

ANALYZING V2 TRIGGERS IN HISTORICAL ENGLISH

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Introduction It is well established that pronouns can intervene between a topicalized constituent and a finite verb in Old English (OE); this has been analyzed as evidence that evidence that the verb moves only as high as T in OE matrix clauses, and that a landing site between T and Spec,CP is available to subject pronouns (cf. Pintzuk 1991). This paper considers a well known exception to this pattern, involving a class of clause-initial, “discourse-anaphoric” adverbs such as *þa* ‘then’, *swa* ‘so’ and *nu* ‘now’, which trigger subject/verb inversion even with pronominal subjects. Since Pintzuk (1991), the literature has generally assumed that these adverbs are a class of operators in Spec,CP, which trigger verb movement to C. However, Trips and Fuß (2009) (henceforth T&F) have proposed an alternative analysis, suggesting that personal pronouns and *þa*-type adverbs compete to fill Spec,TP in an OE clause. Under this analysis, subject/verb inversion occurs when *þa* fills Spec,TP, forcing the subject to remain lower in the clause. This is argued to be a result of the “discourse configurational” characteristic of OE; Spec,TP is not filled to satisfy an EPP in this account, but in order to license discourse-anaphoric elements. T&F argue that for both pronouns and anaphoric adverbs, interpretation “involves a variable that must be bound by (or identified with) a topical element/referent in the given discourse” (184). In this paper, we will consider these alternative analyses of *þa*-type adverbs, and show with quantitative and empirical evidence that the data does not support T&F’s analysis.

Embedded contexts It is unclear what predictions T&F’s theory makes about the behavior of *þa* in embedded contexts. They concede that their theory cannot be as restrictive as it is for main clauses, saying that “embedded tense is dependent on the temporal anchoring of the matrix clause [...] Hence, *þa/þonne* are not required to occupy SpecTP.” (186) Thus, sentences such as (1) would be analyzed by T&F as involving adjunction of *þa*,¹ because unlike in matrix clauses it does not need to occupy Spec,TP. Crucially, what T&F do *not* predict is the lack of the order *þa* - V_{fin} - $Subj_{pro}$ in embedded contexts, as this should be permitted given the possibility of verb-first subordinate clauses plus high adjunction of *þa*. In contrast, this prediction is made by the operator analysis, because inversion triggered by *þa* would be blocked if C were occupied. This is in fact what we find. We considered “strict” V2 orders, where only a *þa*-type adverb precedes the finite verb, in a subordinate clause with an overt complementizer. In the OE corpus we found only one example with this word order, and in Middle English only three; each case involved a copular clause, and was clearly an example of a specificational sentence as in (3) – thus irrelevant to the present issue. Thus, we conclude that inversion triggered by *þa* does not occur in embedded contexts, which supports the op-

erator analysis and raises difficult questions for T&F.

Relation to EPP T&F predict, based on their analysis, that the loss of V2 constructions with *þa* and the rise of expletive *there* are driven by the same change. The EPP feature on T, which drives the insertion of expletive *there*, is incompatible with a “discourse-configurational” Spec,TP position. The graph on the following page compares these two changes. It shows the frequencies of V2 with *þa*, *swa* and *nu*, as well as the frequency of subject expletive *there*.² The incidence of V2 with *þa* has already reached a rate of less than 10% by 1400 or shortly thereafter, while the rate of usage of a subject expletive is only roughly 45%. It is not clear that these two changes proceeded in parallel, although the results are not incompatible with such a fact. However, examples like (2) demonstrate conclusively that T&F’s analysis is not viable. The sentence shows *þa* in a V2 configuration, with *þer* inverted below the finite verb. This *þa* clearly cannot be in Spec,TP, which is occupied by expletive *þer*.

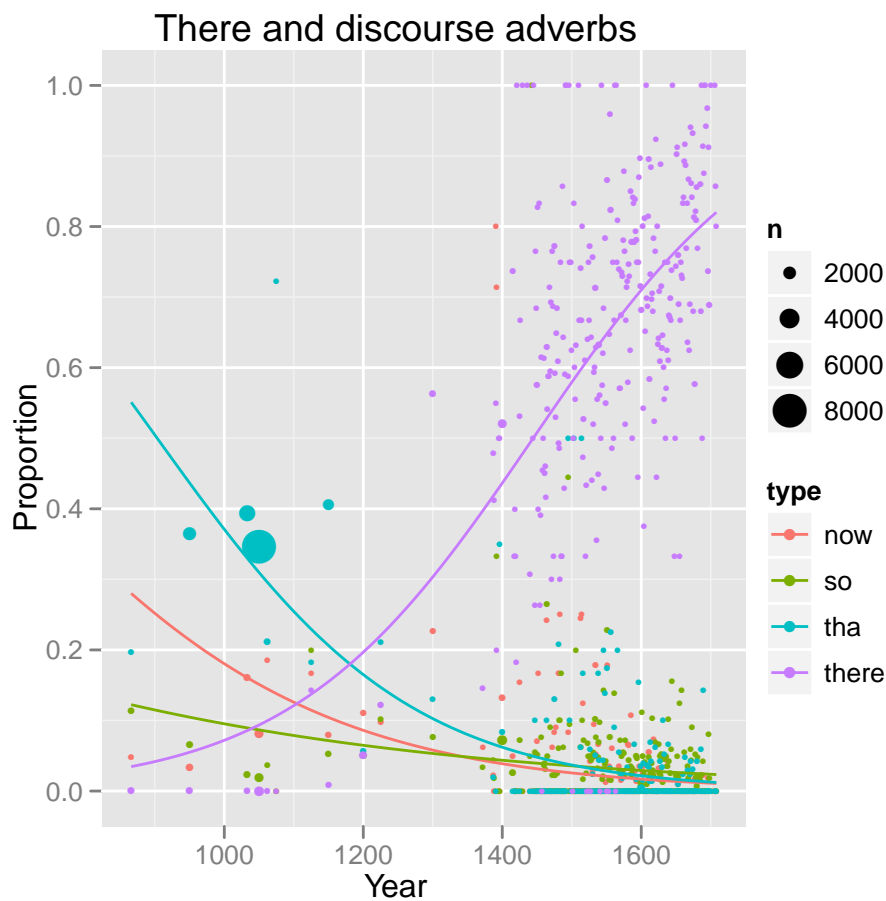
V4 word orders The T&F analysis predicts that V4 word orders (i.e. X_{top} - $Subj_{pro}$ - *þa* - V or X_{top} - *þa* - $Subj_{pro}$ - V) should not occur in matrix (Infl-medial) clauses. However, examples like (4) and (5) are attested. There is no unambiguously Infl-medial V4 clause (on the Pintzuk and Haerberli (2008) diagnostics), but these sentences contain *nu* and *swa* respectively in clause-initial position – discourse adverbs that are known to induce V2. There then intervene between the adverb and the tensed verb both a subject pronoun and *þa*, in that order. This is unexpected for T&F – if the higher discourse adverbs in these sentences are in Spec,TP there is an unusual profusion of material between Spec,TP and T (viz. a pronoun and another adverb). On the other hand, if the subject pronoun is in Spec,TP the higher adverb must be in Spec,CP, thereby raising the question of why *swa* and *nu*, previously identified as aligned with *þa* in word order properties, must receive a separate treatment. There is also the issue of sentence (6). Here the clause-initial PP performs a discourse sequencing function, similar to that claimed for “high” *þa*. The most natural interpretation of the *þa* in this clause is that it too has a discourse-anaphoric function. Once again, the issue of too few specifiers arises with respect to *þa* and the subject pronoun.

Conclusion We have shown that T&F’s analysis fails to predict several facts about the behavior of *þa* in Old and Middle English, and that these V2-triggering adverbs cannot be analyzed as occupying Spec,TP. Instead, the facts presented here lend support to the traditional operator analysis of *þa*-type adverbs. This contributes to the long-standing debate about the characteristics of V2 in the history of English, as it confirms that these elements can indeed trigger V2 of the German type.

¹Note that this example is unambiguously Tense-medial because the finite verb precedes an object pronoun (Pintzuk and Haerberli 2008). As an adverbial adjunct, it is also not a possible CP-recursion environment (Iatridou and Kroch 1992). Thus, both the subject and *þa* must be higher than T in the structure.

²Note that for the adverbs, the denominator of the proportion is total occurrences of the adverb in any position, therefore we do not expect the proportion to ever be 1, given that there are many instances when these adverbs appear VP-internally (as non-discourse-anaphoric adverbials).

- (1) *mid þy ic þa fragn hi*
 when I then asked them
 When I then asked them Alexander's Letter to Aristotle, 34.3.426
- (2) *þa com þer an helendis Mon*
 then came there a foreign man
 Then, there came a foreign man Lambeth Homilies, 79.496; due to Williams (2000)
- (3) *...þinking þat now was tyme for to entir*
 ...Thinking that it was now time to enter
 Capgrave's Chronicle, 211.3787
- (4) *Nu he þonne costode Godes Sunu þurh idel wuldor*
 now he then tempted god's son through vain glory
 Now, he then tempted God's son through vain glory. Blickling Homilies, 29.54.395
- (5) *Swa he þa wæs onhyrigende on þam twam wundrum twegra fædera mægnu*
 so he then was imitating on the two wonders two fathers' mights
 Thus he then was imitating two fathers' mights in the two wonders.
 Gregory's Dialogues, Cambridge ms., 7.49.27.565
- (6) *Æfter þissum hi þa geweredon*
 After this they then defended
 After this, they then defended ... Bede's History of the English Church, 12.52.19.480



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