’, ‘two answers’, ‘many answers’, etc.). Therefore, we will turn our attention to a feature different from [ALT].

#### 8. Narrative Fronting as Focus Fronting

According to Culicover (2013: 247), SpecPolP can be a landing site for focussed constituents<sup>43</sup> (not only) in Spanish and English, like in the responsive examples of a fronted negative (31a) and a *so* phrase (31b) in English:

(31) Did you see anyone?

- a. No, not a single person did I see.
- b. Yes, so many people did I see that I was amazed.

(Culicover 2013: 247)

In line with this, I suggest that the feature [FOC], rather than [NEG] (or [ALT]), is relevant for our Narrative Fronting examples. Importantly, Honda (2021: 48) states that in English Negative Inversion, “the fronted negative element and the rest of the sentence constitute a unified assertive unit”.<sup>44</sup> That is, the fronted phrase in itself does not evoke focal alternatives but the whole assertion can be seen as a larger focal unit. In (14), for instance, the phrase ‘an answer’ does not have a set of alternatives, e.g. #‘It is an ANSWER what he did not get (not a slap, a glance, etc.)’, but there is a contextually determined set of alternative propositions (e.g. ‘She hit him’, ‘She looked at him’, ‘He received a reply’, ‘He did not get an answer’).

Furthermore, Honda (2021: 45) notes that in Negative Inversion, “the fronted negative phrase and the inverted auxiliary must be adjacent to each other”, and compares with “emphatic IFoc [= Information Focus, RS] fronting” in Romance languages, where “the IFoc element and the raised verb must establish a Spec-Head agreement relationship” with “focus-verb adjacency”, which prevents “an adjunct lower topic” from appearing between fronted phrase and verb.

<sup>43</sup> Note that an essential part of McCloskey’s (2017) argumentation regarding the properties of responsive ellipsis in Irish is to adopt that Pol bears a focus feature [FOC].

<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, this construction “seems to carry a contrastive meaning, but this contrastive meaning is triggered by the lexical meaning of negation” (Honda 2021: 44).

I suggest that Narrative Fronting is comparable to the construction described by Honda (2021) and may accordingly be regarded as a Focus Fronting structure. Focus Fronting has been associated with different types of focus, consider (32).

- (32) a. **information focus**: open set, pragmatically delimited  
 e.g. What do you want (to drink)? – **Wine**.  
 b. **exhaustive focus**: exhaustive identification, or exclusion by identification  
 e.g. What do you want, wine or coffee? – **Wine and coffee**.  
 c. **mirative focus**: the proposition is more unlikely or unexpected  
 e.g. Did you see what they poured into their mug? **Wine!**  
 d. **corrective focus**: correction of explicit given alternatives  
 e.g. You wanted coffee, right? – (No!) **Wine!**  
 (definitions after Cruschina 2021: 5, examples from Sackmann 2023)

Mirative focus<sup>45</sup> is linked to unexpectedness and surprise, but also obviousness, in relation to a set of alternative propositions that are relevant in the respective context (Cruschina 2021: 18–22). Conceivably, such a focus type may be observed at least in some of our Middle Welsh examples. In (14), for instance, the fact that ‘he’ didn’t get an answer is rather surprising or unexpected in relation to some contextually anticipated reaction of the other discourse participant (after being addressed three times), i.e. the proposition ‘He didn’t get an answer’ is less likely with regard to a set of other possible events such as ‘She looked at him’, ‘She replied’, ‘He got some reaction from her’. Some other cases are not so much mirative but rather exhaustive in that the negative statement is the contextually only relevant one, probably with some degree of ‘intensification’ (which remains to be characterized in more detail). This is arguably the case in (14), where the situation that the protagonist is in love is described as undisputedly applying to an absolute extent.<sup>46</sup>

Now, granted that Narrative Fronting is indeed some type of Focus Fronting to SpecPolP, we should still explain how this movement operates and results in a verb-second word order. Within a feature-driven approach, the fronted phrase may be perceived of as bearing an interpretable focus feature [*i*FOC], which must be checked by Pol (with an uninterpretable feature [*u*FOC]). The word order sequence between a specifier and its head at PF, de Vos (2014: 102) argues,

<sup>45</sup> Note that “emphatic IFoc fronting” is Honda’s (2021: 39) label for “mirative fronting”.

<sup>46</sup> In a talk given at the XVIIth International Congress of Celtic Studies in Utrecht 2023 (Sackmann 2023), I attempted to describe discourse functions observed with such negative statements in Middle and Early Modern Welsh, but without reference to syntactic structures. I proposed that different types of focus can occur with any of the three focus domains that Lambrecht (1994) distinguishes, which Krifka (2007) already implies. Accordingly, while ‘Wine’, and ‘Wine and coffee’, in (32) represent different types of constituent focus in their respective contexts, I would call (14) an instance of “mirative predicate focus”, while (13) could receive a label “exhaustive sentence focus”.

depends on this diverging interpretability of features. For the agreement relation between SpecPolP occupied by a focal phrase and Pol, we may posit the dependency  $XP[iFOC] > Pol[μFOC]$ : XP checks [FOC] on Pol, which results in verb-second order at PF (cf. de Vos 2014: 85–87). Accordingly, the following (33) could be a schematic derivation of Narrative Fronting (in Middle Welsh).<sup>47</sup>

(33)  $[CP [Spec] \emptyset [PolP [Spec XP_j[iFOC]] [Pol[μFOC] NEG+Infl_i] [TP... (t_j)... t_i... (t_j)...]]]$

To recapitulate: The structure in 0 is derived by movement of some focal phrase XP to SpecPolP to check XP's interpretable feature [iFOC] against the corresponding uninterpretable feature [μFOC] of Pol, which is occupied by finite negative marker and verb. The ordering of features [iFOC] > [μFOC] derives the word order [XP NEG+Infl], or, in other terms, fronted phrase + negative verb, at spell-out. In this construction, fronted phrase and negative finite verb arguably form a single focal information unit and show adjacency, which would mean that no phrases (such as adjunct adverbials) should be able to intervene, contrary to certain *wh*-constructions and left dislocations (cf. topical constructions with an intervening phrase in (3) and (9)). As for the types of focus employed, I suggest that Narrative Fronting may be associated (at least) with mirative or exhaustive focus.<sup>48</sup>

However, it must be noted that the derivation in (33) is most probably too simplistic because Narrative Fronting should be considered an optional movement: McCloskey (2023: 23) assumes that “the fronting itself plays no role in establishing the ‘emphatic’ character of Narrative Fronting” and that this “emerges from a semantic-pragmatic interaction (...) which would take place even when the (...) phrase remains in its base position” (cf. (6)). Sackmann (2023) argues in similar fashion that examples like (14) should be considered to yield a comparable discourse-functional interpretation both in the (non-topical) Narrative Fronting reading (e.g. ‘No answer did he get’) and the topical one (e.g. ‘An answer he didn’t get’), due to their specific textual context, although they differ in terms of information structure and syntax.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Within a cartographic framework, Narrative Fronting should be expected to target FocP (cf. Ostrove 2013: 40, for instance). Traces in parentheses in (33) denote that the base position from which a phrase has moved to SpecPolP may of course differ, depending on its syntactic function. Consider, for instance, (vii), with a fronted adverbial phrase consisting of *byth* ‘ever’ and *bellach* ‘further’:

(vii) *A byth bellach nyt ym6el6n ni*  
CONJ ever further NEG PV-see.PRES.1PL 1PL

‘But nevertheless will we see each other (again)’ (Luft et al. 2013, LIA: 103r2)

<sup>48</sup> In some cases (if not all), it might be more straightforward to opt for the “scalar”/“emphatic” type of focus, for which Krifka (2007: 33–34) notes that “the alternatives are ordered, and the focus denotation often is the least or greatest element”.

<sup>49</sup> According to Dal Farra (2018: 47–48, 56–58), optional focus fronting (as with mirative and corrective focus in Italian) is difficult in a cartographic approach, where a feature [FOC] should obligatorily trigger movement to a FocP. While [FOC] may activate FocP, a combination of [FOC]

More research on this optionality of focus movement and on the exact discourse-functional import of such negative assertions would definitely be appropriate.

## 9. Concluding remarks

In the present chapter, I intended to show that preverbal indefinites in Middle Welsh finite negative clauses bear some challenges on the syntax-semantics interface. Topical ‘out-of-scope’ indefinites can not only receive a generic or specific interpretation but can also be partitive or inferable in certain discourse contexts. Instances of non-topical preverbal indefinites in scope of negation can be considered comparable with such constructions in Irish, while some examples can arguably be regarded as ambiguous between a topical and a non-topical (existential) interpretation. After reviewing previous research, I take the following views regarding syntax of negative verb-second clauses in Middle Welsh:

- I generally assume the availability of different structures in a language and suggest that depending on the (contextual) interpretation, such as (non-)topicality of the preverbal phrase, syntax may differ.
- For topical indefinites (and other topical phrases), two primary positions should be considered, SpecCP and a clause-external dislocated position. I would argue that both were in productive use in Middle Welsh, to different degrees.
- With non-topical indefinites (and other non-topical phrases) in Narrative Fronting, the issue is more complex. We may definitely exclude a left-dislocation structure and have reason to issue caveats about both a movement operation to SpecCP (Willis 1998) and a derivation with indefinite raising and post-syntactic lowering of C (McCloskey’s 1996).
- If we allow for the possibility that the finite negative marker can be lower than C (e.g. in Pol), and assume that the Spec-head relationship can ensure scope of negation over a preverbal phrase in a specifier position (unless we posit an abstract operator), the derivation suggested in (33) can arguably cope with the Narrative Fronting construction as a type of Focus Fronting.
- While this fronting is apparently optional, the ‘emphatic’ nature of the negative assertion can potentially be associated with the notions of mirativity and exhaustivity.

To validate these suggestions, more data and crosslinguistic comparisons are required, not least from the other Celtic languages. One path that may be followed

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with other features (e.g. [+ mirativity] or [+ correction]), rather than [FOC] alone, could be taken to be (partially) responsible for movement. Cf. also Cruschina (2021: 11, note 10).

is that the Narrative Fronting construction can be expected to display adjacency between fronted phrase and negative verb and accordingly may not have an intervening phrase (e.g. an adjunct adverbial). Apart from that, it would be interesting to re-evaluate some constructions in positive clauses with respect to the syntactic (and pragmatic) properties associated with this movement operation. Although the occasional appearance of clitic *-s* in negative object-verb clauses remains as a further difficulty, its cooccurrence with a non-topical object phrase seems to be infrequent in Middle Welsh and can possibly be described as clitic agreement, as Willis (1998) and Borsley et al. (2007) suggest. With a topical reading of the coindexed object phrase, the clitic could be analysed as an anaphoric pronoun devoid of referential features, which substitutes the (abstract) descriptive content of an indefinite. However, more research on that, and related matters, has to be done.

A final question could be asked: What exactly determines the apparent optionality of Narrative Fronting? One might think, for instance, that it might actually depend on factors like register or a speaker's personal preference and (stylistic) choices. But this question is definitely out of this chapter's scope.

### Additional Abbreviations

CT: MS. Cotton Titus D.ii, in: Isaac and Rodway 2002.

LIA: Oxford Jesus College MS. 119 (The Book of the Anchorite of Llanddewi Brefi), in: Luft et al. 2013.

Pen6: MS. Peniarth 6ii, in: Isaac and Rodway 2002.

Pen11: NLW MS. Peniarth 11, in: Luft et al. 2013.

Pen16: MS. Peniarth 16iii, in: Isaac and Rodway 2002.

RB: Oxford Jesus College MS. 111 (The Red Book of Hergest), in: Luft et al. 2013.

WB: NLW MS. Peniarth 4 (The White Book of Rhydderch, part 2), in: Luft et al. 2013.

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