Eastern European Perspectives on Celtic Studies

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Edited by

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This volume is dedicated to those scholars in Poland who pioneered Celtic Studies in Poland, particularly Prof. Piotr Stalmaszczyk (University of Łodż) and the late Prof. Edmund Gusmann (John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin), and all Polish academics who engage in Celtic conversations in Poland and elsewhere.

This volume is the culmination of a number of papers read at the First Poznań Celtic Studies Conference in October 2014, a biannual event which draws participants and delegates from all over the Celtic world and further afield, such as Austria, Canada and, of course Poland, the location of the conference.

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INTRODUCTION

The present volume represents the proceedings of the 1st Poznań Conference of Celtic Studies held between 18-19th October 2014 at the Faculty of English, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland. Though now a regular biannual event, the conference grew out of a number of Celtic thematic sessions organized at the Poznań Linguistic Meeting conference over a number of years. The aim of the conference is to establish a regular Celtic Studies academic event in Central and Eastern Europe and provide a platform for discussion on the most recent research output by scholars from Poland and abroad.

The Department of Celtic Languages and Literatures, now the Centre for Celtic Studies, at the School of English (now Faculty of English) Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań was established in 2004. Initially, a selection of courses on Celtic languages and literatures was offered to students of English philology. The full B.A. programme in English Philology with a Celtic specialization commenced in the academic year 2007/2008. The immense enthusiasm of the students and their expressed interest in pursuing Celtic Studies further led to the launch of the M.A. programme in the academic year 2010/2011. Thus, Adam Mickiewicz University has become the only academic institution in Poland offering Celtic Studies courses at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.

Although Celtic Studies in Poznań have a relatively short history, research in this area has been conducted in Poland for over a century by a number of scholars working at various universities. The earliest Polish scholars publishing on such aspects of Celtic Studies as mythology, religion, Celtic literatures, comparative linguistic studies and phonology include Stefan Czarnowski (1879-1937), Jan Michał Rozwadowski (1867-1935), Jerzy Kuryłowicz (1895-1978), Piotr Bieńkowski (1865-1925), Alfred Majewski (1907-1998) and Leszek Bednarczuk (1936 -), whose work, however, remains little known. In more recent years, the first chair of Celtic Studies was established by the late Professor Edmund Gussmann (1945-2010) in 1991 at the Catholic University of Lublin. Courses on selected aspects of Celtic Studies, however, had been taught in Lublin for a few years before that date. The chair has been managed in recent years by Professor

Eugeniusz Cyran, and presently by Dr. hab. Maria Bloch-Trojnar. The Centre for Celtic Studies at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań is proud of its record of collaborating with the Chair of Celtic Studies in Lublin, having engaged in joint events and contributing to publications produced by the respective Centre/Chair.

This volume aims to show the wide breadth of fields under investigation at the current time in Celtic Studies, both in Poland and further afield. As a discipline, Celtic Studies are undergoing a series of changes in approach, and the field is brought into question in this volume by John Collis who examines the notion of Celtoscepticism, which has received growing attention over the past few years and which has made many scholars rethink their approach to a number of Celtic-based themes. As he points out, Celtoscepticism can potentially, tackled in the right way, breathe new life into the subject and can be viewed as a positive movement. Thus, articles by Hodges and Dołowy-Rybińska problematize the changes in thinking of many linguists over the concept of who speaks a Celtic language and how well they speak it. Attempts to safeguard a number of Celtic languages, through education and the media, as detailed in these chapters, can be contested – who exactly are these provisions for (native speakers? learners?) and what are the discursive expectation for the outcomes of such services? Do schools aim to reproduce traditional speakers or are they creating a new type of speaker? Such questions are opportune as the twenty-first century progresses.

Ifan's contribution reminds us of Wales' much-deserved reputation as 'the land of song' and examines musicality from the perspective of Cultural Studies to highlight that music is being increasingly recognized as a tool to impact positively on health and wellbeing.

The field remains well researched by those scholars following more traditional lines, and those articles on Mediaeval Celtic Studies aim to showcase the work of a number of emerging scholars in the field, who examine various aspects of Celtic textuality in Mediaeval Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The volume aims to give voice to a number of early career scholars (Sneddon and Bonsey), placing them carefully alongside more established scholars in the field (Collis and Miles) in order to show the continuation of established methods of investigation in the field of Celtic Studies, but also new and fresh takes on previously discussed issues.

The volume is arranged in three sections: the first two chapters (Bonsey and Bauer) discuss two aspects of Celtic linguistics, particularly the field

of language contact. The next section consists of sociolinguistic and cultural aspects of Celtic Studies, with chapters on 'new' speakers of Breton (Dołowy-Rybińska), of Welsh (Hodges) and on how music impacts on notions of well-being and everyday life in Wales (Ifan). The final section comprises theoretical, historical and textual aspects of Celtic Studies, with critical examinations of the field itself (Collis), of Irish-Polish relations and migrations (Gmerek), and of Welsh and Irish medieval manuscripts (Miles and Sneddon).

Contributions are included from a range of scholars, not only from the Celtic heartlands but further afield such as Austria, Canada and Poland. As previously mentioned, these papers were read at a Celtic Studies conference in Poland (Poznań, October 2014) and another aim of the editors is to emphasize the international aspect of the field and to highlight the relatively strong position of Celtic Studies in Poland, through the inclusion of Polish scholars working on Irish and Breton, and by introducing an academic audience to the 'conversation' on Celtic matters which was held in 2014 on Polish soil. In particular, Gmerek's article on the presence of the O'Byrne family from Ireland carefully traces the long-established connections between Ireland and Poland and reminds us that migration – for political, economic or other reasons – is not a new phenomenon, and not always from the east to the west, either.

Michael Hornsby and Karolina Rosiak

CHAPTER ONE

MEDIEVAL WELSH AND NORMAN FRENCH IN CONTACT: THE SYNTACTIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE WELSH ABNORMAL SENTENCE

MAGGIE BONSEY

The Middle Welsh Abnormal Sentence, with its subject-first structure, has long been noted as anomalous amongst traditionally verb-initial Celtic languages (Evans 1964). Curiously, this subject-first structure (without emphasis) indicative topicalization is unique to Middle Welsh prose, and has subsequently disappeared in the modern language. However, it still begs the question of why and how this formation developed and why it is such an anomaly. The development of the abnormal sentence seems to have happened concurrently with the Norman invasion of Wales in 1067, a time of heightened internal political strife within the Welsh borders and the impetus for the introduction of French as a prestige language among the elite of England and Wales. The theory of contact induced language change indicates that linguistic shift is driven by societal factors rather than simply linguistic ones, meaning that the speakers of a language cannot simply decide that a specific feature of a contact language would work well within the confines of the grammatical structure of the receptive language and expect it to subsequently appear in the language as a whole. An examination of a literary exchange between Medieval Wales and Norman France indicates a deep cultural impact on Medieval Welsh literature, which led to a noticeable shift in the linguistic and structural content of the literary products of that period. This background provided the foundation to examine the development of the abnormal sentence through a sociolinguistic lens. I used an analysis of the underlying reason for the creation of the Mabinogion and the Celtic substrate in many French poetic romances as examples of the power Normans had on the literary culture of Medieval Wales.

Introduction

Few aspects in the study of Middle Welsh have been as contentious as the Abnormal Sentence, an aspect of literary grammar exclusive to the medieval period. Unlike the typical verb-first word order of most Celtic languages, the Abnormal Sentence is characterized by an unmarked subject-first order. In this chapter, I intend to offer an overview of the scholarship concerning the development of the Abnormal Sentence; over the course of this discussion, I will advance the argument that the development of this particular syntactic feature is due to the influence of the Anglo-Norman presence in Britain from the eleventh century on. While this claim is not groundbreaking in its own right, I hope to provide a summary and evaluation of the various arguments that have yet to be examined together.

Language contact

The lasting effects of extended multi-cultural contact occur beyond the surface manifestation of mutual exchange of cultural thought and customs or cross-linguistic borrowings. The Norman Conquest of Britain in 1066 is a perfect example of a dominant foreign power whose lasting influence caused a fundamental shift in the cultural fabric of existing communities, frequently resulting in the adoption of a new, dominant language in certain cultural and political spheres of the subordinate power. The lasting French influence on English is well attested: for example, it is commonly accepted that about 75% of the lexicon of modern English is of French or Latinate origin (Lerer 2007, Thomason 2001, and others). Throughout the British Isles, Norman French was what is termed a migrant superordinate language (Thomason 2001), an incoming language with significant cultural prestige spoken by a small but powerful minority. As Thomason notes, "[the] French that was introduced into the royal court and other public arenas in England by the Norman conquerors lasted as a major language of public life for about two hundred years" (2001, 23). Thereafter followed a subtle trend to Gallicize the language spoken by the wider populace to reflect the trends set by the dominant political and economic power of the age. Language contact and resultant language shift are driven primarily by social and historical factors; the nature of the contact between cultures determines the futures of the languages in contact. It must also be noted that an element of bilingualism, whether at the individual or societal level, is necessary for any sort of language contact and change. It has already been readily established that Norman

French was spoken by the highest levels of English society during the High Middle Ages. The Normans had an equally strong presence in Wales, filling many of the same functions and ranks that they held in England. This paper will argue that the linguistic contact inherent in conquest situations is, at least in part, responsible for the development and use of the abnormal sentence structure found exclusively in Middle Welsh.

The distinction between 'borrowing' as opposed to 'imposition or interference' must be clarified before proceeding, although the process of borrowing is most relevant for this analysis. Townsend (2006, 71) defines them thus: borrowing is an instance where a speaker of one language takes a word or grammatical form from another language, and begins to use it in their day-to-day speech. This is not necessarily a conscious effort, as speakers may or may not realize that it is happening until the feature is already part of their repertoire. Imposition or interference, on the other hand, occurs when a bilingual speaker uses a word or pronunciation from their mother tongue while speaking a second language. Both borrowing and interference can take the form of a calque, where a lexical item is directly translated into the recipient language, or of a semantic loan, where the original form is preserved, but the meaning is replaced. The results of language contact are not restricted to lexical borrowings, though they are the most common occurrences. Basic phonemes; bound morphemes, such as prefixes and suffixes; syntactic features, such as word order and sentence structure; and orthographic conventions can also be borrowed. For the purposes of this chapter, the most relevant borrowed feature will be the syntactic variation within Middle Welsh prose.

Before the Normans conquered England in 1066, the existing Anglo-Saxon kingdoms faced an unquiet western front. While the northern, western and southern borders of Wales are clearly defined by the sea, the land shared between England and Wales has historically been subject to continuous fluctuations. Offa's Dyke was built after the Saxons settled in England and was used in the law texts as the official marker between the Anglo-Saxon and Welsh kingdoms, specifically Mercia and Powys. Yet raiding parties and shifting military control from either side meant that, at any given time, the border could vary by around eighty kilometers to either side of the Dyke, especially in northeastern Wales (Davies 1992). In his 1918 article, Morgan Watkin posits that, while the Anglo-Saxons did necessarily have frequent contact with the Welsh princes prior to the Norman Conquest, they failed to have a significant linguistic impact in Wales after the Battle of Hastings. Welsh was heavily influenced by Latin during the Roman occupation of Britain and somewhat influenced by Old

English during the seventh and eighth centuries, but Watkin posits that the primary influence on Middle Welsh seems to have come directly from French, instead of entering the Middle Welsh corpus through English. As he explains:

> Since 1911, I have read the Welsh manuscripts of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries with assiduous care, and have garnered every French borrowing I have been able to identify. I have examined their phonology with the scrutiny of a Continental; but despite the utmost vigilance, I have not been able to discover therein the least trace of Early English Influence. On the other hand, the French words in Medieval Welsh, exhibit in their phonetics diverse traits not found in any of the French accessions to Early English. The shifting of the accent has not produced the same results. Anglo-Norman peculiarities, only rarely attested in English, are often numerous in Welsh and *vice versa* (Watkin 1918, 161).

The variety of French loan words found in the Welsh texts is extensive, covering semantic fields from law to sport. Within the Laws of Hywel Dda, the word *breyr* meaning 'a noble, representing a higher grade of the *bonheddig* or gentle class' comes from the Old French *pair, pier, per*. The narrative tales present other examples; the word *erchwys* 'pack of hounds', in *Pwyll*, is a variant of the Anglo-Norman *enchace* or *enchaus* (Watkin, 1918). The Welsh manuscripts produced during the late twelfth century were similarly reflective of the encroaching Anglo-Norman linguistic trends; the influence of French orthography can be seen in Black Book of Carmarthen and the Black Book of Chirk (Watkin, 1918).

By the twelfth century, the influence of the Normans could be felt across Europe; their remarkable ability to assimilate into whichever culture they happened to end up in contact with was second to none (Akbari 2008). Beyond borrowed lexical items and a new language, material culture and legal institutions, the Normans brought genres and styles to add to the already vibrant literary culture of medieval Britain. They had perfected a method of social adaptability through intermarriage, facilitating a diffusion of Norman culture that brought a new linguistic and literary tradition to England (Short 2003). In turn, political marriages between the English royal family and the princes of Wales further advanced the spread of French literature: for example, Joan Plantagenet, Lady of Wales, the wife of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth, is believed to have brought the works of Marie de France to Wales. Marie's poetry itself demonstrated an exceptional amount of intercultural material – *lais* were written in a Continental French dialect in English manuscripts, but the *chansons de geste*

demonstrate a cohesive, insular comprehension of Continental French epic poetry (Short 2003). It is also very likely that Marie had grown up aware of Breton *lais* and based her tales on them (Short 2003).

It is obvious that the literary influence goes both ways—Marie is not the only French writer to utilize Celtic themes within their works. The *Romance of Tristan* by Thomas of Britain, written at the end of the twelfth century, is possibly one of the finest achievements of Anglo-Norman literature.

Delitablë est le deport	Love-making is a true delight
Qui de sa doulur ad confort,	To comfort sufferers in their plight
Car cë est custom d'amur	For love is wont to repay pain
De joie aver aprés dolur.	By bringing pleasure in its train
Pus quë il se sunt descovert,	Those who love's ways together choose,
Qui plus s'astient e plus i pert.	The more they wait, the more they lose.
Vont s'en a joie li amant	The joyful lovers now proceed
La haute mer a plain siglant	Over the open sea and speed
Vers Engleterre a plain ref.	To England's shore with full sail spread.
Tere ont vëu cil de la net...	The mariners spied land ahead…
(Short: 2003, 206)	

While it was composed in French, the tale itself is of Celtic origin.

Wales had a pre-established poetic tradition, but the increased exposure to the Anglo-Norman sociopolitical atmosphere brought more than political change to the Welsh courts. Because the success of the poet very much depended on the happiness of their patron, their poetic style similarly reflected the popular forms of the day. This was especially true for Dafydd ap Gwilym and the other *cywyddwyr*, for whom the lyric poetry of the continent was highly influential. Helen Fulton argues that it was the poetry of the troubadours that had the most direct influence on the view of love held by medieval court-poets, the *gogynfeirdd*—the direct predecessors of the *cywyddwyr* (Fulton 1989, 75). The troubadours and the *gogynfeirdd* were both originally contemporary bodies of professional poets writing for separate groups of social élite and themes and imitations of troubadour poetry were present in the poetry in British courts by the mid twelfth century (Fulton 1989, 75). It would not be that much of a stretch, therefore, to assume that the same were present within the Norman settlements in Wales.

Fulton goes on to explain that while there are obvious, and expected, similarities between troubadour and *gogynfeirdd* poetry, due to their societal function, the cultures and cultural histories were different enough that the similarities were originally rather superficial. She states (Fulton 1989, 75):

> Whereas troubadour verse traces the emergence of a new aristocracy of knights, *gogynfeirdd* poetry invokes the weight of centuries of bardic tradition to reinforce the ruling power of ancient Welsh monarchies challenged by Norman baronies. While troubadour verse supported a feudal hierarchy, the poetry of the *gogynfeirdd* supported the ancient power structure of tribal dynasties (Fulton 1989, 75).

The main difference, however, lies in the distinction between French courtly-love poetry, characterized by odes and eulogies to women of the court, who, romantically attainable or not, could still fill the function of a patron for the composer. Any poetry that could be classified as 'love poetry' composed by the early *gogynfeirdd* was simply an extension of the tradition of praise poetry (Fulton 1989, 77), fulfilling the poet's obligations by assuring the patron that his family was as worthy as the patron himself.

The *gogynfeirdd* shifted away from traditional Welsh poetic styles in the late thirteenth century, as the style had begun to lose social relevance in the rapidly shifting political climate and to maintain credibility, the poets were forced to adopt the contemporary popular literary traditions. The poets were forced to start "drawing increasingly on popular forms and French models, [which] directed related to the changing social conditions of composition and performance." (Fulton 1989, 94) By 1284, after Wales had fallen to English rule, the remaining Norman substrate were so thoroughly engrained within Welsh culture that the *gogynfeirdd* love poetry began to take on a form much more closely resembling the earlier troubadour *fin' amors* than their own historical forms.

Historically, Continental love lyric poetry described the crippling effects that love tends to have on the body at length. A poem written by Guilhem IX (circa 1090-1127) depicts his love as physically painful, as his lady consistently tries the validity of his love:

Farai chansoneta nueva	I'm going to compose a new little song,
Ans que vent ni gel ni plueva	Before wind and snow may sweep down;
Ma dona m'assai' e.m prueva	My lady tries and tests me
Quossi de qual guiza l'am	On the way which I love her;
E ja per plag que m'en mueva	And yet whatever quarrel she may pick with me
No.m solvera de son liam.	I would not set myself free from her chain
(Fulton: 1989, 97)	

The imagery of post-conquest Welsh love poetry shifted to expounding upon that tradition, as well adding lengthy descriptions of the physical attributes of their loves. This is obvious in Iorwerth Fychan's works, composed at the end of the thirteenth century:

Medwl a dodeis medwid vy kofein	I set my thoughts, my senses intoxicated
am twf mirein mein kein kyfyrdelid	on a fair slim flower, beautiful and dignified
medyant pop nwyfyant naw gofid am truel	The power of all energy, nine sorrows consume me
nym llut lliw gwenheul gawn edewid	[she with] the color of the fair son does not hinder me with a weak promise
medweis prydereis pryd tonn eruid.	I was drunk, I was anxious [for her with] the form of the breaking wave.
madeu dyn goreu nym goruygid.	The best girl goes not cause me to depart.
medylyaw yd wyf am dilid lliw gwawr	I am considering pursuing [the one with] dawn's color
lle red olwynawr o elenid"	where wheels run from Elenid
(Fulton: 1989, 96)	

This poem recognizes older poetic traditions, focusing on nature imagery to describe the woman in question, as well displaying new poetic trends.

The distinction between pre- and post-conquest literature is explicitly realized in a shift of content within the poetic construct, as demonstrated above, and by the underlying content of the literature, discussed below. The Norman occupiers, having displaced the Anglo-Saxon governing classes from their position of interaction with the Welsh aristocracy, brought their language and literary traditions into Wales (Watkin 1918, 151). Minstrels like Garnier de Pont-Saint-Maxence were likely welcomed into the Welsh courts, introducing new material to repertoire of the music loving Welsh bards and storytellers (Watkin 1918, 154). What Morgan

Watkin calls "the rebirth of Wales" paralleled the revival of religious fervor caused by the Second Crusade at the end of the twelfth century, an event that was also concurrent with an influx of French scribes supplanting the Welsh in the monasteries (Watkin 1920, 7).

The translations of the *chansons de geste* that were introduced to the Welsh courts extended the Crusading zeal to the Franco-Welsh baronial families, probably with the intention of reminding the high classes in Wales of the duties they owed the Church. It was this same intercultural transmission of literature that introduced the French literary tradition to the Arthur legends. Wauchier de Denain, a poet based in south Wales, claimed that the basis of Chrétien de Troyes' *Percival* came to the Court of Poitiers by Count Bleheris of Wales, also known as Bledri ap Cadifor of Carmarthen. Helen Fulton's analysis of the Welsh romances of the late twelfth century indicates that there had been a reciprocal influence on from the French equivalents written by Chrétien de Troyes, as she identified similarities within the structure of the plots (Fulton 1993, 9).

The Abnormal Sentence

Just as social and political changes in post-Norman Wales introduced new ideas and motifs into the literature, they introduced some profound changes into the structure of the literary language itself. One of the hallmark features of the modern Celtic languages and their immediate predecessors, including Middle Welsh, is an underlying verb-first construction, in which the subject directly follows the verb. This is a relatively new feature of Celtic languages, as the basic word order of Proto-Celtic, and its continental progeny, was not VSO (Mac Cana 1991, 60). Middle Welsh sentences frequently have a preverbal particle in the initial position, which modify about the sense of the verb; for example, in a negative sentence, the negative particle precedes the verb (Evans 1964, 179). In the extant literature, the verb is most commonly found in the third person singular form, even before a noun denoting a plural subject. When the subject is a personal pronoun, however, there is always concord between the verb and the subject (Evans 1964, 179). Evans later notes that the same trend can be found in Modern Welsh (Evans 1971), which has led scholars to posit that concord may be a literary device, with a possible Latinate origin (Mac Cana 1973). Fife and King note, however, that there are examples of subject fronting in native prose, and that fronting was not restricted to finite clauses (1991, 90-91).

Within the context of Middle Welsh prose—which will be the focus of this

analysis, as poetic forms follow a different set of rules—the Verb/Subject/Object word order is supplemented by two other common orders:

a) subject/object/object (or subject) of verbal noun+a/ry/yr + verb
b) adverb or adverbial expression+ y(d)/yt/ry/yr+verb

Order a) is accepted as the basic syntactic structure of the abnormal sentence, *y Frawddeg Annormal*, a sentence structure found exclusively in Middle Welsh with "the subject or object or an adverb, in pre-verbal position, but without this entailing any special emphasis on the fronted constituent" (Mac Cana 1991, 45). It is also the basic syntactic structure of the mixed sentence, *y Frawddeg Gymysg*, differing notably in that the fronted constituent *is* emphatic. The only time when the constructions diverge is in negative sentences. The negative particle in the mixed sentence is sentence-initial, before the fronted, emphatic constituent or negative copula:

1)   *nyt y dyn a doeth*
neg.part the man came
     [it was not the man who came]

The abnormal sentence, however, is never predicated by the copula and the negative particle immediately precedes the verb:

2)   *y dyn ny doeth*
the man neg.part came
[the man did not come]

The two orders are otherwise semantically and syntactically distinct. The abnormal sentence regularly shows concord between the fronted item and main verb, while the mixed sentence only occurs with a third singular verb form (Fife and King 1991). As noted above, the mixed sentence is an emphatic and contrastive construction, utilized to draw the listener's attention specifically to the subject (Fife and King 1991), such as the opening lines of *Pwyll*:

3)   *Pwyll Pendeuic Dyued a oed*
P   prince D d-rel 'bod'+past
[Pwyll, Prince of Dyfed, was…]

In this case, it is very clear that Pwyll is the main focus of the sentence and, in fact, of the tale itself. The mixed sentence is to be found

throughout all subsequent linguistic periods and is still active in Modern Welsh (Fife and King 1991). In contrast, the abnormal sentence, conversely, is limited to Middle Welsh, and while it appears to be structurally identical to the mixed sentence, the syntax indicates that there is a notable underlying difference:

4)   *Mi a'e heirch*
me d-rel-her seek-3sg
[[It is] I who seeks her]

As Simon Evans notes, "in the abnormal order, no special emphasis is intended for the word or phrase which comes at the beginning" (1964, 180).

Fife and King (1991, 86) cite a list of environments where Arwyn Watkins posits that what he calls the "relative order" would present itself. To form the relative order, Watkins collapsed the mixed sentence and the abnormal sentence into one structural type. This order appears in relative clauses, but it also appears for contrastive emphasis as well as 'WH-questions' and their answers, positive optatives and neutral sentences in the context of narrative purposes or direct quotes. He goes on to claim that the relative order is used in both Middle and Modern Welsh; however, this does not explain the complete disappearance of the abnormal sentence in Modern Welsh. His analysis also fails to explain why certain environments should favor one order over another.

Fife and King themselves argue, contrary to many other scholars, that the distinction between abnormal and mixed sentences is less a matter of emphasis and more a matter of focus on the constituents, i.e. the way information is structured in the clause and within the discourse (Fife and King 1991, 92). In order to distinguish further the mixed and abnormal sentences, they examined the different interpretations of both sentence types and their respective grammatical behavior, and concluded that the mixed sentence is 'traditionally emphatic', while the abnormal sentence is not (Fife and King 1991, 93).

The idea of focus, however, is an intriguing one. Focus is the degree to which an item is made more prominent in the communicative structure of the sentence, and therefore the analysis relies less on an assertion of truth and more about the relative prominence of an item within its context. A constituent is fronted only when it serves a purpose in "furthering the communicative flow in the sentence" due to organization of topic and

content, independent of any consideration of perceived or actual truth. That being said, because the basic word order of Middle Welsh is verb-initial, the abnormal sentence can *only* be a marked order. The difference from basic order has to be related to its grammatical function; if a constituent, which is normally not initial, becomes the topic, it is preceded by non-topic material and violates the otherwise universal tendency to put topics first in the sentence. The fronting utilized in Middle Welsh promotes topical elements to sentence-initial position. Topicality does not inherently entail emphasis or contrast, but only indicates that the element has been taken from the lower clause and shifted to a fronted position. A new fronted element requires additional information to contextualize the rest of the sentence, which has the potential to make the entire discourse easier to process, organizing the flow of information through a series of connected sentences. Fife and King cite an example from within the Middle Welsh corpus (1991, 122-125):

7)   *Y mab hagen a gymeraf*
the boy however drel take-1sg
[The boy however I will take]

8)   *Ynteu Pwyll, Pendeuic Dyuet, a doeth y gyuoeth*
he-too P   prince   D d-rel came to-his realm
[For his part Pwyll, Prince of Dyfed, came to his realm]

Fife and King's analysis of 7) states that the topicalization function adds "non-contrastive salience or prominence to the focused item," (1991, 127) specifically *y mab* in this case. The fronting is not driven by the copula, but to highlight the relevant topical noun phrase. As for 8), a little context is necessary: within the tale, Pwyll had just spent a year in the Otherworldly kingdom of Annwn, masquerading as their king and learning to properly rule in his own stead, while the proper king of Annwn, Arawn, was in his place in Dyfed. The lines directly before 8) describe their return to their respective kingdoms and the subsequent fronting is the result of a necessary topic-shift from Arawn to Pwyll. Fife and King (1991, 131) describe topic-shift thus:

> When a topic, which defines the scope of the sentence, is anaphoric, it has a cohesive effect across sentences. But if it uses new information, it can mark a break in the continuity of text, bringing in a new topic or re-introducing an old one.

By fronting the subject, the focus is quickly, and effortlessly, redirected to

the correct referent. The topics are functional sentence-wide within the discourse structure and tend to have full sentential scope, marked by initial position, meaning that the absolute initial position, or place of topics, cannot be occupied by a subordinate topic, except when it is extracted from the overall syntactic context (Fife and King 1991, 137).

The first major work on the abnormal sentence was completed in 1942 by Lewis, who pointed out the distinction between the abnormal order and verb initial sentences. He argued that the Modern Welsh sentences

    9)   *y ffermwr adawodd y glwyd ar agor*
    [the farmer left the gate open]

    10) *Duw cato pawb/ni*
    [God preserve all/us]

are syntactically and semantically identical to the Middle Welsh abnormal sentence, if not its continuation into the modern language. Looking at the above sentences and Lewis's assertion that the Modern Welsh sentences, presented here in both an informal and a literary register,

    11) *Twm Jones rows ergyd iddo fe*
    [Tom Jones gave him a clout]

    12) *Rhoddes Thomas Jones ergyd iddo ef*
    [Thomas Jones gave him a clout]

are semantically identical led Mac Cana to argue that Lewis's analysis only leaves room for two possible analyses for a subject-initial-type sentence: a cleft sentence, which expresses contrastive-identificatory emphasis, or the unmarked 'abnormal' type (Mac Cana 1991, 46).

Mac Cana states that there is a semantic difference between subject and verb-first sentences, specifically that subject-initial form "reflects clearly in its constituent order its functional status as a responsive/explanatory statement." (1991, 47) In sentence 9), the fronting does not indicate contrastive emphasis, but it is a marked feature and can have no connection to the Middle Welsh abnormal order. This he explains thus:

    The inversion of the normal VSO order signals that the sentence in question has a specific function as a response and/or explanation. It is common in modern spoken Welsh and quite well attested in Middle

> Welsh, though naturally it does not stand out clearly in an environment
> dominated by S/OV (1991, 64).

Similarly, sentence 10) is a fossilized form in contemporary use (Fife and King: 1991, 89). In the original analysis, almost all of the examples cited by Lewis are subject first sentences, a fact to which Arwyn Watkins (1989) has three main objections. First, the number of supplied non-verb-initial sentences is insignificant with respect to the number of verb-initial sentences actually present within Middle Welsh. Furthermore, some of the examples are examples of relative order, as opposed to true non-verb-first sentence. Finally, all of the sentences are taken from poetry, which exhibits very different syntactic patterns than prose. He feels that Lewis seems to disregard any "possible relationships between constituent order and sentence type and discourse function." (1989, 52)

Lewis also claimed that Gaulish had no fixed word order, a view with which John Koch disagreed quite vehemently. Koch (1987) posits that the abnormal order derives from the above-mentioned subject-initial Proto-Celtic word order, as attested in Gaulish. Working down from the syntax of surviving Gaulish funerary inscriptions, such as

> 13) MARTIALIS   DANNOTALI   IEVRV   VCVETE   SOSIN
> CELICNON
> 'M.D. bestowed on Ucuetis this chalice'

he argues around the fact that the VSO order is a relatively recent occurrence in Old Irish and Welsh prose. He goes on to cite the order in the *cynfeirdd* poetry, noting that "V-medial and -final orders comprise a sizeable proportion of the total" a fact which he claims reflects the Gaulish tendency toward verb-medial or verb-second constructions (1987, 169). Mac Cana, however, points out that there is no possible proof that normal Gaulish constituent order "is accurately reflected in a corpus composed largely of brief commemorative inscriptions" (1991, 49). Furthermore, due to the context of the remaining inscriptions, the personal name would tend to be at the head of the phrase, as it is the most important piece of information, a feature that is still seen in Modern Welsh. On the surviving corpus of Gaulish, Mac Cana points out that "not merely is it confined to inscriptions, but it also belongs to a period of cultural syncretism when the native tradition and learning of Gaul was being overlaid by or re-interpreted in terms of the imperial classical culture of Rome" (1973, 93).

Any argument in favor of the existence of subject-verb order as late as early Welsh must be based entirely on surviving texts, the majority of

which contain exclusively poetic content. This is an unreliable guide to syntax unless they can be compared to modern literature, and even then, such a comparison does not guarantee an accurate description of the realities of the language. Mac Cana goes on to state,

> Only a tiny body of prose has survived from the Old Welsh period; yet it is sufficient, and sufficiently varied in structure, to warrant our making two definite and related observations: first, it offers no evidence whatsoever of a SV of proto-'abnormal' order, and, secondly, it indicates that the normal unmarked prose statement was VS(O) (1991, 52).

Instead, he put forward the idea that the abnormal sentence in Middle Welsh may have been a feature that only occurred within the literary tradition. As stated multiple times above, as far as anyone can tell, the abnormal sentence does not exist at all in either Old or Modern Welsh, so its sudden appearance, and subsequent disappearance, in the period of Middle Welsh is very odd. He suggests that the origin and development of written narrative prose in Welsh did not occur long before the beginning of the Middle Welsh period, and that

> if, as seemed to be the case, the 'abnormal' construction is absent from what remains of OW and has a base in spoken Welsh only in the south-eastern area, it seemed to me that it must have some implications for the provenance of the structure of written MW prose and perhaps even for the provenance of the tales themselves (Mac Cana 1979, 180).

He also states that it is likely that the abnormal sentence was a feature of a learned and literary syntax that was closely connected to the development and expansion of written narrative prose, with a marked subject-initial structure "particularly suited to heightened or solemn speech within the context of a VSO language" (1991, 63).

Fife and King continue this analysis, suggesting several other factors that might account for the sudden noun-initial order within the prose, such as recitation style, introduction of new characters and explanatory statements. While they do not feel the factors identified by other academics are "sufficiently concrete to account for why the frontings are so prevalent" (1991, 86), they do allow that the abnormal sentence "seems to be something of a literary fetish, an affected sort of syntax practiced by Welsh literati in several genres of prose" (1991, 89). It is possible, and has in fact been suggested by multiple scholars, that the fronting is due to Latin influence on translated texts, despite the fact that there are obvious examples of fronting in native prose (Mac Cana 1973). It is odd, then, that

while the abnormal sentence completely fell out of use in Modern Welsh, there are still instances where a syntactically and semantically identical feature is found in Breton.

On the surface, Breton syntax, like all modern Celtic languages, is verb-first (Press 1987), but the syntax of copular sentences is peculiarly similar to the formation of the Middle Welsh abnormal sentence (Stephens 1993, 398-399):

Affirmative
14)   Ar vugale a zo kreñv
NP sub. cop complement
[The children are strong]

Negative
15)   Ar vugale   n' int ket kreñv
the children neg. are neg. strong
[The children are not strong]

The syntax, especially that of the negative copular sentence, is very similar to the negative abnormal sentence, as in sentence 2) above. Oddly, the function of topicalization is very similar in Breton to Fife and King's analysis of the same in Middle Welsh: the fronted constituent does not carry heavy emphasis (Stephens 1993, 401). Additionally, other more complex sentences in Breton also begin with a subject (Press 1987, 185):

Compound
g)   subject+verb+object

Complex
h)   subject+verb+(*cpt*))

Within the main or independent clause or if it is an interrogative pronoun, a non-emphatic subject may easily come before the verb:

16)   *me zo prest*
[I am ready]

In a clause that begins with an adverb, adverbial phrase, or indirect compliment or is preceded by a subordinate clause, the subject can still precede the verb:

17)   *en amzer-nevez al laboused a gan*

[in the spring the birds sing]
but it can also follow the verb:

18)   *amañ ec'h eanas trabel ar merc'hed*
[here the chattering of the women stopped]

Moreover, the subject always follows the verb when there is an interrogative adverb at the beginning of a clause (Hemon 1984). If a predicate begins the clause, the subject follows the verb and in the case of independent or main clauses, it may begin with a verbal complex followed by the subject.

It is generally accepted that the unmarked sentence order in medieval French, like modern French, is subject initial (see Foulet 1990, and Wilshere 1993 for an in depth discussion of the debates surrounding what is 'normal' in terms of medieval French grammar). While medieval French does have examples of word orders that are not permitted in modern French, the unmarked Subject-Verb-Compliment sentence is predominant in prose texts of the time. It seems, then, as if Breton has absorbed French syntactic influences while keeping the underlying Celtic basic word order. It seems quite fitting, therefore, for Press to comment (1947, 194):

> the possible basic VSO order of Breton, and the considerable frequency of sentences not composted of subject/verb/object, but with impersonal constructions and personal forms of prepositions, creates a situation where the 'verb phrase' may be a less major constituent.

Not only is the verb phrase a 'less major constituent', it cannot be found in the same place across any one grammatical structure. It does seem as though Celtic, specifically Brythonic, syntax may not be as fixed as many academics would like to think.

Consistent with the other Celtic languages, Cornish does retain a standard verb-first sentence structure, preceded by a verbal particle (Brown 2001, 240). Unlike Welsh and Breton, the Cornish verbal sentence is a fairly typical example of the unmarked verb-first word order expected in Celtic languages. The noun-fronted sentences, or nominal sentences, however, are more remarkable. Despite historically being emphatic sentences, noun-fronted sentences, have lost their emphasizing character and have become the normal affirmative statement (Brown 2001, 242), moving from

19)   *Yth yw my a dheber bara*
[It is I who eat bread]

to

20)   *An diogyon a werth leth*
[The farmers sell milk]

Mac Cana (1973, 115-116) points out that subject-initial order, throughout Brythonic syntax,

> is the norm in spoken Modern Breton, whereas verb-initial is the norm in modern spoken Welsh. And though it is the usual order in Middle Welsh prose, this can hardly be in direct line of succession from the few prose remains we possess from the Old Welsh period, and one can hardly avoid the conclusion that the 'abnormal' sentence of MW is essentially a literary syntax which does not reflect the usage of spoken Welsh.

This cross-linguistic tendency toward subject fronting could be indicative of something else at work here, especially when one keeps geographic and socio-cultural history in mind. Of course, more work needs to be done in this area to ascertain whether these similarities are coincidental, or the result of similar historical processes.

The lasting effects left across the British Isles by the Norman invasion can still be seen in language and literature today. The prestige status of French has been well documented, and its inevitable consequences on the languages with which it came into contact. In many ways, Norman French became the *lingua franca* of the island, promoting and allowing movement between the kingdoms that may not have occurred otherwise. As French replaced English as the language of English high society, there was a strong likelihood that any foreign government official, member of the clergy or minstrel who encountered the Welsh aristocracy between the initial Norman occupation and mid-fourteenth century was a French speaker (Watkin 1918, 153). As early as 1090, a mere twenty years after the initial conquest, the Norman and Welsh aristocratic families established a trend of intermarriage. The foremost result of this was an emergence of families bilingual in Norman French and Welsh. By the twelfth century, very few of the noble Welsh families were not connected to a Norman or Anglo-Norman family by marriage (Watkin 1918). Within the Welsh chronicles, the historians make a very pointed distinction between the Norman and Anglo-Saxon rulers and their exploits: while a level of hostility was expected between the occupying forces and the native people, it does seem likely that the extent of the abovementioned Welsh despair may have been exaggerated. The discussion of linguistic change driven by contact with a language of prestigious standing, coupled