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The Fifteenth-Century Catalan Preterit **Maurice Westmoreland**

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THE FIFTEENTH-CENTURY CATALAN PRETERIT

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1. INTRODUCTION

The following study looks at pragmatic and dialect factors which between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries impacted Catalan past tense form and function. During this period a reduction in Catalan simple preterit usage and an expansion of the analytic *va cantar* structure as a past tense equivalent was contemporaneous with the analogical spread of an *-r-* segment within the preterit paradigm. The analogy proceeded from form 6, where the *-r-* appears etymologically, to forms 5, 4, and 2. Below are early medieval forms alongside modern forms.

canté → cantí	perdí → perdi	dormí → dormí
cantast → cantares	perdist → perderes	dormist → dormires
cantà	perdé	dormí
cantam → cantàrem	perdem → perdérem	dormim → dormírem
cantau ¹ → cantàreu	perdeu → perdéreu	dormiu → dormíreu
cantaren → cantaren	perderen → perderen	dormiren → dormiren

The analogy spread rather quickly across the paradigm, beginning first in the fourteenth century in Eastern Catalan dialects in a process in which both analogical leveling and a reallocation of function aimed to rescue an irregular paradigm in the face of emergent analytic structures. Today in the standard language, the analytic *va cantar* form is favored in spoken Catalan, while the synthetic *cantà* is a stylistic recourse tied to the literary tradition.² The principal issues I intend to address here include:

- 1) what factors within the Catalan preterit paradigm contributed to the spread of the analogy and changes in preterit function;

¹ Form 5 also had medieval forms of *cantats*, *perdets*, and *dormits* (Badia i Margarit, *Gramàtica* 314-316).

² Vallduví notes the following distribution of forms. Catalunya, Menorca, and Mallorca only have the *va cantar* form in spoken speech. Central and Southern València and Eivissa (Ibiza) use both simple and analytic forms. Alguerese has only the *va cantar* form (86).

- 2) where and when did the analogy and change in function first occur, geographically and sociolinguistically;
- 3) what factors motivated the popularization of the *va cantar* form over both the synthetic preterit and other older and more established analytic forms.

For data, I will refer to previous studies on both Catalan and contiguous romance dialects, and to an analysis of the form's limited appearance in texts of major fifteenth-century writers (Anselm Turmeda, Bernat Metge, Francesc Eiximenis, Sant Vincent Ferrer, Antoni Canals, Joan Roig de Corella, Jaume Roig, Sor Isabel de Villena, Joanot Martorell, and Ausiàs March).

In eastern Spain, southern France, and northern Italy, there occurred quite parallel changes with regards to preterit analogy and shifts in function (Westmoreland 484-88).³ The most significant analyses here come from Bybee and Brewer for Occitan and Fleischman for French, the former who describe the analogy and the latter who explains the functional reallocation. In Occitan, an *-r-* segment appeared initially and solely in preterit form 6, where it is an etymological reflex. Bybee and Brewer, however, argue for the Occitan preterit analogies as not deriving from a form 6 base, but rather from the bases of other tenses: forms 1 and 2 use a present tense base and forms 4 and 5 employ an imperfect tense base, with the "form 6" *-r-* segment attached only as a linking consonant between the base and the person endings. They trace a complex set of analogies to explain the various Occitan preterit forms which use *-t-*, *-c-*, or a vowel as preterit marker, basing much of their argument not just on formal issues but also on the theoretical stance that base forms must have a low semantic simplicity, a high discourse word frequency, and a high morphophonemic opacity. While their analysis rightly privileges such criteria in identifying base forms for analogy, their conclusions seem to overlook the analogy's gradual spread which altered the balance of morphemic, if not form, frequency. Furthermore, accepting the argument that the analogical *-r-* here served initially only as a linking consonant does not preclude it from later being interpreted in many dialects as the preterit morpheme marker. Elsewhere in romance dialects, we often see a situation of analogical creep where the *-r-* segment, if not preterit morpheme, spreads from form 6 picking off first less frequent forms (5 and 4) with which form 6 has a natural association (plurality), changing the morphemic frequency balance between *-r-* and competing preterit markers. Then the analogy moved

³ The same *-r-* analogy also appears later in standard Romanian, as well as in several of its dialects, in standard Friulian, and in the Bielsa dialect of Spanish.

optionally on to form 2, in several dialects the only then remaining weak preterit form, setting up an opposition between weak-stressed forms marked by an *-r-* segment and strong- stressed forms.⁴ Such seems to be the case and path for the analogy in Catalan. Currently in Catalan the *-r-* segment has optionally extended as well to form 1 in the periphrastic preterit paradigm, making it the marker for all forms except form 3, the only remaining strong form.

<i>vaig cantar</i>	<i>vàreig cantar</i> (→ vulgar) ⁵
<i>vas cantar</i>	<i>vares cantar</i>
<i>va cantar</i>	
<i>vam cantar</i>	<i>vàrem cantar</i>
<i>vau cantar</i>	<i>vàreu cantar</i>
<i>van cantar</i>	<i>varen cantar</i>

Molho (94) here argues that form 3 is naturally resistant to suffixation, noting that there are no instances of Catalan form 3 undergoing lengthening.

With regards to the periphrastic preterit *va cantar* form, we again see that Catalan is not unique in western Romance in generating an analytic past tense utilizing a go-verb auxiliary. However, only in Catalan did the structure flourish beyond its initial limitations of context and genre; in Spanish, French, and Occitan, a parallel periphrastic form is documented in medieval texts only to later disappear, accommodating the popularization of a rather similar structure with an inchoative, and then future, meaning.⁶ A go-verb past-tense structure is found in Spanish as late as the fifteenth century, appearing in the *Poema de Mio Cid*, the *Crónica General*, and the *Rimado de palacio*.

In Occitan, the structure reached its apogee between 1350 and 1450, largely disappeared in the sixteenth century, and today only remains in some isolated Gascon dialects. In French, it appears up through the seventeenth century (Colon 112). In none of these languages does the *va cantar* form appear as an expression of immediate futurity before the fifteenth century, and its triumph is much later (Colon 107).

⁴ This argument is further supported by Bybee and Brewer's statistics which indicate that form 6 is the most commonly used plural form (224), and thus the one most likely to be the base for a plural analogy. Additionally, the absence of an *-r-* morpheme in other desinenes would further appear to encourage its potential use as a preterit marker.

⁵ Badia i Margarit (*Gramàtica* 328) notes the optional use of the *-r-* analogy in form 1 of the auxiliary. M. Molho (94) notes the *vàreig* auxiliary form is rarely used in Barcelona.

⁶ Vallduví notes that the Catalan *va a cantar* future structure is both recent, appearing only after the Civil War, and dialectally limited, used almost exclusively in the Xava dialect (90).

Where the two forms do appear dialectally contemporaneous, the future meaning is found primarily in dialogues, and the past meaning in narratives, further arguing against a close monogenesis for the two structures.

2. MOTIVATIONS FOR THE CHANGES

Several internal qualities of the medieval preterit contributed to both the appearance of the *-r-* analogy and a reallocation of function. Indications of a preterit paradigm ripe for analogical leveling if not wholesale replacement include:

- a) irregular stress patterns and morpheme marking, both within and across paradigms;
- b) syncretism produced by natural sound change, as form 6 merged with form 6 of the *-ra-* "conditional" derived from the Latin pluperfect indicative, and forms 4 and 5 merged with the present tense forms 4 and 5;
- c) the popularization and functional expansion of the analytic structures *va cantar* and *he cantat* reinterpretable as expressing some preterit functions.⁷

In Catalan, late medieval changes in stress accent in the preterit paradigm regularized patterns both within and across paradigms. In the fourteenth century, there were still strong forms appearing alongside newer weak ones: *dec* alongside *deguí* and *degren* alongside *degeren*, but by the end of the fifteenth century, the strong forms for persons 1 and 6 had been replaced by weak ones, and there remained strong forms only for person 3 (Nadal and Prats 419). In fifteenth-century texts analyzed here, strong forms appear almost exclusively with form 3, outside of which there appears little variation, and we further see a strong consistency of remaining irregular forms among the different authors. In March, we find *volch*, *vench*, *plach*, *bach*, *sostrach*, *pusch*, *fonch*, *tench*, *fón*, *fén*, *viu*, and *dix*. Villena only has *fon*, *dix*, *vén*, *fén*, *pres*, and *respòs*. Martorell has the Villena forms and *fonc*, *mès*, *venc*, *encès*, *promès*. Roig has *mou*, *riu*, *fou*, *diu*, *tenc*, *vench*, and *permès*.

Instances of syncretism contributed to the analogy's spread, as forms 4, 5, and 6 merged phonetically with forms from other paradigms. The issue of syncretism is particularly notable between

⁷ Bybee and Brewer's (207) analysis of Old Occitan preterit analogy, here equally applicable to Catalan, noted the difficulty in identifying the preterit marker due to: a) the existence of weak and strong conjugations, b) variation between final and penultimate stress on forms 4 and 5, and c) homophony with other tense forms.

form 6 of the preterit and the *-ra-* forms derived from the Latin pluperfect indicative, and which have been adduced as a contributing factor in favor of the spread of the *-r-* segment analogy (Westmoreland 492). In the Montuiri Mallorcan documents (Miralles Monserrat), we find confusion in the use of preterit and *-ra-* forms, which appears both with form 6 between the preterit *hagueren* and the "conditional" *hagueran* (a), and with form 3 with instances of preterit forms in *ra* (b).

- (a) "e salavores e tentost aquells s'*acostaran* (=s'*acostaren*) e *stira[ren]* (=s'*tiraren*) darts e pedres, e puy's sabrassaren la I e l'altra e's *trangueran* (=s'*tragueren*) armes, e que'n Muntaner que y *sobravenguera* (=sobre-*vengué*)"
- (b) "con lo dit Massot *passara* (=passà) dessà ab huna nau, que en aquel leny sí venc lo dit Jacme Arnau"
- "aquel *prenguera* (=prengué) per lo cabès, e aquel donà del pug per lo cab". (265)

In medieval Catalan texts these forms do not appear with a pluperfect indicative function, but rather as principally a conditional variant in the apodosis of contrary-to-fact if clauses (Russell-Gebbet 208). Already in Old Catalan, strong *-ra-* forms had been replaced by weak ones: *volguéra*, *volguéres*, *volguéira*, *volguérem*, *volguéreu*, *volguéren* (Badia i Margarit, *Gramàtica* 320), suggesting that the *ra* form itself was, like the preterit, functionally and analogically, undergoing changes. Russell-Gebbet (208) notes that the original Latin pattern "Si fecisset..., fecisset," was reinterpreted in Iberia and southern France as "Si fecisset..., fecerat" with the Latin pluperfect indicative reinterpreted as a past subjunctive in the apodosis, a pattern which had also appeared some in Latin. The *fera* (<*fecerat*) form thus took on in pre-literary Catalan a modal or conditional meaning, which appears in Old Catalan texts with its periphrastic variant *haguera fet* from the thirteenth to fifteenth century, later replaced by *farie* and *haurie fet*. Today, the *-ra-* form survives in Catalan only as a past subjunctive in Valencian, and lexically in some fossilized expressions with *fóra*, *haguera*, or *deguera* (Badia i Margarit, *Gramàtica* 320). Moll (155-58) notes that in Llull's texts the *ra* past subjunctive forms are already half as common as forms derived from the Latin pluperfect *se* subjunctive, and that the *ra* form, as a variant of the conditional, is limited to the apodosis of contrary-to-fact statements. In texts examined here, the form appears (a) in the apodosis of if clauses, (b) as a subjunctive following indefinite antecedents, or (c) as optative.

- (a) "Car si no fos home no *haguera* delliurat l'home."
(Sor Isabel de Villena 54)
- (b) "axi no plague menys al gran Ercules, presa e catiua,
del que li *poguera* plaure richa, trihufant Keyna."
(Joan Roig de Corella 24)
- (c) "*Valguera* m mays, cert, que servis de coch lay els inferns, e sofris cest
turmen, que no servir dona desconoyssen"
(Jordi de Sant Jordi 29)

Functionally, the simple preterit faced expanded usage of two emerging analytic structures, the periphrastic preterit *va cantar* and the periphrastic perfect *he cantat*. Mendeloff, following Colon's thesis, suggests that initially the auxiliary of *va cantar*, if tensed in the past (*anà*) dramatized the idea of past action, while the auxiliary, if tensed in the present (*va*) "highlighted an action whose decisiveness gave rise to other actions, which were mere consequences and could appear in the more pedestrian simple preterit" (320).

As such, *va cantar* more than *anà cantar*, initially presented a past tense corollary to what Bauhr (347-51) suggests for *va a cantar*'s function in Spanish and for what Vet (73-74) suggests is *je vais chanter*'s function in French: with the form's use, the speaker establishes a connection to the "point of origin," often understood as "near future" – or with regards to *va cantar*, "near past." Harris (140) similarly suggests that the issue of present relevance is the key marker for the "go-structure," whether "go-future" or "go-past." Pragmatically, *va cantar*, as argued here, was used initially as a way of foregrounding specific events in popular narrative passages. Fleischman argues that in French narratives, the preterit was the unmarked, background tense, and that the function of other tenses, specifically the present or present perfect was to foreground events. Form selection, originally determined by tense or aspect distinction then came to be replaced by issues of textual function. For Catalan, there have appeared supportive, if not parallel, analyses. Badia i Margarit (*Gramàtica* 326-27) has suggested that the frequent medieval use in narratives of the historical present alternating with the preterit contributed to *va cantar*'s use as a past tense. Molho (98) has argued that *va cantar*'s use as a historical present led to the form's reinterpretation as a preterit. Lafont (276) has proposed that *va cantar*'s popularity derives from the form's expressing the historical present. In Catalan, the simple preterit *cantà* has been replaced principally by *va cantar* rather than *he cantat*, which has largely maintained its function of only expressing past actions leading up to the present, but not those with only present relevance, the source for expanded perfect usage in other romance dialects. In Catalan, this

expansion appears short-circuited by the presence of the more vivid *va cantar* structure filling that role. There are, however, indications from western Catalan of expanded present perfect use in dialogues, which further suggests a split in usage between Eastern and Western dialects already in the fifteenth century. Marsà notes that in *Lo somni*, the preterit appears almost exclusively in prose, while the present perfect is used in passages with dialogue (321). The same pattern appears as well in Sor Isabel de Villena and Roiç de Corella. For Metge, Marsà (318) reaffirms Par's observations that the preterit describes a past action which did not occur "today," whose moment is specifically delimited and which circumscribes the field of our interest (319), suggesting both aspectual values of perfective and punctual to the preterit (320-21). By contrast, Metge used the present perfect for actions which occurred today and for actions continuing into the present or whose consequences relate to the present.

3. TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

The particulars of medieval Catalan dialect formation provide the external context in which these changes and their manifestations occurred. Not until the twelfth century was much of today's Eastern Catalan dialect area incorporated into the Catalan domain, and not until the middle of the thirteenth century were Mallorca and València conquered and resettled. The Catalan of thirteenth-century València was still quite similar to that of the thirteenth-century Barcelona, and when Llull was writing in Mallorca in the thirteenth century, the language of the island was still that of recent colonizers from the Barcelona and Girona areas.⁸ The changes in preterit form and function discussed here were only beginning to occur in Eastern Catalan at the time during which there emerged a dialectalization of differences between the East and West, or between Barcelona, Mallorca and València. Evolving differences between these areas, of which the preterit is just one of many, however, are still often absent or underrepresented in medieval literary documentation. The pre-fifteenth century use of Provençal as the learned language of poetry and the fifteenth-century use of the official language of the Chancellory, a standard koine, as the learned language of prose, served to mask both the spread of the *-r-* analogy in the preterit paradigm and the reanalysis of preterit function. Both the simple preterit *cantà*

⁸ Of course, in Llull, we find only the non-analogical forms: *portí, portast, portà, portam, portàs, portaren, vené, venest, vené, venem, venés, veneren*, and *partí, partist, partí, partim, partís, partiren* (Moll 137).

and the analytic *va cantar* coexisted in fifteenth-century Catalan. As the latter was being popularized in the late medieval and early modern periods, the cultural center shifted from Barcelona and Eastern Catalan to Valencia and Western Catalan, and beginning in the sixteenth century, Catalan literature as a force for standardization and the basis for an educated spoken language underwent a three century decline (Colon 129-37). Already in the fifteenth century the cultural shift towards a more linguistically conservative Valencian and Western Catalan had slowed literary texts' reflection of the periphrastic preterit's growth and the simple preterit functional reallocation. Colon (128-29) notes that particularly in València the simple form was recommended during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, from Lluís d'Averço's *Torcimany* to Francesc d'Olesa's *Nova Art de Trobar*. Thus fifteenth-century literary texts of Western Catalan writers from the Gandia-València area (Roiç de Corella, Jaume Roig, Sor Isabel de Villena, Joanot Martorell, and Ausiàs March) reflect both more conservative preterit forms and function than what we find in earlier non-literary documents from Eastern Catalan dialects, where the preterit's appearance was being limited more and more to narratives and passages of learned prose.

There is some scattered evidence, however, from the mid-fourteenth century on for the preterit *-r-* analogy and a reallocation of preterit function. The expansion and popularization of the *va cantar* preterit appears associated with textual function, or what is often loosely classified as "style." The earliest primary evidence for the preterit changes, the analogy and confusion in function, appears in non-literary texts, and documents from the northeastern periphery of Eastern Catalan dialects. Griera (92-95) notes that both functional expansion of the *va cantar* form and the *-r-* analogy were changes centered principally in Eastern Catalan dialects. The fifteenth-century Catalan grammar *Regles d'esquivar vocables o mots grossers o pagesivols*, an *Appendix Probi*-type list of common errors offering purist norms, stigmatizes both the simple preterit's analogical *-r-* forms and the analytic *va cantar* used as a preterit.⁹ Its prescriptive directives reflect the sociolinguistic context in which these changes took place, indicating they appeared first in popular speech. It also partly explains the paucity of analogical *-r-* forms in the period's

⁹ The suggestions appear as rule 48 (Badia i Margarit, "Regles" 143): "Més val dir: anam, venguem; no: vam anar," a correction added to the margins by the work's second author clarifying the earlier author's confusion over which of the forms was to be preferred; the first author's rule 49 "wrongly" stated: "vaig anar e vaig venir per aní e venguí," indicating further the high degree of confusion which already existed in the fifteenth century over form usage. The note on common analogical errors appears in rules 154-155: "arribàrem per arribam" and "anàrem per anam, e semblants" (146).

literary texts. In the western Catalan texts studied here, we find examples of non-analogical forms. In *Lo somni*, we find "Ab tant, ambdósos *partim* d'aquí; e anant per un camí tord, lonch e molt escur, quant *fom* a la sumitat" (262). In Martorell, "*partim* d'aquí e *venguem* prop ... *trobam*" (194). In *Spill*, we find "Puys *ixquem* tots ... / *ffem* corregudes; / nons hi *triguam* / que *calsiguam* / tota llur terra" (31).

Colon suggests the *va cantar* periphrasis existed prior to Catalan written texts (122), and that, in its origin, it was atemporal and used for vividness (127). It appears in Lull with the value of a present tense (Soldevila 267), but by the time of Desclot and Muntaner it was referentially equivalent to the simple preterit (Colon 132). Colon (127) notes the periphrastic forms essential absence in the works of Eiximenis, Metge, and Ausiàs March, as does Mendeloff (319) for *Curial and Güelfa*, *Lo somni*, *Evast e Blanquerna*, and *Tirant*. It's absence from most texts analyzed here appears due, first, to its use initially limited to Eastern Catalan, and secondly, to its use being both socially stigmatized and stylistically marked as popular, and thus avoided in works of a philosophical, theological, or didactic nature. The clearest evidence for the early changes occurring in eastern Catalan dialects comes from Mallorcan, where court texts from Montuïri (Miralles Monserrat) of 33 criminal proceedings between 1357-60 show all instances of the simple preterit appearing in normal prose and none in dialogues, and there are several instances of the analytic *va cantar* form (86) with preterit meaning, used mostly with verbs of action. In the late fourteenth century *Cobles* of the Mallorcan Anselm Turmeda, the periphrastic preterit appears in the following passage.

Sí em lleví un bon maití,
temps era de primavera,
e *vai pendre* mon camí
per una estreta sendera. (*Cobles* 9)

In fourteenth and fifteenth-century texts from Rosselló, Fouché documents twelve examples of non-analogical forms. He offers 4 instances of analogical forms, all which appear in texts between 1450 and 1470, and all for form 4.¹⁰

¹⁰ Fouché gives the following forms and dates for evidence from Rossellonès documents: *pujárem* (1452), *andrem* (1456), *vinguérem* (1459), *diguérem* (1468) beside *haguem* (1405), *vinguem* (1470), *prenguem* (1486). There are no examples of form 5, and only non-analogical forms for form 2.

4. THE GRAMMATICALIZATION OF *VA CANTAR*

The trajectory of disappearance taken by the Catalan simple preterit, and the motivation for its displacement by the periphrastic preterit relates to *va cantar* becoming a pragmatic marker of high focus, and then grammaticalized as simple past tense. The argument presented here is that the Catalan periphrastic preterit is a form whose appearance and popularization can best be explained by recourse to non-referential, pragmatic factors such as high and low focus.

The following provides an example of the simple and periphrastic forms' use in medieval Catalan.

"Quant cels de la host ho *viuren*, *meseren* mans a cridar: -A armes cavalers! Que'ls cavalers del castel se'n van!-. E el rey, qui assò hac entès, *va pendre* ses armes, e *mundà* a caval e *comensà* a córrer après d'èls; e no *foren* pus de XX· cavalers ab él, que'ls altres no eren tantost aparellats."
(Desclot *Crònica II*, p. 43.6) (Colon 104)

This late thirteenth-century example is typical of the context we find for the form's earliest documentations, and may be contrasted with the two examples below, taken from contemporary literary texts, one from a narrative passage (a), the other from a dialogue (b), where we note the form's eventual triumph over the simple preterit as the primary manner of expressing past perfective actions.

a) narrative passage:

"Quan *vam tornar* a ser a dins del cotxe en Marc em *va preguntar* on m'agradaria anar. Li *vaig dir* que a la Rambla de Catalunya; la *vaig passar* tota amb el cap enrera mirant el brodat que feien les fulles dels til·lers.
(*El carrer de les camèlies* 124)

b) dialogue passage:

"C: No em preguntes com *va anar* la missa per a homes?
L: He sentit per la ràdio que eren tants capellans repartint la comunió.
C: Encara tinc son. M'he llevat d'hora i em *vaig ficar* tard al llit. A més, que no he dormit gaire."

(*Quan la ràdio parlava de Franco* 66).

The periphrastic preterit formation, constructed with a *go* verb as its auxiliary followed by an infinitive,¹¹ morphologically parallels

¹¹ Vallduví argues that the periphrastic preterit *va cantar* structure does not derive from the earlier *va cantar* periphrasis, but instead from a non-periphrastic combination of the two verbs, noting the optional intercalation of objects between the two verbs and parallel structures with *venir* + infinitive (94-95). He further argues a lexical distinction between *anar* as independent verb and *anar* as simply "indicador temporal," noting

structures in French and Spanish which may denote inchoative aspect, intention, and/or future action. Colon (122) analyzes the Catalan auxiliary verb "anar," when used as an independent lexical item, as expressing one or more of the following:

- a) movement away from the speaker
- b) the beginning of a movement
- c) the period of movement

This analysis, however, only with difficulty sheds light on the *anar* auxiliary being used to denote perfect aspect, past time, actions.¹² For the latter to have happened, *anar* first would have to be even further stripped of its ascribed literal meaning, and, as an auxiliary, have undergone a semantic shift of the sort: movement → action → focus → focused past tense → past tense. This, in opposition, to the go-verb's semantic stripping in languages where it later came to be a future tense auxiliary. Here we might suspect that future meaning was reinforced by the inclusion of *a* in Spanish, although the preposition does not occur with the French future, and was optional in Spanish up to the sixteenth century.

The process which facilitated the growth of the Catalan periphrastic preterit is revealed most clearly by the discourse settings in which the new tense is first documented, where issues of marked and unmarked usage allowed for pragmatics to communicate which events were particularly deserving of attention. In texts of narrative, where we find instances of the periphrastic preterit first documented, Fleischman (313) notes that time reference, established at the outset, tends to generally be a property of large stretches of discourse, and thus, in theory, need not be encoded on every verb. In the unmarked context of ordinary language the present is the unmarked tense while the past tense is marked. By contrast, in the marked linguistic context of narratives, past time is assumed as the given context and the preterit tense is the unmarked tense. Other verb forms, associated elsewhere with particular tense or aspect functions are in narratives more free to be used to perform non-referential, pragmatic functions.¹³ In western

paradigm differences in forms 4 and 5 (*anem* and *aneu* vs. *vam* and *vau*) and the presence of analogical forms *vares*, *vàrem*, *vàreu*, and *varen* in the analytic past paradigm (95-96).

¹² Vallduvi offers a concise overview of theories concerning *va cantar*'s genesis (87), noting in particular those which privilege an originally inchoative explanation (notably Berchem), and those which stress the structure's association with the narrative and historical present tense use (Ronjat, and Badia i Margarit). Colon's theory which accepts contributions from both of the above positions corresponds most to my conclusions here: that the *va cantar* form was initially used as a focusing device "una 'mise en relief' per a destacar un fet decisiu i extraordinari" (Vallduvi 88 on Colon).

¹³ See Fleischman for a thorough elaboration of this point. I am indebted throughout to her analysis of French.

Romance, tense and aspect are synthetically merged in the same morphology, and during the medieval period temporal distinctions were often neutralized so that morphology might express aspectual distinctions, making it easier and more common for tense/aspect forms to be used pragmatically (Fleischman 69). During this period we find early scattered examples of forms used to signal focus irrespective of either aspect or tense. In Catalan, *va cantar*'s initial use as a particular discourse strategy for focusing the attention of the listener or reader on the more important actions of a narrative is the function from which its current usage in non-narrative contexts derives. Consequently its function is often interpreted simply as a strategy for making a specific action more vivid. The argument that the periphrastic preterit was initially pragmatically motivated is supported by such intuitive observations as Mendeloff's above on the relation between decisive actions and periphrastic preterit use, and appears facilitated by the go-verb auxiliary, which would seem to lend itself to high focus by iconically glossing actions with overt motion. The pragmatic role of the Catalan form as a focuser, a form employed to make the action more vivid, intense, emphatic, and real, is reflected in switches from the past tense form for the auxiliary (*anà cantar*) to its present tense form (*va cantar*) with no change of referential meaning, as indicated in the following passage's neutralization of auxiliary tense:

"E quant fo fora, puyí lo cavayl dels esperons e *anà ferir* entre·ls sarrayns, sí que·l primer colp n'abaté, ab lo pits del caval seu, ·IIII· a terra; e *anà ferir* ·I· sarray de la lança, que la dàraqua li passà e tot lo cors, sí que l'abaté mort a terra. E puys arancà·li la lança dels cors e, de manén, *va'n donar* tal colp per mig lo pits a aquel ..."

(Desclot *Crònica III*, p. 94.2-3) [Colon 104]

The use of the present tense in the auxiliary appears well established already in the fourteenth century in Muntaner, of which Soldevila's corpus provides over 60 examples of the auxiliary verb used in the present tense and none of it being used in the preterit. The selection of auxiliary tense *va* rather than *anà* was finalized during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and although the present tense was chosen over the past, analogies of the *-r-* morpheme within the *va* paradigm have since more clearly marked the auxiliary as a past tense form perhaps in order to clarify the reference to a past action.

The odd tense use associated with narratives is the product of both the oral nature of the discourse and morphology used pragmatically rather than referentially. Fleischman (85-93) describes for French the path of pragmatically-based tense usage in medieval narratives as moving from the oral to the literary, from the situation of interactive storytelling to contexts of natural narrative performance to a

grammaticalization and integration into the written grammars. Such appears, as well, the route traveled by the Catalan periphrastic preterit. Given the essential "orality" of medieval culture, the language of the period is seen most clearly in those text types most associated with performance, in which pragmatics plays a more central role. The *va cantar* form initially appears most in popular genres which have a greater association with an oral tradition, such as epics, chronicles, adventure novels, and romances. In Muntaner, the forms' frequent appearance is understood as an example of the text's popular language (Soldevila 267).

Looking at the structure's earliest Catalan documentation, we see the form used as a discourse strategy. The examples offered above are representative of its usage in the Colon and Soldevila corpora where the periphrastic preterit and the simple preterit are referentially synonymous, and differ only in degree of grammaticalization. The *va cantar* form is found only in narratives, and specifically in instances of narration rather than directly quoted speech or narrator's commentary. It is initially found only with lexically perfective verbs, primarily verbs of action. Perfective actions, as they express achievements, are generally considered the foreground of a narrative and to be of higher focus than imperfective verbs. Only later, as the *va cantar* form became grammaticalized, did it come to be used with lexically imperfective verbs. In broad terms, a focus-strength or saliency hierarchy, understood as a continuum not a binary, can be said to run from perfective to imperfective verbs. As a tense structure, the periphrastic preterit most often and earliest appears associated with the lexical expression "*anà ferir*" and synonymous meanings. It was from these high-focus, narratively-weighted actions that the structure made its expansion. Narrative focus is generally associated with events of intrinsic importance, those which move narrative time forward, or which describe unpredictable or unexpected events (Fleischman 169-80). Of the samples taken from the Catalan texts and corpora, the breakdown by general perfective/imperfective categories and subcategories is indicated below.¹⁴

	<i>ferir</i>	movement	other perf.	imp
Soldevila	49%	30%	21%	0
Colon	17%	27%	57%	0
Rodoreda	4%	26%	50%	20%
Benet i Jornet	0	23%	52%	25%

¹⁴ The Soldevila corpora contains 69 items, the Colon corpora contain from in Catalan, 35 from French, and 25 from Occitan.

In Soldevila's study of Muntaner, the structure is first found most in *anà ferir* type structures. In Colon's medieval corpus, which includes a wider range of texts and covers a broader time frame, there is a broader distribution of periphrastic preterit use among different perfective verbs. The verbs which Miralles Monserrat (283) lists as using the periphrastic preterit in the Mallorcan court documents are *acostar*, *aranchar*, *dir*, *donar*, *enpèyer*, *farir*, *gafar*, *pasar*, *pendre*, *posar*, *tacar*. There appear two instances each of the form used with *afarar*, *abrasar*, *qaura*, *saqudir*. In our two modern Catalan sources, we see the structure now being used also with imperfective verbs. High focus, a pragmatic feature, thus appears as central in the propagation of the *va cantar* structure as the Catalan narrative past tense. Hopper's position that aspect, particularly perfective aspect, originates at the textual level as a focus marker¹⁵ has support from Reid who has argued that high focus correlates with preterit use in literary French, vis-a-vis low-focus imperfect form use, and Ozete who has proposed a similar argument for preterit usage in Spanish. The latter studies, however, suggest, more an overlay tendency between focus and tense/aspect than an actual displacement of one function for the other as happened in Catalan. Additionally they make no claims on the issue of narrative and non-narrative differences in tense and aspect usage. That the *va cantar* and *cantà* forms appear in medieval texts in aspectually the same environments, and ignoring pragmatic or textual motivations, may be termed synonymous, differentiates such modern explanations of the imperfect form's functional usage, which cannot be termed referentially synonymous with that of the preterit or present perfect. That the Catalan simple and periphrastic preterits are only referentially synonymous is suggested both by the findings here and observations by other linguists. The centrality of focus as a concept in explaining the emergence of the Catalan periphrastic preterit is in its eventual displacement of the simple preterit.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The fifteenth-century Catalan preterit was effected both by analogy within its paradigm and a functional reallocation brought on by expanding analytic structures. While both changes were also appearing elsewhere in the romance domain, in each case changes appear to have been brought on by like conditions of an unstable preterit paradigm and the lack of an educated norm inducing similar changes originating independently rather than having spread from one geographical center

¹⁵ See Fleischman (7) for a review of Paul Hopper's argument.

to another. For Catalan, the *-r-* analogy appears earliest in the Eastern dialects, and sociolinguistically among the more popular classes. Initially it marked the preterit plural forms (4,5,6) and then quickly all weak forms (2,4,5,6), leaving only strong forms 1 and 3 with a accentual preterit marker. The analogy appears sporadically in fifteenth-century writers associated with eastern Catalan, but is absent from those writers associated with the western dialects or those who adopted the language of the Chancellory for their didactic prose.

The grammaticalization of the Catalan periphrastic preterit as the principal past tense which replaced the preterit involves an interplay of factors such as high focus, narrative text type, and popular social class. Its extension to other contexts is the product of privileging textual function at the expense of referential function. The Catalan form moved beyond particular culture-specific frames, from being a marked category of linguistic performance to being the unmarked everyday norm. The loss of focus status due to its grammaticalization is a case of pragmatic unmarking, wherein an evaluation device such as focus is overused to the point of losing its distinctiveness. As a form, *va cantar* was initially circumscribed geographically, socially, and stylistically. It was found primarily in the Barcelona area and north, and less often in texts from the southern Catalan-speaking region. Thus, we see the form's emerging popularity in thirteenth and fourteenth-century documents, generally popular and Barcelona-based, and its virtual absence in the major fifteenth-century documents, largely didactic texts produced principally during the Valencian cultural renaissance. From the start, usage of the periphrastic *va cantar* structure was socially stigmatized. Grammarians of the period criticized its use both for Catalan and other romance languages. It is specifically the demise of prescriptive grammar in the Catalan speaking area, and of high literature and high culture during the fifteenth to the seventeenth century that facilitated the eventual triumph of what was originally a stigmatized and contextually-limited variant of the morphologically complex simple preterit.

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