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Deriving object-verb order in late Middle English[1]

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Late Middle English is a VO language in which surface OV order can nevertheless be found. This has been taken to show that the language has both OV and VO as possible underlying orders. However, there are various types of data that this hypothesis cannot account for. It is therefore argued in this article that late Middle English only had VO order underlyingly, and that all surface OV orders are derived by means of leftward movement of the object across the verb, in a manner fully compatible with the Minimalist Program. In surface OV, the object moves overtly to the functional projection AgrOP for feature-checking; LF movement is also possible (yielding surface VO), since the two derivations are equally economical. Pronominal objects can move to a higher clitic position. This analysis is shown to account for a wide range of data.

1. Introduction

Until a few years ago, it was standardly assumed that English had undergone a change in underlying word order from object verb (OV) to verb object (VO) in the 11th-12th centuries. Studies arguing for and elaborating on this hypothesis include Stockwell (1977), Canale (1978), Lightfoot (1981: 231–234, 1991: 42–77), Gerritsen (1984), van Kemenade (1987: 174–180), Weerman (1989: 157–178, 1993), Jucker (1990), Stockwell & Minkova (1991), Danchev (1991) and many others; see Fischer (1992: 370–375) and Denison (1993: 27–58) for summary and discussion. In recent work, however, this view has come under attack from two different sides. Roberts (1994) argues that even in Old English the underlying order was VO. Pintzuk (1991, 1996a, b) and Kroch & Taylor (1994a, b), on the other hand, argue that both OV and VO were available as underlying orders, in Old English as well as Middle English.

[1] Part of the material in this paper was presented at the 28th Societas Linguistica Europaea conference in Leiden, August 1995. I would like to thank Werner Abraham and other members of the audience for helpful remarks and suggestions. While writing this paper, I benefited from discussion with Hans Broekhuis about object movement in the minimalist framework. I am particularly grateful to Marcel den Dikken and two anonymous *JL* referees for useful comments on an earlier version of this paper, which led me to rethink many of the issues dealt with. None of the people mentioned here should be held responsible for what I have done with their suggestions.

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In this paper, I will also argue against the standard view. My primary focus will be on the relation between underlying order and surface order of verb and object in late Middle English, i.e. the 14th and 15th centuries. At that time, except in sentences with topicalization or some other obvious application of A-bar movement to the object, the most frequent surface order is VO, just like in Modern English. However, surface OV order is also found, as in (1) and (2), which are from a prose text of around 1440.[2]

(1) ȝif þei þise degrees knowyn.
if they these degrees know
'If they know about the degree [i.e. of affinity].'
(*Jacob's Well* 21/17)

(2) I may no sorwe haue.
I may no sorrow have
'I may have no sorrow.' (*Jacob's Well* 22/8)

Scholars arguing for the hypothesis that Middle English had become underlyingly VO by 1200 have not paid much attention to data like (1) and (2). The only serious attempt to explain their existence under this hypothesis can be found in Stockwell & Minkova (1991: 397), who call the Middle English occurrence of surface OV order 'an unresolved problem', and say that it might be tackled as follows:

> The best option we have is probably Henning Andersen's (1973) suggestion of 'adaptive rules', where one would claim that the Middle English acquisition device (i.e., a young human) worked out the grammar as SVO and then added rules to allow him to produce 'old-fashioned' sentences that would have been routinely generated a couple of hundred years earlier by an SOV base grammar.

What Stockwell & Minkova are suggesting here, I take it, is that the data with surface OV order can be derived from underlying VO order by means of some leftward movement rule(s) applying to the object.

Pintzuk (1991, 1996a, b) and Kroch & Taylor (1994a, b) take a rather different view of data like (1) and (2), and indeed the shift from surface OV to surface VO in the history of English in general. Pintzuk (1996a: 258) formulates this view as follows:

> Instead of a uniform grammatical system during the Old English period, with word order variation determined by optional movement rules, there are two competing grammars, one underlyingly OV, the other underlyingly VO. The VO grammar emerges early in the Old English period,

[2] For the editions used for the Middle English texts, see the list of Primary Source References at the end of the article.

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and competes with the old OV grammar throughout the Old and Middle English periods, until the old system dies out.

Data cited in support of this interpretation of surface OV come mainly from Old English (see in particular Pintzuk 1991, 1996a, b) and early Middle English (see especially Kroch & Taylor 1994b). If it is correct, it would imply that the surface order in (1)-(2) directly reflects the underlying order. However, we may wonder whether other data found in late Middle English support this idea.

In section 2 of this paper, I will suggest that the answer to this question is: No. I will argue that for late Middle English, assuming the availability of base-generated OV order is not sufficient, since in some cases additional leftward movement of the object needs to be assumed. Once such leftward movement is posited, base-generation of OV order, already shown to be insufficient, may no longer even be necessary, since surface OV order might then be derivable from underlying VO in combination with leftward movement. This would make the Middle English surface OV data compatible with the minimalist approach to syntax developed in Chomsky (1993, 1995) and Kayne (1994), which takes the only underlying order made available by UG to be that of head-complement. How surface OV can be derived within the minimalist model will be the topic of section 3; there I argue that the leftward movement rule is nothing but the minimalist equivalent of objective Case assignment. In section 4, I apply this analysis to the full set of data considered in section 2. Section 5 will present some predictions following from this minimalist analysis, and also take up some of its implications for the diachrony of object-verb order in the history of English. Section 6 provides a summing up.

2. OV BASE ORDER IN LATE MIDDLE ENGLISH?

From the earliest generative studies of Middle English word order, scholars have agreed on positing underlying VO order for this stage of the language. The reasons for this are clear: in the vast majority of cases, the surface order is VO, just like in Modern English, and there is no indication that in such sentences the object has moved across the verb, or vice versa. Let us therefore assume that Middle English indeed has underlying VO order.

However, this assumption does not rule out the possibility that Middle English may also have underlying OV order, in addition to VO order. As pointed out in section 1, this is exactly what Pintzuk (1991, 1996a, b) and Kroch & Taylor (1994a, b) propose. The initial motivation for adding OV as a possible base order is that surface OV still occurs in Middle English. Though less frequent than VO, it is too robust and widespread to dismiss as a mere E-language phenomenon. In Foster & van der Wurff (1995a), it is shown that surface OV is still attested at a reasonable frequency even in late Middle English; poetic texts favour OV more than prose texts, but in both

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it is not uncommon.[3] In (3)-(7) I give some more examples of OV order from late Middle English, with both pronoun objects and full NP objects, in various kinds of verb groups.

(3) it hym conserveth florissynge in his age.
it him conserves flourishing in his age
'It conserves him flourishing in his old age.'
(Chaucer, *Melibee* 995)

(4) bot al lees hate.
but all lies hate
'But hate all lies.' (Rolle, *Form of Living* 100/135)

(5) For syn he was born I haue hym blent.
for since he was born I have him blinded.
'Because I have blinded him since the day he was born.'
(*Castle of Perseverance* 531)

(6) And fayn I wolde my sowle saue.
and gladly I would my soul save
'And I am eager to save my soul.' (*Castle of Perseverance* 378)

(7) I beseche yow yowr condycyons to rectyfye.
I beg you your conditions to rectify
'I beg you to amend your position.' (*Mankind* 13)

All the data given in (1)-(7) would follow straightforwardly from underlying OV, and are therefore compatible with the idea that late Middle English allows both OV and VO as base orders. Kroch & Taylor (1994a) go somewhat further and construct an argument against deriving sentences like (1)-(7) from underlying VO order by means of leftward movement. Their argument is based on the following very common sentence type, which itself has surface VO order.

(8) þerfore I do it nouȝt
therefore I do it not
'Therefore, I don't do it.' (*Cloud of Unknowing* 125/20)

On standard assumptions, it must be the case that here both the verb (*do*) and the object (*it*) have moved out of VP, so that the structure is as in (9) (with the relative order of t_i and t_j being immaterial).

(9) V_i it_j not $[_{VP}$ t_i $t_j]$

This then would be an instance of leftward movement of the object. However, it is well-established that the order of (8), i.e. V-OBJ-*not*, occurs in

[3] The texts investigated in Foster & van der Wurff (1995a) total 220,000 words, about one third representing verse. We found a VO to OV ratio which went up from 2 (ca. 1350) via 5 (ca. 1400) to 13 (ca. 1450) in poetry. For the prose texts, the figures are: 4, 22, 160. The examples in the present paper are for the greater part drawn from this earlier study.

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late Middle English (and also in early Modern English, see Roberts 1995) only with pronominal objects. Full NP objects always follow the negator, as in (10).

(10) & ȝit he ȝeuiþ not þis grace.
and yet he gives not this grace
'And yet he does not give this grace.' (*Cloud of Unknowing* 69/12)

This difference makes (8) very similar to object-shift as found in the modern Mainland Scandinavian languages (see, for example, Vikner 1989, 1994); there, the object can be moved across the negator and/or VP-adjuncts, but only if V itself moves and the object is a pronoun. Such an analysis is obviously not appropriate for the Middle English examples (1)-(7), in which the verb does not precede the object, and the object can also be a full NP.

Kroch & Taylor (1994a) conclude that Middle English has no leftward movement of objects apart from cases like (8), and that sentences such as (1)-(7) should therefore not be analysed as instances of object-movement. Rather, surface OV order should be interpreted as reflecting underlying OV order, a possibility that must then exist in Middle English alongside underlying VO order.

A further argument for assuming underlying OV in Middle English is given by Pintzuk (1996a: 252f.). She notes that throughout the Middle English period, there are examples of particles occurring in preverbal position. If particles cannot move leftward, this indicates that underlyingly, complements can occur in preverbal as well as postverbal position.

Pintzuk (1991, 1996a, b) and Kroch & Taylor (1994a, b) claim that this OV/VO variation was not (only) dialectal in nature, with speakers from one part of the country, or of one social class, having OV order while other speakers had VO order; the variation existed within the competence of the individual speaker. If one accepts the existence of such 'grammar competition' involving a double base order, this certainly seems the only reasonable interpretation, since in all Middle English texts that have surface OV, there is also surface VO.

There are, however, problems with the double-base hypothesis. On the theoretical side, one could point to considerations of restrictiveness and learnability. Allowing for the co-existence of parameter settings usually held to be mutually incompatible amounts to a weakening of grammatical theory. It leads to questions like: why doesn't a child acquiring Modern English hypothesize that it too allows both OV and VO as underlying orders?

Kroch & Taylor (1994b) provide a possible answer to these theoretical difficulties by suggesting that grammar competition only occurs during periods of change, when the language shows clear evidence for both of the competing parameter settings. In the absence of such evidence, the child would opt for a single setting. If we accept this idea (setting aside possible questions about its implications for markedness and about the postulated

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difference between languages that are undergoing change of this type and those that are not), it becomes necessary to inspect more closely the late Middle English evidence that may have a bearing on the choice between single-base and double-base grammars. It then turns out that there are several empirical facts of late Middle English OV order that the double-base hypothesis cannot account for. These problems all involve cases in which, unlike in (1)-(7), the object is not immediately adjacent to the verb. A first type can be seen in (11) and (12), in which an adjunct intervenes between the object and the lexical verb.

(11) this pepyl a masyngere to the emperour in goodly wyse sent.
these people a messenger to the emperor in good manner sent
'These people sent a messenger to the emperor in the proper manner.' (Metham, *Amorys and Cleopes* 190)

(12) I may my persone and myn hous so kepen and deffenden.
I may my person and my house so keep and defend
'I can keep and defend myself and my house in such a way.'
(Chaucer, *Melibee* 1334)

If we assume that the adjuncts occupy a position outside at least one segment of VP and that VP-elements surfacing to their left have moved across them, we must conclude that sentences like (11) and (12) necessitate the assumption of some kind of leftward object-movement (applicable to pronouns as well as full NPs, since the order OBJ-Auxiliary-V is found with both).

The element separating the direct object from the verb may also be the indirect object, as in (13) and (14).

(13) him that alle þise guodes ham lenþ.
him that all these goods them lends
'him that lends them all these goods' (*Ayenbite of Inwyt* 6-7)

(14) he it me tok.
he it me took
'He took it for me.' (Chaucer, *Book of the Duchess* 48)

For these cases too, it looks as if the OV base hypotheses will need to be supplemented by further mechanisms to account for the surface position of the direct object.

The element intervening between direct object and θ-marking verb can also be an auxiliary or (pre-)modal, as in (15) and (16).

(15) And Absolon his gyterne hath ytake
and A. his guitar has taken
'And A. has taken his guitar.' (Chaucer, *Miller's Tale* 3353)

(16) so foul þat þou schalt nouȝt elles mowe se þerynne.
so foul that you shall nothing else be-able see therein
'So foul that you will not be able to see anything else in it.'
(*Cloud of Unknowing* 14/28)

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A final type of non-adjacency of preverbal object and verb in late Middle English involves the object of an embedded infinitive surfacing to the left of the matrix verb. I have only found examples like this in poetry; (17) and (18) are two of them.

(17) Fortune his howve entended bet to glaze.
Fortune his hood intended better to glaze
'Fortune intended to glaze his hood better [i.e. to beguile him even more].' (Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde* 5/469)

(18) Coveytyse Mankynd euere coueytyth for to qwell.
Covetousness Mankind always wishes for to kill
'Covetousness always wishes to kill Mankind.'
(*Castle of Perseverance* 66)

The assumption of underlying OV order on its own cannot explain how, in this type of sentence, the object (*his howve*, *Mankynd*) ends up on the left of the matrix verb (*entended*, *coueytyth*) rather than the embedded verb (*glaze*, *qwell*) from which it receives a θ-role.

The point should be clear: the hypothesis that late Middle English has underlying OV order is in itself not sufficient to account for the various surface orders, since the language seems to allow what is usually called scrambling, i.e. the object NP can be separated from V by various types of elements. Additional devices will therefore need to be postulated to derive all the actual surface orders. It is true that these devices do not necessarily have to involve movement: they might conceivably allow preverbal objects to be directly generated in their various surface positions (as argued, for example, by Bayer & Kornfilt (1994) and Neeleman (1994) for Modern German and Dutch data that are partly similar to the late Middle English facts presented above). However, I will here adopt the standard assumption that θ-marking always takes place under sisterhood, which entails that sentences such as (10)-(17) must be regarded as featuring object-movement.

Once such movement is admitted, postulating underlying OV order may no longer be necessary, since object-movement could then be invoked to derive all the surface OV orders from underlying VO order (which everyone agrees is needed for Middle English anyway). As a result, not only would the possible theoretical problems raised by the double-base OV/VO hypothesis dissolve, but it would also bring late Middle English into line with the ideas expressed in Kayne (1994) and Chomsky (1995), where it is suggested that UG makes available only VO underlying order. If this is correct, movement of the object across the verb is in fact the only possible way of deriving the late Middle English surface OV orders. The task then becomes to develop a specific analysis of such object-movement, or scrambling. This analysis, moreover, should also explain: (a) why the pattern V-OBJ-*not* only occurs with pronominal objects; and (b) why particles can occur in preverbal

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position. As noted above, these are facts adduced by Kroch & Taylor (1994a) and Pintzuk (1996a) in support of the double-base hypothesis. In what follows, I will suggest that the minimalist framework of Chomsky (1993, 1995) makes available a VO-base analysis of late Middle English word order with the desired properties. In section 3, I will present the broad outlines of this analysis, showing how it accommodates the occurrence of both OV and VO order; in section 4, I will consider in more detail how it accounts for the various data described in this section.

3. OV AND VO SURFACE ORDERS IN LATE MIDDLE ENGLISH: A SKETCH OF A MINIMALIST ANALYSIS

An essential element of the minimalist model is the need for argument NPs to move out of their base positions inside VP in order to participate in feature checking, and it seems natural to exploit this possibility in analyzing late Middle English examples of surface OV order. Let us first consider the analysis of cases such as (1)-(7), in which the object is adjacent to the verb. For convenience' sake, I repeat (1).

(1) ȝif þei þise degrees knowyn.

I would suggest that in (1), the object has moved from its base position in VP to a position in AgrOP where its Case features are checked, as has been suggested for Modern Dutch by vanden Wyngaerd (1989) and Zwart (1993: 302–319). The relevant part of the structure of (1) can then be as in (19), in which the subject (SUBJ) is base-generated in Spec-VP.

(19) $[_{\text{AgrOP}}\ \text{OBJ}_i\ \text{V}_j\text{-AgrO}\ [_{\text{VP}}\ \text{SUBJ}\ t_j\ t_i\ ]]$

Note that in (19), V has raised overtly to AgrO. Following Chomsky (1993: 18), we may take this to be a necessary step in the derivation, since it will make Spec-AgrOP and Spec-VP, which is the base position of the subject, equidistant. As a result, movement of OBJ to Spec-AgrOP does not violate the Shortest Movement condition, even though it crosses the intervening Spec-VP. Interestingly, Roberts (1993: 246–273) argues, on independent evidence, that V indeed raises to some functional projection throughout the Middle English period. A direct and very welcome result of this analysis is that in Present-day English, which has no overt V-movement, the object is predicted not to raise overtly either, hence only surface VO order should be found. Roberts (1995), who discusses sentences of the type *I did it not* in early Modern English, also links the ungrammaticality of this pattern in Present-day English to the absence of V-movement (for more on this sentence type, see below). Note that no explanation for these facts is available under the OV/VO double-base hypothesis.

While (19) represents a structure in which the features of OBJ can be checked, it should be realized that, strictly speaking, there is an additional

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structure in which this can be done. This would have OBJ raise not to Spec-AgrOP but to a position adjoined to AgrOP, since that position is also included in the checking domain of AgrO (see Chomsky 1993: 10–13). In that case too, V has to move to AgrO to achieve equidistance, with the result given in (20).

(20) $[_{\text{AgrOP}}\ \text{OBJ}_i\ [_{\text{AgrOP}}\ \text{V}_j\text{-AgrO}\ [_{\text{VP}}\ \text{SUBJ}\ t_j\ t_i\ ]]]$

For most purposes, the distinction between (19) and (20) is irrelevant, so I will disregard (20) in the discussion in the remainder of this section. Later, however, we shall see that there is empirical support for its existence.

A potential problem in the derivation represented in (19) involves the question how the subject can move out of VP to a higher Spec, crossing Spec-AgrOP. If V-to-AgrO is necessary to make Spec-VP and Spec-AgrOP equidistant, there should also be further V-movement to make Spec-AgrOP and a higher Spec-position equidistant. This seems to rule out surface SOV languages. In them, we may assume that V moves to AgrO and OBJ to Spec-AgrOP, as shown in (19). After this, SUBJ moves out of VP to some higher Spec-position, but the verb stays in AgrO. Descriptively, therefore, we have to say that, once OBJ has moved out of VP, movement of SUBJ is apparently not blocked by the intervening Spec-AgrOP or any further intervening Spec-positions.[4]

Various solutions can and have been proposed to solve this theoretical problem. Zwart (1993: 304–306), for example, suggests that the Shortest Movement requirement should be given up altogether. Another solution would be to have SUBJ originate not in Spec-VP but in a projection higher than AgrOP, as suggested by Koizumi (1993) and Broekhuis & van Dijk (1995). Yet another possibility is advanced by Watanabe (1993): there could be excorporation (see Roberts 1991) of AgrO in (19), so that it can raise to a higher head-position without taking along V; as a result, Spec-AgrOP would become equidistant with a higher specifier position. These are just some of the ways in which the problem with SUBJ in (19), which arises not only for late Middle English but for all surface SOV languages, might be solved. In what follows, I shall disregard these complications, and simply assume that SUBJ will be able to move out of a structure as in (19).

Let us now consider how clauses with surface VO could be accommodated. Technically, it would be possible to attribute the surface variation between OV and VO to variable strength of the N-features in AgrO. If they are strong, they must be eliminated before Spell-Out, resulting in overt movement to Spec-AgrOP, as in (19). If they are weak, Procrastinate dictates that movement should be delayed till LF, so that OBJ is still in VP at Spell-Out.

[4] Den Dikken & Broekhuis (1993: 9) suggest that this potential problem with movement of SUBJ holds also in Modern English if V does not move overtly at all.

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Although presumed cases of variable feature strength can be found in the literature (see, for example, Collins & Thráinsson (1996: 393), who make this proposal for the N-features of AgrO in Modern Icelandic, and Henry (1995) for various cases in Belfast English), it may not be the most insightful way to deal with optional movement phenomena in the minimalist framework. As Kroch & Taylor (1994b) point out, postulating variable feature strength amounts to claiming that a language combines parameter settings usually held to be incompatible. Fortunately, the minimalist model makes available a more natural account of the facts, making use of economy considerations: if 'costliness' as measured by economy determines which of two (or more) derivations will be rejected, two derivations that are equally costly would both be expected to yield legitimate sentences. This idea is developed, and specifically applied to object-movement, in Kitahara (1995: 67–74). He argues that economy takes account not only of movement, but also of applications of non-branching projection, and of deletion at PF of the copy left by a moved element. Under this view, Present-day English LF object-movement would involve the three operations shown in (21).

(21) (a) overt projection of AgrOP without Spec
(b) covert V-to-AgrO
(c) covert object-movement to (the simultaneously created) Spec-AgrOP

Overt object-movement would involve four operations, given in (22).

(22) (a) overt V-to-AgrO
(b) overt projection of AgrOP with Spec (filled by OBJ)
(c) PF deletion of verb-trace (i.e. verb-copy)
(d) PF deletion of OBJ-trace (i.e. OBJ-copy)

Economy will select (21), i.e. LF object-movement, as being the shorter derivation.

Derivations can also involve an equal number of operations. Examples are Modern Icelandic sentences such as (23) and (24), from Vikner (1994: 494).

(23) I gær las$_i$ Pétur bókina$_j$ ekki [$_{VP}$ t$_i$ t$_j$]
yesterday read P. book-the not
'P. did not read the book yesterday.'

(24) I gær las$_i$ Pétur ekki [$_{VP}$ t$_i$ bókina]
yesterday read P. not book-the

Kitahara (1995: 72–74) analyzes these data as follows: in Modern Icelandic, V always raises overtly since it has to check a strong feature; this being so, the object may raise overtly, yielding (23), or at LF, yielding (24). The two options are equally costly, since the derivation of (23) involves the four steps given in (22), while (24) also requires four operations, as shown in (25).

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(25) (a) overt V-to-AgrO
(b) overt projection of AgrOP without Spec
(c) covert object-movement to (the simultaneously created) Spec-AgrOP
(d) PF deletion of verb-trace (i.e. verb-copy)

In this way, Kitahara manages to derive variation from economy principles. Note that his approach suggests that the principle of Procrastinate may be eliminable. Most of its effects now follow from the idea that overt head-movement will generally necessitate an additional operation of PF trace-deletion; because of the need for equidistance, this will also tend to make derivations with overt XP-movement costlier than those with LF movement. Also note that this entails that there is no association between 'weak' features and LF-movement: strong features enforce overt movement, but otherwise movement may take place at any point during the derivation.

Kitahara's analysis of Modern Icelandic object-movement is also well suited for late Middle English. As pointed out above, at this stage there is always V-movement, which we can attribute to a strong V-feature in AgrO. Given this, the costs associated with object-movement in the syntax and at LF are the same; the operations needed are those in (22) and (26) respectively. The result is that OV as well as VO surface orders can be found in late Middle English. The former have overt movement of OBJ to Spec-AgrOP, as in (19), and the latter have LF movement, as in Present-day English.

4. Applying and sharpening the minimalist analysis

In general terms, the analysis that we have developed accommodates the occurrence of both OV and VO order. We have also seen that it has an important advantage over the OV/VO double-base hypothesis, in that it links the occurrence of OV order to the operation of V-movement, and can therefore explain the absence of overt object-movement in Present-day English. We shall now consider how the analysis fares when applied to the problematic cases presented in section 2. As we shall see, the data will allow us to sharpen the analysis somewhat. We start with the rather special VO pattern found in (8), which I repeat here.

(26) þerfore I do it nouȝt
therefore I do it not

This particular order is found only with pronominal objects. This fact might be taken (as it is by Kroch & Taylor 1994a) to undermine an analysis of object-movement in terms of movement to Spec-AgrOP, since one might wonder why in negative clauses, such movement should be restricted to pronouns. However, consideration of a somewhat wider range of negative clauses shows that this question is misguided. Specifically, there is evidence

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that in late Middle English, the negator *nouȝt/not/nat* is in a position higher than AgrOP. This is shown by the existence of sentences like (27) and (28).

(27) Though that the feend noght in oure sighte him shewe
although that the devil not in our sight him shows
'Although the devil does not show himself in our sight.'
(Chaucer, *Canon Yeoman's Tale* 916)

(28) And though I nat the same wordes seye.
and though I not the same words say
'And though I do not say the same words.'
(Chaucer, *Tale of Thopas* 959)

Both sentences have OV order, yet the objects are to the right of the negator. This indicates that their structure is as in (29) (in which I suppress the subject).

(29) NEG [$_{\text{AgrOP}}$ OBJ$_i$ V$_j$-AgrO [$_{\text{VP}}$ t$_j$ t$_i$]]

We may take the negator *nouȝt/not/nat* to be either in the specifier position of a separate projection NegP (see Beukema & Tomić (1995) for this possibility in Middle English) or to be an adjunct (as argued for Modern English by Baker (1991), Ernst (1992), and others). Either way, the negator is in a position higher than Spec-AgrOP. This predicts that the order V-OBJ-*not* should not occur, since Greed will forbid further movement of OBJ once its features have been checked in Spec-AgrOP in (29). For full NP objects, this prediction is indeed fulfilled (some apparent counter-examples are dealt with below). For pronouns, the prediction is very clearly not fulfilled, as (8) shows. The fact that (8) is unexpected can be taken to suggest that there is some special factor at work in it, and it is not difficult to see that this may well be the nature of the object, which is always a personal pronoun, i.e. a potentially clitic-like element.

It is well-established that personal pronouns occur in positions barred to full NPs in Old English and early Middle English (see especially van Kemenade (1987) and also much subsequent work). In late Middle English, such a difference also exists, most conspicuously in the case of subjects (see van Kemenade 1987: 196–202), but sentences like (8) show that it also holds for object pronouns. Roberts (1995) demonstrates that in early Modern English too, the pattern V-OBJ-*not* is restricted to pronominal objects.

Following common assumptions, we may take the special position of pronouns in earlier English to be due at least partly to a movement operation that they but not full NPs can undergo. In the case at hand, the pattern of (8) suggests that a pronoun can undergo movement to a position outside AgrOP. In the literature on comparable facts involving clitic pronouns in the Germanic languages, there are several proposals as to the exact nature of this movement process. One possibility might be that object pronouns move from their complement position in VP to the head of a functional projection, i.e.

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AgrO, T or AgrS; this fits in with the idea that clitics are both XPs and heads (see Deprez 1994: 124–125 and Chomsky 1995: 402–403).[5] Another possibility would be to say that pronouns adjoin to a maximal projection (see, for example, Vikner 1994). I will leave the choice between these options open here; obviously, it is not possible to solve the problem of cliticization of pronouns in Germanic within the scope of this article. What is important for us is that the data suggest that, in late Middle English at least, sentences such as (8), with the order V-OBJ-*not*, result from movement to a clitic position higher than AgrOP.

Of course, in sentences like (8) it is not only the object that has moved out of AgrOP; V too has undergone further movement, presumably to T or AgrS, resulting in surface VO order.[6] From a theoretical point of view, these two applications of movement are independent (unlike V-to-AgrO and OBJ-to-SpecAgrOP, which, as pointed out in section 3, are linked by the need to achieve equidistance). There are indeed sentences in which only one of the elements has moved out of AgrOP; examples are (30) and (31).

(30) God stere*þ* not *þ*ee in *þ*is writyng
God stirs not you in this writing
'God does not stir you in this writing.'
(*Book of Privy Counselling* 155/17)

(31) so slyly that the preest it nat espide.
so slyly that the priest it not saw
'So slyly that the priest did not see it.'
(Chaucer, *Canon's Yeoman's Tale* 1230)

In (30), V has moved out of the VP to AgrO and on to AgrS (or perhaps T), but the object is still inside AgrOP. (31) has V in AgrO, but the object in a clitic position outside AgrOP. Yet another possibility is that both elements stay in AgrOP: (27) is an example.

The conclusion may be that pronoun objects in late Middle English show different behaviour than full NPs because of their ability to move to a clitic

[5] Roberts (1995) considers such a head-movement analysis for early Modern English object pronouns in sentences like *I knew him not*, but rejects it on the grounds that it would incorrectly predict that the object pronoun could be carried along with V when V moves to C via T and AgrS (i.e. we would expect sentences like [*Knew him*]$_i$ *you* t_i *not?* to occur, but they do not). The same problem arises in late Middle English. However, Zwart (1993), in dealing with comparable facts in Modern Dutch, does maintain that pronouns can be in T and AgrS; he suggests that V skips these positions when moving to C. I leave this problem open here.

[6] It might be thought that this further movement is banned by economy, since it calls for more operations than sentences like (27) and (28), which have V remaining in AgrO. However, within Kitahara's (1995) approach, the number of operations will be equal if we assume that what looks like successive movement is the result of one application of Generalized Transformation (as in fact proposed by Chomsky 1993: 15) and that all traces (copies) of a particular element are deleted in one operation.

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position higher than AgrOP. Empirically, this shows up in their occurrence to the left of the negator, as in (8) and (31). There may also be other elements that can occur to the right of pronominal objects but not full NP objects. This, however, is somewhat difficult to establish, since little descriptive work has been done on object positions in late Middle English. Moreover, in sentences with surface OV order, the usual pattern is for the object to be adjacent to the verb (Foster & van der Wurff (1995a), for example, found this pattern in over 80% of a collection of 500 OV tokens). If such sentences have a pronominal object, as in examples (3) and (5), it is probably also in a clitic position, but the movement is string-vacuous.

The application of our minimalist analysis to late Middle English clauses with negation and/or a pronominal object has helped us determine the position of the negator *not* (higher than AgrOP) and that of object clitics (which can move to a position higher than AgrOP). Let us now turn to cases in which the direct object is separated from its θ-marking verb, to see what they can show us. We established that the intervening element can be an adjunct, another argument, an auxiliary, and even a matrix verb. An example with an adjunct is (12), which I repeat here.

(12) I may my persone and myn hous so kepen and deffenden.

This sentence type is incompatible with the idea that surface OV has the object in Spec-AgrOP and the verb in AgrO (since, unless we are willing to allow adjunction to AgrO′, the object will then have to be adjacent to the verb). However, we saw in section 3 that, theoretically, the object might also be in a position adjoined to AgrOP, and I suggest that this possibility is in fact instantiated in sentences like (12). Its (partial) structure would be as in (32).

(32) $[_{\text{AgrOP}}$ my person$_i$ $[_{\text{AgrOP}}$ so $[_{\text{AgrOP}}$ keep$_j$-AgrO $[_{\text{VP}}$ t$_j$ t$_i$]]

Both the adjunct *so* and the object are adjoined to AgrOP; of course, only the latter is involved in feature checking, the former being inert in this respect.[7] Note that, contrary to adjuncts like *so*, the negator *not* never follows a full NP object; this indicates that, if *not* is an adjunct at all, it is adjoined to a projection higher than AgrOP.

Besides adjuncts, the indirect object can also intervene between direct object and V, as in (13) and (14).

(13) him that alle þise guodes ham lenþ.

(14) he it me tok.

[7] The analysis given in (32) may provide a minimalist explanation for the often-made observation that leftward scrambling is limited to OV languages (see, for example, Fukui 1993). The explanation is that a clause has surface OV order if the object's Case features are checked overtly, and that is exactly what happens in (32).

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In the case of (14), both objects are pronominal, and we may assume that they are in some clitic position (whether these are heads or adjoined positions). In example (13), only the indirect object is a pronoun; the direct object is a full NP, and must therefore be either in Spec-AgrOP or adjoined to AgrOP, while the verb must be in AgrO. The indirect object could then be in AgrO, or in an adjoined position somewhat like *so* in (32), depending on the analysis adopted for clitics. Since the frequency of preverbal indirect objects in late Middle English is very low, other relevant data are lacking, making it impossible to provide a more precise analysis.

A more frequently attested order is that with the object preceding an auxiliary, as in (15).

(15) And Absolon his gyterne hath ytake.

For the analysis of this type of sentence, we can make use of a suggestion in Broekhuis & van Dijk (1995), who propose that in a clause with a perfect, there are two AgrOPs, one dominating the participle and one the auxiliary *have*. Slightly generalizing this proposal, we could say that any verb with a Case feature will be dominated by an AgrOP which may or may not have a corresponding feature. Generally, the derivation of a clause containing an object will not converge unless the AgrOP immediately above the θ-marking verb has a Case feature. However, if there is an auxiliary, the lower AgrOP need not have a Case feature, since the object can check its features in the AgrOP dominating the auxiliary. For (15), this would yield a structure as in (33).[8]

(33) Absolon $[_{\text{AgrOP1}}$ his gyterne$_i$ hath$_j$-AgrO1 $[_{\text{VP}}$ t$_j$ $[_{\text{AgrOP2}}$ ytake$_k$-AgrO2 $[_{\text{VP}}$ t$_k$ t$_i$]]]]

AgrOP2 has no Case feature, so the object *his gyterne* has to move to AgrOP1 for checking.

The analysis given in (33) allows us to explain a class of counter-examples to the claim that a full NP object never occurs to the left of the negator *not*. The relevant sentences all contain an auxiliary; I give two in (34) and (35).

(34) And yet they mowe hir lustes nat amende.
and yet they can their pleasures not improve
'And yet they cannot raise their spirits.'
(Chaucer, *Knight's Tale* 3066)

(35) I may the beautee of hem not sustene
I can the beauty of them not endure
'I cannot endure their beauty.' (Chaucer, *Merciles Beaute* 2)

[8] I disregard possible problems with equidistance, simply accepting the descriptive statement, made in connection with (19), that once the object has left VP, intervening Spec-positions do not seem to block further movement.

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If we take the negator to occupy a position between AgrOP1 (above the auxiliary) and AgrOP2 (above the lexical verb), the object will cross it on its way to Spec-AgrOP1, resulting in the order OBJ-*not* which is unattested in single-verb clauses. Note that, compared with (33), the auxiliary in (34) and (35) has moved out of AgrOP1 (presumably to T or AgrS) but this does not seem a necessary operation. Although I have not found actual examples, I would expect sentences such as *Absolon his gyterne hath not ytake*, with the auxiliary still in AgrOP1, also to be possible in late Middle English. Whether this particular prediction is fulfilled or not, the existence of sentences like (34) and (35) lends support to the structure given in (33).

Now that we have seen that an object can check its Case features in a higher AgrOP, we may wonder whether this could ever be the AgrOP associated with a lexical matrix verb. That this is indeed possible is suggested by the final type of non-adjacency of object and verb mentioned in section 2, in which the direct object of an embedded infinitive precedes the matrix verb. I repeat example (17).

(17) Fortune his howve entended bet to glaze.

This construction also exists in Modern Dutch, where it is usually analyzed as involving scrambling of the object out of the infinitival IP (see Broekhuis, den Besten, Hoekstra & Rutten 1995 for discussion). Zwart (1993: 345) proposes that the scrambling process is actually movement to the matrix Spec-AgrOP, and I suggest that this is also the case in the late Middle English examples of this construction. The structure of (17) would then be as in (36).

(36)

(36) Fortune $[_{\text{AgrOP1}}$ his howve$_i$ entended$_j$-AgrO1 $[_{\text{VP}}$ t$_j$ $[_{\text{IP}}$ PRO bet $[_{\text{AgrOP2}}$ to glaze$_k$-AgrO2 $[_{\text{VP}}$ t$_k$ t$_i$]]]]

Since the complement of *entended* is an IP, which has no Case features to be checked, the AgrOP above the matrix verb is available for checking the Case of the embedded object, *his howve*.[9]

So far, then, I have demonstrated that the various OV and VO data presented in section 2 can all be analysed as deriving from underlying VO. The analysis boils down to the following two statements: the object may raise overtly to a position in AgrOP (which need not be the AgrOP immediately above the θ-marking verb), and pronominal objects can move to a clitic position higher than AgrOP. As shown above, these two statements, and the recognition that the negator is higher than AgrOP, suffice to account for a wide range of data in a manner that is fully consonant with the minimalist framework.

It remains to consider the argument, briefly mentioned in section 2, that the occurrence of preverbal particles in Middle English indicates the

[9] Equidistance could be achieved by moving the head of the embedded IP to the matrix V.

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existence of underlying complement-verb order (Pintzuk 1996a: 252f.). A late Middle English example is (37).

(37) An hevenyssh perfit creature,/ That down were sent
a heavenly perfect creature that down was sent
in scornynge of nature.
in scorning of nature
'A perfect, heavenly creature, which was sent down to mock nature.'
(Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde* 1/105)

In general terms, it is not clear that examples with a particle can be used directly to determine the possible underlying position of objects. Besides, there is evidence that particles can undergo leftward movement in Germanic; Modern Icelandic sentences such as (38), from Maling (1990: 82), are a case in point.

(38) Fundurinn sem fram hafði farið í Ósló var skemmtilegur.
the-meeting that on had gone in Oslo was fun
'The meeting that took place in Oslo was fun.'

(38) features what is usually called Stylistic Fronting, an operation that moves a (single) adverb, adjective, verb or particle to a position in front of the finite verb; it is restricted to clauses with a subject gap. (38) shows that particles can indeed move, and this may also have happened in (37). In fact, it is argued by Roberts (1993: 252–254) that Middle English also has the process of Stylistic Fronting and, in view of the subject gap, (37) may actually be an instance of Stylistic Fronting comparable to Modern Icelandic (38). It is therefore of little help in determining the underlying position of the object in late Middle English.[10]

5. Empirical predictions and diachronic implications

On the basis of the analysis of surface OV proposed above, several empirical predictions can be made. We shall here consider some of these, and then also look at some of the implications for diachrony. A first prediction is that

[10] One of the anonymous *JL* referees suggests that some of the other sentence types discussed in this section may also feature Stylistic Fronting (e.g. fronting of the negator in (28)). The referee also suggests that preverbal objects in clauses with a subject gap might be due to the same process (for example, in (1) and (2), if the subject pronoun is not in Spec-IP, and in relative clauses). It is true that OV order in late Middle English (and also Middle French; see Bauer 1995: 110–111) is often found in relative clauses, but all the patterns discussed here for which Stylistic Fronting could be invoked can also be found in clauses without a subject gap or pronoun subject, as the data given in this section show. Since, furthermore, Stylistic Fronting is not particularly well-understood (it is not clear, for example, whether it can affect phrases or only lexical heads; for some views, see Maling 1990, Rögnvaldsson & Thráinsson 1990, Jónsson 1991, Santorini 1994, Cardinaletti & Roberts to appear), I have (perhaps to the detriment of this article) not explored this line of approach any further here.

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movement of the object from its position in VP to Spec-AgrOP could make Across-the-Board (ATB) effects possible, i.e. one overt object might function in two conjunct VPs. This would then be a parallel to ATB cases like (39) in Modern English.

(39) The criminal will be arrested and confess to the crime.

As Burton & Grimshaw (1992) and McNally (1992) show, the VP-internal subject hypothesis entails that there is movement from both conjuncts in (39), leading to a legitimate ATB sentence, with the subject being in Spec-AgrS and binding the specifier position of both VPs.

We have already encountered one late Middle English example, i.e. (12), which might be susceptible to an analysis along these lines. Another one is (40); some further examples are given by Visser (1963: 525–527).

(12) I may my persone and myn hous so kepen and deffenden.

(40) Or who hath you mysboden or offended?
or who has you insulted or offended
'Or who has insulted or injured you?'
(Chaucer, *Knight's Tale* 909)

Earlier, I provided a structure for (12) in which I concentrated on the position of the adjunct, and disregarded the coordinated verbs (see (32)). If we now disregard the adjunct, and concentrate on the coordinated verbs, we may assume a structure roughly as in (41).

(41) $[_{\text{AgrOP}}$ my person$_i$ $[_{\text{AgrOP}}$ keep$_j$-AgrO $[_{\text{VP}}$ t_j t_i]] and $[_{\text{AgrOP}}$ defend$_k$-AgrO $[_{\text{VP}}$ t_k t_i]]]

Each of the conjuncts contains a VP with an object trace, bound by *my person*, which has moved to AgrOP. The structure for (40) is essentially the same, except that there the object, being a pronoun, must have moved to a clitic position. Although conjunction is not among the best understood of linguistic phenomena, the existence of sentences like (12) and (40) does fit in with the analysis of surface OV order that I have adopted.[11]

Another prediction following from the analysis proposed involves a phenomenon that is, comparatively speaking, better understood, namely Exceptional Case Marking (ECM) constructions. Chomsky (1993: 8) argues that the subject of an infinitive embedded under an ECM verb moves to the matrix Spec-AgrOP at LF (see Lasnik & Saito (1991) and Hornstein (1995: 81) for some observable consequences of such movement). Since, as we have seen, late Middle English sometimes has overt movement to Spec-AgrOP, we

[11] Sentences like (12) and (40) also occur in a form which has the object in postverbal position in the first conjunct, as in: *He toke hire hond and put to his mouth* 'He took her hand and put it to his mouth' (*Ipomadon* 354/41). Most of Visser's 14th and 15th century examples are actually in this type. Many of them feature verbs like *get* and *take*; as Marcel den Dikken (p.c.) suggests, these might be analysable in terms of verb serialization.

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might also expect sentences with overt movement of the subject of an ECM-complement. And examples like this are indeed found, as witness (42) and (43).

(42) the grace of God, amydde the lyly white,
the grace of God, amidst the lily white
The beaute causith to be of more delyte.
the beauty causes to be of more delight
'The grace of God, amidst the white lilies, causes beauty to be more delightful.'

(Lydgate, *Life of Our Lady* ii. 559–560)

(43) This robbour and this homycide/That many a man made to wepe
this robber and this murderer that many a man made to weep
and pleyne
and lament
'This robber and murderer, who had caused many a man to weep and lament.'

(Chaucer, *Monk's Tale* 2629)

A further prediction that can be made is as follows: if the object has adjoined to AgrOP, the inner segment of AgrOP might subsequently undergo movement, in particular topicalization. This would yield sentences just like the Modern Dutch and German construction analyzed by den Besten & Webelhuth (1987), who refer to it as remnant VP-topicalization. Examples of this type can indeed be found in late Middle English; (44) is one of them.

(44) Ne telle hir durste I nat my thoght.
nor tell her dared I not my thought
'And I did not dare to tell her my thoughts.'

(Chaucer, *Book of the Duchess* 1186)

The relevant stages in the derivation of this sentence would be as in (45).

(45) (a) $[_{\text{AgrOP}}$ my thoght$_i$ $[_{\text{AgrOP}}$ telle$_j$-AgrO $[_{\text{VP}}$ t$_j$ t$_i$ hir]]]
(b) $[_{\text{AgrOP}}$ telle$_j$-AgrO $[_{\text{VP}}$ t$_j$ t$_i$ hir]] durste I not $[_{\text{AgrOP}}$ my thoght$_i$ t$_{\text{AgrOP}}$]]

The first step, in (45a), has been A-movement of the object to adjoin to AgrOP; the other relevant operation, shown in (45b), is topicalization of AgrOP, which leaves behind the adjoined object. The existence of this construction in late Middle English thus lends support to the idea that the object can scramble out of the projection containing the verb. Den Besten & Webelhuth (1987) take this projection to be VP; under the assumptions I have adopted, it must be AgrOP.[12]

[12] On the basis of certain binding facts in Modern English, Huang (1993) also argues that it is a functional projection rather than a VP that is moved in so-called VP-topicalization structures.

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As (46) shows, the preverbal object can also be carried along under topicalization of AgrOP.

(46) His doctrine to sue euer I purpose.
his doctrine to follow always I intend
'I intend always to follow his doctrine.' (*Wisdom* 384)

Here, we may assume that the object has moved into Spec-AgrOP first, after which the whole AgrOP has been topicalized.

We may conclude that the data reviewed here lend further empirical support to the movement analysis of late Middle English OV order that I have proposed.[13] If this analysis is indeed correct, it would of course have certain implications for the diachrony of surface OV order in English, and it may be appropriate to sketch some of these briefly here. On the basis of the general model underlying the analysis, I would hypothesize that throughout its history, English has had only VO as a base order, and that what has changed over the centuries is that there has been a decline in the operation of leftward object-movement (i.e. overt movement to AgrOP), due to both grammatical and extra-grammatical factors.

For (early) Old English, we may assume, with Roberts (1994), that the Case features of AgrO were strong, so that the object had to move overtly to AgrOP in all clauses for convergence to be achieved. Unless other processes intervened (such as those affecting heavy constituents and those moving verbs), the result was consistent OV surface order. It could therefore be said the Old English was like Modern Dutch, as analysed by Zwart (1993). At some point, the case features of AgrO lost their strength, hence derivations with object-movement at LF also converged. Since they were equally costly as those with overt movement, the result was variation between OV and VO

[13] Another type of data that might be relevant to demonstrating movement of the object is parasitic gaps. Although it is usually assumed that these are only licensed by A-bar movement, there is evidence that in some Germanic languages, something similar to a parasitic gap can be licensed by A-movement, and also by scrambling (see Zwart (1993: 309–313), Neeleman (1994: 400–406), and de Hoop & Kosmeijer (1995: 149) on Dutch, and Bayer & Kornfilt (1994: 24–25) on German). I have not found any such examples in OV sentences in late Middle English. However, OV surface order continues in English for some time after 1500 (see van der Wurff & Foster to appear), and, as it happens, I have found the following parasitic gap-like construction in a 16th century OV sentence.

(i) Hypocrise him to entrappe, Doth to his home entreate.
Hypocrisy him to entrap does to his home entreat
'Hypocrisy invites him to his home, to entrap him.'
(Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, Heading to Book I, Canto I)

It appears that *him* has moved out of the VP headed by *entreate*, crossing the adjunct clause, the object of which is allowed to remain null. However, I would not press the significance of this example, since Spenser's language is generally regarded as archaizing and artificial.

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surface orders (making Middle English similar to Modern Icelandic, though with more liberal OV). The timing of the change remains to be settled. If we take the loss of feature strength to correspond to what is traditionally called the shift from OV to VO, the date would be around 1200. Pintzuk (1991, 1996a, b), however, argues that there are some late Old English VO data with the object unambiguously in situ; this would make the loss of feature strength somewhat earlier. The causes for the change could lie in a reanalysis of various kinds of surface VO clauses; while originally being due to, for example, object-movement followed by verb movement to a higher position, they were reinterpreted as having the object in situ. This, of course, is the type of motivation advanced in most of the existing literature on the shift from OV to VO (see the references given in section 1), and the specific proposals made there could be retained (perhaps in reformulated forms) within the scenario that I am sketching here.

Throughout the Middle English period, the situation would be as outlined in the preceding sections (modulo independent developments, such as those having to do with verb-second). The gradual decline in frequency of surface OV order during this period was not due to any grammatical change. The grammar of Middle English simply made available both surface orders. Which order was actually used when might depend on factors like social differentiation (perhaps partly correlating with English versus Danish ethnicity, see Weerman 1993), stylistic differentiation (well-attested for poetic versus prose styles, see Foster & van der Wurff (1995a)), discourse factors (e.g. given versus new information, see Foster & van der Wurff (to appear)), and ease of processing of specific clauses (compare Bauer (1995) on developments in French).

Grammatical change took place again shortly after the middle of the 16th century, when overt verb movement in English was lost, probably due to phonological erosion of verbal agreement (for detailed discussion, see Roberts 1993: 246–273). As also suggested by Roberts (1995) for the pattern V-OBJ-*not* in early Modern English, the minimalist analysis of OV order presented above predicts that, once the verb remained inside VP until after Spell-Out, overt object-movement (whether to Spec-AgrOP, to a position adjoined to AgrOP, to the AgrOP above the auxiliary, or AgrOP above a matrix verb) should become impossible. This is strikingly confirmed in the collection of texts examined in van der Wurff & Foster (to appear), where surface OV of all types was found to disappear from prose writings in the course of the 16th century.[14]

The picture of the shift from OV to VO which results from combining the analysis of OV presented above with that of V-to-I presented in Roberts

[14] I leave as a topic for further research the continuance of OV in poetry for several more centuries (see Foster & van der Wurff 1995b); one would expect it to correlate with continued evidence of overt V-raising.

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(1993: 246–273) is therefore one of gradualness and indirectness. From a grammatical point of view, three stages can be distinguished: the first has categorical overt object-movement (due to strong features of AgrO), the second one allows both overt and LF movement (AgrO's features not being strong anymore, the two derivations both converge at equal cost), and the final stage only has LF movement (since V moves at LF). Extra-grammatical factors determine the actual frequency and incidence of surface OV and VO during the second stage. Phonetic factors were responsible for the change yielding the third stage, though quite indirectly: erosion of verbal agreement meant that the V-features of AgrO lost their strength, which led to the loss of overt movement (due to economy), which in turn made overt object-movement impossible.

6. Conclusions

In this paper I have argued that instances of surface OV in late Middle English can be derived from underlying VO order by a process of leftward movement. The alternative of assuming underlying OV order in addition to underlying VO order was shown not to be sufficient to account for all the empirical data.

Adopting the minimalist framework of Chomsky (1993, 1995) and Kayne (1994), I have argued that the process of leftward movement that derives surface OV order from underlying VO consists of overt movement of the object to AgrOP. This was possible because V moved to AgrO overtly in late Middle English. However, LF movement of the object was equally economical, and therefore also allowed. Pronominal objects could move out of AgrOP to a higher clitic position. Although the historical data are necessarily limited, a rich array of late Middle English data can be accounted for by the analysis. These data include sentences with negation and/or a pronominal object, sentences with the object separated from its θ-marking verb by an adverbial adjunct, by the indirect object, by an auxiliary, and even by a higher verb. There are also examples of conjunction reduction affecting an object in a second conjunct, there is remnant VP/AgrOP-topicalization, and full VP/AgrOP-topicalization with surface OV order. In some contexts, an embedded subject can also surface to the left of the matrix verb.

Most of these patterns cannot be explained by the idea that OV was a possible underlying order in late Middle English. We also noted that none of these patterns is possible any more in Modern English; all of them disappeared in the 16th century, a change ultimately caused by certain phonetic developments. Although, in the analysis proposed here, they instantiate different structural possibilities (with the object in Spec-AgrO or adjoined to it, either in the AgrOP above V or that above Aux, or even above the matrix V, and pronouns being in a position higher than AgrOP), all of

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these options depend on prior V-movement. When this became impossible, OV also became impossible.

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