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## WEAK FOCUS AND POLARITY: ASYMMETRIES BETWEEN SPANISH AND CATALAN.<sup>1</sup>

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### 0. Introduction

As is well-known, in Old Spanish and Old Catalan contrastive focus, see (1), obtains whenever a word or a constituent is moved to the left, to the Specifier of Contrastive Focus Phrase, bringing about subject-verb inversion. This type of focus fronting has been widely attested in Old Spanish.<sup>2</sup>:

- (1) a. *Bien sepa el abbat que buen galardon dello pendra* [*Çid*, v.:386]  
well know the abbot who good award of-it take<sub>FUTURE,3RD.SG</sub>  
'The abbot has to know well that he will have good award for it'
- b. *Si del campo bien salides, grand ondra auredes vos* [*Çid*, v.:3565]  
if from the field well go-out<sub>2ND.PL</sub>, great honour will-have you  
'If you come out of the battlefield well, you will be honoured to the highest degree'
- c. *Mas poc profitara si érem enseyatz e no érem reemutz* [*CICA: Vides de Sants Rosselloneses*. Segle XIIIb: 14]  
but little will-benefit if were<sub>1ST.PL</sub> taught and not were<sub>1ST.PL</sub> redeemed  
'However, we would have little benefit if we were taught and not redeemed'
- d. *E dix la dita Johana: "e on és?", e respòs Jacme: "a Sexona l' é lexat, mas esta nit herà ..."* [*CICA: Llibre de Cort de Justicia d'Alcoi* (1263-65). Segle XIIIb: fol. 3r]  
and said the mentioned Joan: and where is<sub>3RD.MASC.?</sub>, and answered James: in Sexona him have<sub>1ST.SG</sub> left, but this night here (he)will-be  
'And the mentioned Joan said: And where is he?, and James answered: In Sexona have I left him, but tonight he will be here'

The data in (2) show that contrastive focus clearly differs from clitic left dislocation, which exhibits a resumptive pronoun:

- (2) a. *Alos de myo Çid ya les tuellen el agua* [*Çid*: v. 661]  
to-the of myo Çid by-now them take-away<sub>3RD.PL</sub> the water  
'By now those that go with myo Çid have been taken the water away'
- b. *...allò no u atorga la comunitat* [*Eiximenis, Dotzè: 1a part, Vol. I, 134*]  
that not it give<sub>3R.SG.INDICATIVE</sub> the community  
'That is not given by the community'

Old Spanish and Old Catalan display another focalization strategy which gives as a result a weak or unmarked focus. Both contrastive focus and unmarked focus cause subject-verb inversion, but they can be clearly told apart by the divergent intonation patterns they exhibit. Benincà (2004) supplies wide evidence for unmarked focus among medieval Romance, as illustrated in (3). Besides, several recent works show that some Modern Romance languages still have an unmarked focalization pattern available, as in Sicilian (see Cruschina 2008, 2009

and 2010: 247-260, and Cruschina-Remberger 2009) or Sardinian (see Jones 1993, Mensching and Remberger 2010: 261-276, and Paoli 2010: 277-278).

- (3) a. *Autre chose* ne pot li roi trouver [*Mort le roi Artu*: c. 1230, 101; Benincà (2004)] OLD FRENCH  
another thing not can the king find  
'The king cannot find any other thing'
- b. *Mal cosselh* donet Pilat [*Venjansa de la mort de Nostre Señor*, 106; Benincà (2004)] OLD PROVENÇAL  
bad advice gave Pilate  
'Pilate gave bad advice'
- c. *Con tanta pazeença* sofria ela esta enfermidade [*Diálogos de Sao Gregório*; Benincà (2004)] OLD PORTUGUESE  
with so-much patience suffered her this disease  
'She endured this disease with huge patience'
- d. *Bon vin* fa l'uga negra [*Bonvesin da la Riva*, 1280; Benincà (2004)] OLD MILANESE  
good wine makes the grape black  
'Black grapes make good wine'
- e. *Ciò* tenne il re a grande maraviglia [*Il Novellino*, II, 1300; Benincà (2004)] OLD FLORENTIN  
this has the king as a great wonder  
'The king regards this as a great wonder'

In addition to prosodic evidence, there are clear semantic differences between both types of phenomena. Thus, on interpretive terms, weak focus does not necessarily entail a contrastive reading, whereas contrastive focus "identifies by contrastive exclusion the complement of the focus within the set of alternatives". (Cruschina 2009: 24, f. n. 13).

The structure of this chapter is as follows. The first section is devoted to the study of the nature and properties of weak or unmarked focus and its vitality in Old Spanish and Old Catalan. In the second section we examine the behaviour of these constructions in Modern Spanish and Modern Catalan, and we conclude that both languages pattern differently in this aspect. On the basis of this evidence, we claim that there has been a grammatical change concerning weak focus from Old Catalan to Modern Catalan. Finally, in the last section, we explore the asymmetry between Modern Spanish and Modern Catalan and provide an explanation to account for this asymmetry and also for the grammatical change undergone by Modern Catalan, which we relate to the properties of the polarity node.

## 1. Weak focus in Old Spanish and Old Catalan

### 1.1. Old Spanish

Weak focus involves leftward fronting of a constituent with different functions: arguments and adjuncts. This is shown in (4) and (5), respectively:

- OBJECT PREPOSING

(4) a. *Los quinientos marcos* dio Minaya al abbat [*Çid*: v. 1422]

the 500 marks gave Minaya to-the abbot

'Minaya gave the abbot the 500 marks'

b. *este logar* mostro dios a abraam [*GE*, I. fol. 62v; Fontana (1993)]

this place showed God to Abraham  
'God showed Abraham this place'

- ADJUNCT PREPOSING

(5) a. *en mano* trae desnuda el espada [*Çid*: v. 471]

In had brings<sub>3SG</sub> uncovered the sword  
'He has the uncovered sword in his hand'

b. *De Ebrón* enbió Jacob so fijo Josep a Sychem por veer sos ermanos [*Fazienda*: 43]

From Ebron sent Jacob his son Joseph to Sychem to see his brothers  
'Jacob sent Joseph, his son, from Ebron to Sychem to see his brothers'

Weak focus fronting applies also to different categories, as adjectives (6), past participles (7),<sup>3</sup> or quantifiers (8):

- ADJECTIVE PREPOSING

(6) a. *Alegre* es doña Ximena & sus hijas amas [*Çid*: v. 1801; Batllori (1993)]

happy is lady Ximena and her daughters both  
'Lady Ximena and both her daughters are happy'

b. Non podían beber de las aguas [...] que *amargas* eran [*Fazienda*: 72; Batllori (1993)]

not could drink of the waters that sour were  
'They could not drink that water because it was sour'

c. *Vivo* es e sano [*Fazienda*: 56; Batllori (1993)]

alive is and sound  
'He is alive and well'

- PAST PARTICIPLE PREPOSING

(7) a. *betatu* lo ayat [*Glosas Silenses*: 295; Batllori (1993)]

vetoed it<sub>CL</sub> have<sub>PRES.SUBJ</sub>  
(that he) has forbidden it

b. lo que en muchos días *acabado* non as [*Buen Amor*: 579; Batllori (1993)]

it that in many days finished not have  
'what you have not finished in many days'

c. *Benedicto* sea Abraam de Dyos [*Fazienda*: 44; Batllori (1993)]

blessed be<sub>SUBJ</sub> Abraham by God  
'Let Abraham be blessed by God'

d. las puertas de mi casa *aviertas* las tenía [Berceo, Mil.: 639c; Batllori (1993)]

the doors of my house open them<sub>CL</sub> I-had  
'I had the doors of my house open'

- QUANTIFIER PREPOSING

(8) a. Fazerlo he; màs *mucho* me pesarà si os bien non fuere [*CORDE*: c. 1400-1498, Anónimo, *El baladro del sabio Merlín con sus profecías*]

Do-it-have<sub>1ST.SG</sub>; but much me<sub>CL</sub> upset<sub>3SG.FUTURE INDICATIVE</sub> if you well not go<sub>3SG.FUTURE SUBJUNCTIVE</sub>

'I will do it, but it will greatly upset me if you did not succeed'

b. & por esto *poco* se mesclaua con la multitud [*CORDE*: 1379-1384, Juan Fernández de Heredia, *Traducción de Vidas paralelas de Plutarco*, III]

and for this litte REF.PRON. mixed with the crowd  
'And for this reason he hardly mixed with the crowd'

- c. omes & mugieres que *algo* tienen de lo mio o que *algo* me deuen en Villa nueva  
 [CORDE: C. 1218, a 1300. Anónimo, *Carta de nombramiento*]  
 men and women that something have<sub>3RD.PL</sub> of the mine or that something to-me  
 owe<sub>3RD.PL</sub> in Villanueva  
 ‘(there are) men and women that have something mine or that owe me something in  
 Villanueva’

## 1.2. Old Catalan

Old Catalan examples show exactly the same behaviour as their Spanish counterpart.<sup>4</sup> Focus fronted elements can also be arguments, as in (9), or adjuncts, as in (10):

### • OBJECT PREPOSING

- (9) a. *Los chamins e les charreres pupliches* fa trencar e clodir [1190-1210. *Greuges dels Templers de Barberà*. Russell-Gebbett (1965: 85); Batllori-Iglésias-Martins (2005: 158)]  
 the paths and the roads public makes<sub>3RD.SG</sub> destroy and close  
 ‘He makes destroy and close the public paths and roads’
- b. *D'aquesta misèria de la comunitat* parla la Escriptura en molts lochs [Eiximenis, *Dotzè*: 1a part, Vol. I, 180]  
 Of this misfortune of the community talks<sub>3RD.SG</sub> the Holy-Scriptures in many places  
 ‘The Holy Scriptures tell us about this community misfortune in many places’

### • ADJUNCT PREPOSING

- (10) a. Declarades aquestes .iiii. causes, *en lo sermó* será gran doctrina al poble per conixer e amar virtuts e per conixer e a desamar pecats [Llull, *Virtuts e Pecats*.: 8]  
 stated these four causes, in the sermon will-be great doctrine to-the people for know and love virtues and for know and to loose-affection sins  
 ‘Once these four causes have been stated, the sermon will provide people with fine understanding to recognize and favour virtues and to identify and reject sins’
- b. *En semblant manera* no porás forçar que sies just per justicia [Llull, *Virtuts e Pecats*.: 13]  
 in similar manner not can<sub>2SG.FUTURE</sub> force that be<sub>2SG.SUBJUNCTIVE</sub> fair for justice  
 ‘In a similar way you will not be able to force you to be fair on rightness’

Apart from their functional status, focus fronted elements can belong to different categories, that is, adjectives, as in (11), past participles, as in (12), or quantifiers, as in (13):

### • ADJECTIVE PREPOSING

- (11) a. *si fas lo contrari, injust e imprudent* serás [Llull, *Virtuts e Pecats*.: 52; Batllori (1993)]  
 if you-do the opposite, unjust and imprudent you-will-be  
 ‘if you do the opposite, you will be unfair and careless’
- b. *foyl es home glot* [Llull, *Virtuts e Pecats*.: 251; Batllori (1993)]  
 fool is man greedy  
 ‘The greedy man is fool’

### • PARTICIPLE PREPOSING

- (12) a. *Mostrats* avem doncs los secrets [Llull, *Virtuts e Pecats*: 175; Batllori (1993)]  
 Shown we-have so the secrets  
 ‘So we have shown the secrets’

- b. *promés* li ho havem [XIV. Jaume I, Fabra 1912: 167; Fabra (1983-1984: 128); Batllori-Iglésias-Martins (2005: 167)]  
 promised him it have<sub>1ST.PL</sub>  
 ‘we have promised it to him’

• QUANTIFIER PREPOSING

- (13) a. Mon senyor e lo meu bé, *molt* me enuja la vostra partida [CICA: s. XVb, *Curial e Güelfa*.]  
 My lord and the my good, much to-me annoy<sub>3RD.SG</sub> the your departure  
 ‘My lord and my dear, your departure annoys me a lot.’
- b. E ell testis dix: ... que *massa vianda* m’avets dada, la qual ne volria haver gitada, no que me’n donets més [1374-1377. *Un matrimoni desavingut i un gat metzinat: procés criminal barceloní del segle XIV*; J. A. Rabella (1998:30)] ‘and the witness said: ... that too-much food to-me have<sub>2ND.PL</sub> given, the-that of-it would-like have thrown-up, not that to-me of-it give<sub>2ND.PL</sub> more.  
 ‘and the witness said: ... that you have given me too much food, which I would rather had thrown up than that you had given me more.’
- c. aquells qui *poch* ho han a tenir ne són pus cruels, arrancant-ne ço que poden, ne’s curen de la justícia pensant que *poch* ho han a tenir [Eiximenis, *Dotzè*: 1a part, vol I: 191]  
 those who little it have<sub>3RD.PL</sub> to have not are more cruel, tearing-out not this that can<sub>3RD.PL</sub>, not REF.PRON care for the justice thinking that little it have<sub>3RD.PL</sub> to have.  
 ‘those who will scarcely have it are neither crueler by tearing out what they can nor avoid judgement by thinking that they will not quite have it’

**1.3. Further properties of weak focus**

In addition to the properties discussed so far, there is crucial evidence to show that weak focus fronted constituents pattern as focal elements. Notice in this respect that adjacency is required between the fronted element and the finite verb. Consequently, the subject (when lexically realized) appears in a postverbal position, as illustrated in (14):

- (14) a. [<sub>SX</sub> *De Ebrón*] enbió Jacob so fijo Josep a Sychem =(5b)  
 b. [<sub>SX</sub> *Alegre*] es doña Ximena =(6a)  
 c. dix que [<sub>SX</sub> *fleuma*] era e que [<sub>SX</sub> *mala vianda*] eren los blets  
 d. Mon senyor e lo meu bé, [<sub>SX</sub> *molt*] me enuja la vostra partida  
 =(13a)

Furthermore, no resumptive pronoun occurs in object fronting constructions, which rules out an analysis along the lines of clitic left dislocation. This is shown in (15):

- (15) a. [<sub>SN</sub> *Los quinientos marcos*] dio Minaya al abbat =(4a)  
 b. [<sub>SN</sub> *este logar*] mostro dios a abraam =(4b)  
 c. [<sub>SN</sub> *Los chamins e les charreres pupliches*] fa trencar e clodir  
 =(9a)

Given the assumption that the constructions under study are focal in nature, we would expect them to only occur in matrix clauses. However, a potential problem arises with the examples in (16), which show that WFF is also attested in embedded sentences:

- (16) a. Juro ego ... che ... *treva et paz* tenré et a mos òmens tener la mannaré [XII. *Jurament de pau i treva del comte Pere Ramon de Pallars Jussà al bisbe d'Urgell* (1098-1112), Moran-Rabella (2001: 64-65); Batllori-Iglésias-Martins (2005: 165)]  
Swear I ... that ... truce and peace will-have<sub>1ST.SG</sub> and to my men have it will-order<sub>1ST.SG</sub>  
'I swear that I will keep truce and peace and that I will order my hosts to keep them, too'
- b. dit m'an que *clams* volets fer a la cort d'aquest mal fet que ma filla n'Anthònia vos ha fet [1374-1377. *Un matrimoni desavingut i un gat metzinat: procés criminal barceloní del segle XIV*; J. A. Rabella (1998:32)]  
said to-me have<sub>3RD.PL</sub> that claims want<sub>2ND.PL</sub> (to) make to the court of this bad act that my daughter the Antoinette you<sub>CL</sub> have<sub>3RD.SG</sub> made  
'They told me that you want to make claims to the court because of the evil things that my daughter Antoinette did to you'
- c. De la reyna Dona Maria, nostra mare, volem aytant dir que, si *bona dona* havia e·l món, que ela ho era en tembre e en honrar Déu e en altres bones costumes que en ela eren [CICA: Jaume I, *Llibre dels fets del rei en Jaume* (1325-1349): fol 4r]  
Of the queen lady Mary, our mother, want<sub>1ST.PL</sub> such say that, if good woman have<sub>3RD.SG.IMPERSONAL</sub> in the world, that she it was in fear and in honour God and in other good habits that in here were<sub>3RD.PL</sub>  
'Concerning our mother, lady Mary, the queen, we want to say that if there were a perfect woman in the world, it would be her because she fears and honours God and has other good habits'
- d. e dix-li que li retés l'arcènich que venut li h[avi]a, cor mal li estava que ell, qui *son amich* era, lo aportàs [a perill] de perdre lo cors e'l haver [1374-1377. *Un matrimoni desavingut i un gat metzinat: procés criminal barceloní del segle XIV*; J. A. Rabella (1998:47)]  
and said to-him that him returned the arsenic that sold him had, because bad him were that he, who his friend was, him brought to danger of loosing the body and the assets  
'And he told him to give back the arsenic he had sold him, because he considered it dreadful that he, who was his friend, had put him in danger to the point of loosing his body and his assets'
- e. Non podian beber de las aguas [...] que *amargas* eran [Fazienda: 72; Batllori (1993)]  
not could drink of the waters that sour were  
'They could not drink that water because it was sour'

Nevertheless, it must be taken into account that the kind of subordinate sentences that host weak focus exhibit properties of root sentences.<sup>5</sup> That is, they instantiate cases of embedded clauses depending on verbs that select indicative like *jurar* "to swear" (16a), *dir*, "to say" (16b), peripheral adverbial clauses (16c, 16e), and non restrictive relative clauses (16d).

Now, returning to the examples in (14), some authors, paying attention to the O-V-S order, concluded that medieval Romance displayed V2 properties and that medieval Romance languages were similar to Germanic ones in this respect:

- (17) [<sub>SPEC</sub> IP este lugar<sub>i</sub> [[<sub>I</sub> mostró] [<sub>VP</sub> Dios [<sub>V'</sub>[<sub>V'</sub> tv t<sub>i</sub>] a Abraham]]]]  
[Fontana (1993:73)]

Consistent with the cartographic approach developed from Rizzi (1997) onwards— that supplied a split CP domain to give an adequate explanation of the relationship between the syntactic representation of the sentence and its pragmatic and information structure-, several scholars have regarded the examples under study as cases of focalization which can correspond to different types of foci:<sup>6</sup>

‘The hypothesis that the Focus Field can host various kinds of Foci is relevant in particular for medieval Romance languages. This area appears to be more easily activated in those languages than in modern Italian, so that we find there not only contrastive Focus or *wh* elements, but also less ‘marked’ elements (an identificational, informational or ‘unmarked’ focus, an anaphoric operator, or even elements with the pragmatic characteristics of a topic ‘put in relief’)’ [Benincà (2004: 251)]

This view, applied to Fontana’s example, would give the following representation:<sup>7</sup>

- (18) a. [<sub>FORCEP</sub> [<sub>TOPICP</sub> [<sub>FOCUSP</sub> ... {UNMARKED FOCUS [<sub>SPEC</sub> *este lugar*<sub>i</sub> [<sub>UFOCUS</sub>’ [<sub>UFOCUS</sub> mostró]]}]]] [<sub>FINP</sub> ... [<sub>VP</sub> Dios [<sub>V</sub>’ [<sub>V</sub> t<sub>v</sub> t<sub>i</sub>] a Abraham]]]]]]
- b. [<sub>FORCEP</sub> [<sub>TOPICP</sub> [<sub>FOCUSP</sub> ... {UNMARKED FOCUS [<sub>SPEC</sub> *d'aquesta misèria de la comunitat*<sub>i</sub> [<sub>UFOCUS</sub>’ [<sub>UFOCUS</sub> parla]]}]]] [<sub>FINP</sub> ... [<sub>VP</sub> la Escriptura [<sub>V</sub>’ t<sub>v</sub> t<sub>i</sub>]]]]]]

The analysis in (18) expresses the fact that this pattern of focus fronting obtains by the leftward movement of unmarked non-focal (or mildly focal) elements that would end up in a left peripheral functional category hierarchically lower than contrastive focus.

## 2. Weak Focus in Modern Spanish and Modern Catalan

### 2.1. A preliminary overview to the data

The general picture sketched in the preceding section exhibits a regularity which sharply contrasts with the one offered by a comparison of Modern Spanish and Modern Catalan data, which shows that weak focus is more restrictive in the latter than in the former. The following examples illustrate that, whereas Modern Spanish still allows these configurations (19), most of them are ungrammatical in Modern Catalan (20):

- (19) a. *Mucho* me temo que la crisis no ha tocado fondo  
‘I am afraid that the crisis has not finished yet’
- b. *Sus razones* tendrá para actuar de este modo  
her reasons them<sub>CLITIC.ACCUSATIVE.FEM.PL</sub> will-have to act in this way  
‘There must be an explanation for such behaviour’
- c. *Eso mismo* pienso yo  
‘So believe I’
- d. *Buena tierra* es esta [Leonetti & Escandell (2008)]  
‘This is a fertile land’
- (20) a. \**Molt* has matinat tu avui  
‘you woke up really early today’
- b. \**Els seus motius* deu tenir per haver-se enfadat  
‘There must be some reason for being so upset’
- c. \**Això mateix* penso jo  
‘So believe I’

- d. \**Bona terra* és aquesta  
 ‘This is a fertile land’

It should be observed, though, that the examples in (21), in which the fronted constituent is a QP, are well formed in Catalan:

- (21) a. *Algú* hi trobarem, a la Rambla  
 ‘at the Rambla, you will find somebody’ [*apud* Quer (2002: 256)]  
 b. *Gaires estudiants* no deu haver aprovat, aquest professor  
 ‘There may not be many students who passed this teacher’s exam’  
 c. *Molts diners* no han costat, aquestes arracades  
 ‘They did not cost a lot of money, these ear rings.’

Interestingly enough, the examples in (21) are grammatical not only in Catalan, but also in other Romance varieties in which WFF in general is not possible. Cruschina (2009: 22) considers that ‘existing analyses and new empirical data from other Romance languages show that, contrary to traditional assumptions, non-contrastive FF is widespread in Romance, especially with quantifiers and quantified expressions (i.e. QP-Fronting)’. Benincà (1988:141-142) gives the following examples:

- (22) a. *Niente* concludi, stando in questo buco  
 nothing conclude<sub>2ND.SG</sub> staying in this hole  
 ‘You are not getting anywhere, staying in this hole!’  
 b. A nessuno nuoce, col suo comportamento  
 to nobody harm<sub>3RD.SG</sub> with his behaviour  
 ‘He’s not hurting anyone with his behaviour’

We will examine this issue more extensively in section 3.

## 2.2. Properties of weak focus in Modern Spanish and Modern Catalan: a comparative view

Weak focus fronting (WFF) has been regarded as a productive phenomenon in Italian (see Cinque 1990), Portuguese (see Ambar 1999) and Catalan (see Quer 2002).<sup>8</sup> However, WFF does not follow a homogenous pattern within Modern Romance languages, which becomes obvious by the comparison of the data given in (19) to (20).

Before taking into consideration the contrast between the above examples in (19) and (20), it is worth summarizing the main properties of unmarked focalization in Spanish:

I. Unmarked focalizations are incompatible with resumptive clitics (i.e., they diverge from topicalizations):

- (23) \**Sus razones* las tendrá para actuar de este modo  
 her reasons them<sub>CLITIC.ACCUSATIVE.FEM.PL</sub> will-have to act in this way  
 ‘There must be an explanation for such behaviour’

II. Subject-verb inversion is compulsory:

- (24) \**Algo* estos niños estarán tramando  
 Something these children will-be plotting





b. ??Algú trobarem a la Rambla  
[Quer (2002: 264)]

- (30) a. Alguns llibres deu haver comprat, l’Oriol  
‘Oriol, must have bought some books’  
b. ??Alguns llibres deu haver comprat l’Oriol  
[Quer (2002: 264)]

According to this author, emargination prevents postverbal elements from being assigned nuclear stress: in case they were assigned it there would be a potential conflict with the focal value of the fronted QP.

Crucially, in Modern Spanish there is no requirement for the emargination of postverbal elements in WFF and, what is more, (31) and (32) prove that it makes no difference with regard to the grammaticality of the sentence. This poses a problem for Quer’s analysis, because it erroneously predicts the ungrammaticality of the examples in (31a) and (32a), which lack emargination:

- (31) a. Poco se imaginaba María lo sucedido  
little Mary imagined what happened  
‘Mary could not imagine what had happened’  
b. Poco se imaginaba, María, lo sucedido
- (32) a. Algo estarán tramando estos niños  
something will-be plotting these children  
‘These children must be plotting something’  
b. Algo estarán tramando, estos niños

The contrasts given in (31) and (32) are relevant empirical evidence to sustain the hypothesis that elements submitted to WFF occupy different positions in Modern Spanish and Modern Catalan left periphery. Our claim is that the requirement for emargination is related to the presuppositional differences between Catalan and Spanish data. More precisely, Catalan requires emargination because the right dislocated element interpreted as topic is the one that allows the further partition of the informative structure of the sentence, which gives rise to its presuppositional value.

Next section will examine the homogeneity between Old Spanish and Old Catalan in contrast with the asymmetry between Modern Spanish and Modern Catalan to find out the nature of the grammatical change that took place from Old Catalan to Modern Catalan in relation to WFF structures.

### 3. Weak focus fronting and polarity

#### 3.1. Towards an explanation for the asymmetry between Modern Spanish and Modern Catalan

On the basis of the data discussed so far, we are in a position to claim that Modern Spanish still maintains an unmarked focus position which is hierarchically lower than contrastive focus and which serves as *landing site* for WFF constituents. See Benincà (2004: 256):

{Topic...[CLLD]...} {Focus...[ContrastFocus]...[UnmFocus]...}

In order to account for the asymmetry between Modern Catalan and Modern Spanish with regard to WFF, we hypothesize that the syntactic change that has taken place from Old to

Modern Catalan can be grasped as the loss of the unmarked focus position within the focus domain:

- (35) [<sub>FORCEP</sub> [<sub>TOPICP</sub> [<sub>CONTRASTIVE FOCUSP</sub> [<sub>UNMARKED FOCUSP</sub> [... [<sub>FINP</sub>]]]]]]]

Therefore, information structure is a source of variation between Modern Spanish and Modern Catalan, while it was not the case between Old Spanish and Old Catalan.

Under the assumption that a syntactic projection for unmarked focus is no longer available in Modern Catalan, the following question arises: what position do the fronted elements submitted to WFF target? In view of the presuppositional interpretation displayed by constructions like (21), we postulate that the projection where these elements move to in Modern Catalan is PolP, as (36) illustrates:

- (36) [<sub>FORCEP</sub> [<sub>TOPICP</sub> [<sub>CONTRASTIVE FOCUSP</sub> [<sub>UNMARKED FOCUSP</sub> [<sub>POLP</sub> [<sub>FINP</sub> ]]]]]]



This hypothesis offers an explanation for the ungrammaticality of the Modern Catalan examples in (20) and the grammaticality of those in (21). More precisely, the contrast between (20) and (21) clearly suggests that a “stronger” trigger is needed in order to license WFF in Modern Catalan. Notice in this respect that examples in (21) would turn out to be clearly inadequate if they were expressed ‘out of the blue’, this is, in absolute discourse initial position, being independent of a previous context.

The presuppositional import of WFF structures in Modern Catalan cannot be extended to their counterparts in Modern Spanish, which in some cases do not allow a contrast with the preceding discursive context. This can be shown by examining the minimal pair in (37). Whereas (37a) can be expressed without previous reference to the activity developed by the subject (the children), (37b), as already said, refute or rectify an affirmation uttered earlier about Lola:

- (37) a. *Algo* estarán tramando estos niños = (32a)  
 something will-be plotting these children  
 b. *Algun error* haurà comès, la Lola  
 some mistake will-have made, Lola

Our proposal connects with the analysis given to WFF structures by Leonetti and Escandell (2009: 155), who claim that this type of focalization, which they label *Verum Focus Fronting* (VFF), “triggers association of focus with sentence polarity”. According to them, “in Spanish the most natural paraphrase of a VFF consists in a construction in which the propositional content is embedded under the affirmative particle *sí* ‘yes’ or under the adjectives *seguro* ‘sure’ or *cierto* ‘true’”. They illustrate all this with the following paraphrases:

- (38) a. *Algo* has visto → {*Sí* / *seguro*} que has visto algo  
 something have seen → {yes / sure} that have seen something  
 ‘You have seen SOMETHING’ → ‘Yes / surely you have seen something’  
 b. *A alguien* encontrarás → {*Sí* / *seguro*} que encontrarás a alguien  
 to someone will-find → {yes / sure} that will-find to someone  
 ‘You will find someone’ → ‘It’s sure that you will find someone’  
 c. *Miedo* me da pensarlo → {*Sí* / *es cierto* que me da miedo pensarlo  
 fear I<sub>CLITIC.DATIVE</sub> gives think it → {yes / is true} that I<sub>CLITIC.DATIVE</sub> gives fear think it  
 ‘Afraid as I am to think so’ → ‘Yes / It’s true I’m afraid to think about it’

Leaving aside the grade of adequacy<sup>10</sup> of the paraphrases adduced in (38), they offer an explanation that fits with a picture where WFF properties crucially rely on polarity.

The analysis proposed in (36) is also supported by diachronic evidence. Configurational changes undergone by medieval languages correlate with changes in the Polarity node.<sup>11</sup> Both Old Spanish and Old Catalan displayed double negation. Spanish lost this option by the XVth century, while Catalan still has it:

- (39) Que los descabeçemos *nada non* ganaremos [Çid: v. 620]  
 that them cut-head nothing not win<sub>1ST.PL</sub>  
 ‘Even if we cut their heads, we are not going to win anything’
- (40) en nula guisa porà, e si fer-ó volrà, *res no* valrà [CICA: Segle XIIIa. *Usatges de Barcelona*]  
 In no maner will-be-able, and if do-it will-want, thing no be-worth<sub>3SG.FUT</sub>  
 ‘He won’t be able to do it anyway, and if he wanted to do it, it won’t be worth doing it’

Furthermore, the possibility to attribute the syntactic change we are considering to the properties of the Polarity node in Modern Catalan is supported by an important diachronic fact: Catalan has shown a high tendency to grammaticalize fronted elements as polar markers. Adverbs and adjectives such as *poc* ‘little’, *pla* ‘flat’, *prou* ‘enough’, and *bé* ‘well’ behave like negative and positive emphatic polarity markers nowadays. In contrast, in Modern Spanish the only element that has grammaticalized as an emphatic polarity marker is *bien*:

- (41) a. En Pere *prou* que ho deia → sí que ho deia  
 The Peter enough that it said → yes that it said  
 ‘Peter said it indeed’
- b. *Poc* ho farà la Maria → no ho farà  
 Little it will-do the Mary → not it will-do  
 ‘Mary won’t do it’
- c. La Maria *pla* que ho farà → no ho farà<sup>12</sup>  
 The Mary flat that it will-do → not it will-do  
 ‘Mary won’t do it’
- d. *Bé* hi ha anat a la biblioteca. No l’has trobat? → sí que hi ha anat  
 Well there have gone to the library. Not him have met? → yes that there have gone  
 ‘He has gone to the library indeed. Didn’t you meet him?’

Following Batllori and Hernanz (2008), we assume that the elements alluded to are base-generated in PolP, as illustrated in (42):

- (42) [...[<sub>FOCUSP</sub> *bien*<sub>i</sub> ~ *bé*<sub>i</sub>, *prou*<sub>i</sub>/ *poc*<sub>i</sub>, *pla*<sub>i</sub> [<sub>POLP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> [<sub>FINP</sub>...]]]]<sup>13</sup>

Further evidence that Modern Catalan displays a strong polarity projection is provided by the examples in (43), where two positions for negation are attested. As discussed in Hernanz (2007: 128), this possibility is totally banned in Modern Spanish.

- (43) *No que no* ha vingut la Lola  
 not that not has come the Lola  
 ‘But Lola did not come’

These divergent properties of PolP bring about leftward fronting phenomena which fall under different paradigms in each language.

### 3. 2. Diachronic Romance and the node Polarity

Bearing in mind the preceding evidence, it can be stated that polarity is an important source of diachronic and synchronic variation between Spanish and Catalan.

In this section, on the bases that in both medieval languages polarity shared the same properties (i.e., it was strong), we are going to summarize the way they encoded the different values (polar and non polar) of WFF sentences.

#### 1. WFF in Old Catalan

- WFF with polar value:

(44) Do[n]cs *bé* podem saber qe negú om no escaparà qe ·l Diable no·l exag [CICA: *Homilies d'Organyà* XIIIa]  
 so well can<sub>1ST.PL</sub> know that noone man not escape<sub>FUTURE.3RD.SG</sub> that the devil not him tried  
 ‘So we can know well/indeed that no one will escape without having been tested by the devil.’

(45) [ForceP [TopicP [Contrastive FocusP [Unmarked FocusP [PolP [FinP ]]]]]]

- WFF without polar value:

(46) D’acò creu que *molt* n’agatz ligit e oït [Eiximenis, *Cartes autògrafes*: 247]  
 of this think<sub>2ND.SG</sub> that a-lot of-it have<sub>2ND.PL.SUBJ</sub> read and listened  
 ‘Be sure that you have read and listened much of this’

(47) [ ForceP [TopicP [Contrastive FocusP [Unmarked Focus P [PolP [FinP ]]]]]]

#### 2. WFF in Old Spanish

- WFF with polar value:

(48) CELESTINA: Señora, este es otro y segundo punto, [el qual] si tu con tu mal sufrimiento no consientes, *poco* aprovechara mi venida, y si como prometiste lo sufres, tu quedaras sana y sin deubda, y Calisto sin quexa y pagado. [Celestina: 243]  
 CELESTINA: Madam, this is another and second point, [the which] if you with your bad suffering not consent, little benefit my arrival, and if as promised it suffers, you remain<sub>FUTURE-2ND.SG</sub> healthy and without debt, and Calisto without complaint and paid.  
 ‘Celestina: Madam, this is another point, a second one, if you do not consent with your distressing suffering, little will you take advantage of my arrival, and if you suffer it as you promised, you will be healthy and with no debt, and Calisto will not complain and will be satisfied.’

(49) [ForceP [TopicP [Contrastive FocusP [Unmarked FocusP [PolP [FinP ]]]]]]

- WFF without polar value:

(50) ¿Eres muerto o vivo? Cierto, *mucho* me maravillo de ti [CORDE: c. 1400-1498, Anónimo, *El baladro del sabio Merlin con sus profecías*]



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<sup>2</sup> See Martínez Gil (1989) and Batllori (1993).

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed description of participle preposing in Old Spanish see Rodríguez Molina (2010: § 5.1) and (2011).

<sup>4</sup> The only difference we can see between Old Spanish and Old Catalan is that the former displays interpolation, whereas it is not attested in the latter –see Batllori-Iglésias-Martins (2005) for more information.

<sup>5</sup> See Haegeman (2007) and subsequent works.

<sup>6</sup> There has been considerable debate concerning the categorization of medieval Romance as V2 languages. Cruschina-Sitaridou (2009/In press), among others, argue that most of them display V1, which does not apply in such canonical V2 languages as Modern German. This implies that medieval Romance languages have a richer and more complex information structure than Modern Romance, which brings about different distributional orders, emulating V2. In fact, Danckaert (2011: 51 and 288) poses a richer hierarchical structure for Latin in which there are Focus and Topic projections both in the high and in the low left periphery, apart from a medial Scrambling projection. Notice that Poletto (2006) also argues in favour of two peripheries: the high and the low one in vP. If we assume that the change from OV to VO took place within Latin (as in Vincent 1976) and that medieval Romance languages still have the same structure as Latin, the resulting superficial V2 order can be easily explained as information structure distribution. In fact, Castillo Lluch (2011) shows that charters OV order flows between a Latin archaic flavour and an innovative information structure preposing. Extending all this to Old Spanish and Old Catalan would set light on the data and would surely help to distinguish among the different kinds of preposing (nominals, adjectives, past participles, quantifiers, etc.). We leave this for further research, though.

<sup>7</sup> See Benincà (2004: 267).

<sup>8</sup> See Cruschina (2009: 22) for more bibliographical references concerning quantifier fronting.

<sup>9</sup> On emphatic polarity in Spanish, see Hernanz (2007).

<sup>10</sup> Although some Modern Spanish WFF structures admit this type of paraphrases, it is not the case in all the Modern Spanish examples of WFF. This may possibly be due to the fact that WFF configurations are not homogeneous in Modern Spanish. We leave this aspect for further research.

<sup>11</sup> See Martins (2000), (2002) and (2005) for an account of the strong/weak nature of  $\Sigma P$  and its correlation with scrambling, VP-Ellipsis and clitic placement.



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<sup>12</sup> See Rigau (in press).

<sup>13</sup> For a detailed explanation of the analysis instantiated in (42), see Batllori and Hernanz (2008).