Three Little Problems of
Old Provençal Syntax

Omission of a Relative Pronoun

In his Vermischte Beiträge, second edition, pages 111–13, Tobler deals with the following Old French syntactical phenomenon. Where the first of two co-ordinate verbs is accompanied by a personal pronoun which should be repeated before the second verb, but in a different case, this second pronoun is frequently dropped, as in the following sentence: "Il lor dona armes et appareilla honorablent." Here a les is to be supplied before appareilla from the foregoing lor. At the end of his article, Tobler gives one example of the same phenomenon, but in connection with a relative, instead of a personal, pronoun. We want here, in a way, to complement Tobler's article by presenting some Provençal parallels to his last example, i.e., the omission of a relative pronoun.

1. Lo reis cui es Castrasoritz
e te de Toleta · palais
lau que mostre de sos eslais . . .

(Bertran de Born, P.C. 80.32
[Appel (ed.), No. 21, IV, 2])
As *cui* (line 1) is dative, the nominative *qui* is to be supplied after *e* (line 2).

2. Qar cel cui destreing grans dolors 
e sap qu'avcr no pot secors 
mas per un metge sol, cre ... 

(Gauc. Faidit, P.C. 167.5 [Kolsen (éd.),
Arch. Rom., XVII, 365], IV, 8)

Here the *cui* (line 1) is an accusative, so one should expect to find the nominative *qui* before *sap* (line 2).

3. ... dont ad autor 
trac mon segnor 
de Peitieus, cui es honransa 
e pretz capdell' et secor.

(Ibid., P.C. 167.31 [Kolsen (éd.), Arch. 
Rom., XVII, 1] VI, 10)

The *cui* of line 3 has the value of a dative, while another case of the relative pronoun is missing after *e* (line 4). This should be *que* (accusative), if one assumes, as does Kolsen, that the subject of *capdell' e secors* is *pretz* (line 4); it should be *qui* (nominative) if the subject is the *segnor de Peitieus*.

4. Per que falh qui· desdui, 
pos aisi leu s'esdui 
so c'om plus vol ni·lh platz.

(Giraut de Bornelh, P.C. 242.73 
[Kolsen (éd.) No. 73] VI, 9)
The subject of vol (line 3) is om, its object que (c'). In the second part of the line, what was nominative in the first part (om) becomes dative in the second: ·lh (=li). So a relative pronoun in the nominative should stand between ni and ·lh. The form of that nominative, its gender being neuter, would, it is true, have the same form as the que (c') in the beginning of the line, but they differ from logical and grammatical standpoints.

5. Selh cui joys tanh ni chantar sap
   e sos bclhs ditz vol despendre
   a tal dona·ls fass' entendre . . .

   (Raim. de Miraval, P.C. 406.18 [Kolsen (ed.), Beiträge, 25], I, 1)

Here the nominative qui is to be supplied after ni (line 1), the cui of the same line having the value of a dative. This qui would also be the subject of vol (line 2).

6. Cel qu'eu asor
   e volc esdevenir
   per nostr' amor
   fyll de Santa Maria
   e mal sentir,
   turmen, pen' e paor,
   e mort sofrir
   e ressors al terç dia,
   prec . . .

   (Cerveri, P.C. 434a.62 [Riquer (ed.), No. 40, V, 1])

In line 1 que is accusative, the object of asor, whose subject is eu. But the subject of the second verb (volc) is a missing qui, which should refer to Cel, i.e., Christ. This nonexistent qui is also the subject of the third finite verb of this passage, viz., ressors in line 4.
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7. Ar a Brunessen so que vol,
que de so dc que plus si dol
e mais en est siegle dezira,
de que soven plain e sospira,
si fai mut ricamenz pregar.

("Jaufre," éd. Clovis Brunei [Paris, 1943], line 7849)

Since the *que* of line 2 depends on the preposition *de*, one should expect another *que*, direct object of *dezira* (line 3), after the *e* of the same line. This anacoluthon would have been more obvious still if the poet had used *don* instead of *de que* in line 2. It is, moreover, noteworthy that, after the anacoluthon of line 3, the poet resumes, with the *de que* in line 4, the original construction of line 2.

The above examples no doubt show a certain negligence from a strict grammatical standpoint. Could one, therefore, say that the authors of these passages did not know their language well, or would they, if somebody had called their attention to this way of speaking, have admitted that they had made mistakes? We do not think so. For such an assumption, the examples seem too great in number and the writings from which they are taken too different in character and time of composition. Such anacolutha, just as the Old French ones mentioned in the beginning of this section, where it is a personal pronoun that was omitted, sprang from common usage in medieval times, and it was—and could be—left to the reader or listener to adjust grammar and sense.

**Complementary Relative Clauses**

There are relative clauses that seem absolutely superfluous because the nouns to which they refer are perfectly clear in
their meanings. I have found such clauses only in non-lyric writings.

1. En cenaire,¹ nos mantenem
   mielz la nostra lei que tenem
   que vos non faz, si nos ajut
   le nostre dieus per sa vertut.

   (Jeu de Sainte Agnès, ed. Jeanroy [Paris, 1931], line 158)

   The possessive pronoun preceding lei makes the following relative clause still more dispensable.²

2. Ben sui certa que mais non ti veirai.
   Dona mi .I. bais al partir qu’en farai.
   Que Dieu ti don s’ajuda.

   (Ibid., line 381)

   The spectators are witness of this farewell; al partir alone would, therefore, seem sufficiently clear.³

3. [Que] anc non vist sa par dolor
   qu’el fay, e sons payres major.

   (Sant Honorat, ed. Ingagärd Suwe [Uppsala, 1943], line 552)

4. Fuion s’en de rrandon de paor c’an aguda.

   (Ibid., line 4106)

5. . . . Per que la batet fort:
   de gran ira que ac l’aduys pres de la mort.

   (Sant Honorat, ed. A-L. Sardou ⁴ [Nice, 1875], LXX, 6)
6. Atressi m’avias dat un sol fiyll que avia; Sarrasin lo mi tolgron de denfra l’abadia.

(Ibid., XCIV, 67)

Is this only an awkward condensation of two different ideas: “you had given me a son” and “he was the only one I had”? In this case, the relative clause would not be unjustified.

The following examples, taken from a prose work, show that our pleonastic relative clauses are not due to prosodic reasons.

7. E, ploran de gaug que avian, disseron a Thomas. . . .

(Philomena, ed. Schneegans in Gesta Karoli Magni [Halle, 1898], line 236)

8. Et Helias del dol que ac laissec se cazer del cavalh.

(Ibid., line 1719)

9. E Matras, ples de vergonha, d’ira e de tristessa que ac, entret s’en en la ciutat.

(Ibid., line 1868)

10. E Karles, can ausia que venian, isxic lor defora e, can los vic, de gran gaug que n’ac la cara li·n tornec colorada.

(Ibid., line 2697)

11. . . . que, per erguelh que an, no volon estar am la cort.

(Ibid., line 2755)

12. . . . de gran meravelha que s doneron foron totz esbalausitz.

(Ibid., lines 3030–31)
What may have been the origin of these pleonastic relative clauses? We venture to give an explanation. In Chapter XXXVI of Volume I of his *Vermischte Beiträge zur französischen Grammatik* (2nd ed.; Leipzig, 1906–21), Tobler deals with “Aussage bestehend aus Nomen und Relativsatz.” He gives numerous Old and modern French examples; e.g., the following one in modern French: “Et le médecin qui n’arrivait pas.” He also quotes two Old Provençal passages, of which we reproduce here the one from *Croisade Albigeoise* (line 8678): “Li Frances s’en partiron, mas laichero·i pens.‘ Mans mortz e mans perdutz, e lor coms que n’es mens.”

Something similar was, in our opinion, the root of our relative clauses. Tobler’s French examples are characterized as statements, although some of them border on exclamations, and the nouns to which the relative clauses refer designate, almost exclusively, living beings. I could imagine that there had been, in the spoken language, similarly constructed sentences—a noun and a relative clause—whose nouns expressed an emotion in themselves and were referred to by adequate relative clauses. Such sentences, then, would have been genuine exclamations, not mere statements. I am thinking of expressions such as “*Ai, la dolors que fetz!”, “*Oi, la paors que an aguda!”, “*E lo gaugs qu’en senti!” Those relative clauses, originally complementing exclamations, were then, we presume, so intimately connected, in the speaker’s mind, with nouns expressing an emotion that they were also kept where those nouns appeared in statements, thus penetrating into the written language, especially into works of a less sophisticated kind than troubadour lyrics. Our theory would seem to be corroborated by the fact that all our examples with the exception of threcc (1, 2, and 6), which are dubious anyhow,
have an emotive noun as the antecedent of those pleonastic relative clauses.

Senseless as those clauses may appear to us today, they may have had a certain stylistic value at their time. They separate the emotive noun, which represents an essential element of the sentence, from what follows. This procedure forces the reader or listener to dwell on that noun and its emotional value, thus bringing the latter out in full relief.

_A Special Use of the Preposition “A”_

The oldest example known to me, a deed of 1103, may illustrate this special use of the preposition _a_: “Ab aquels fin ni societad non auria, fors pels castels a recobrar.” We find here two prepositions, _per_ and _a_, the former indicating the purpose of the action expressed by the infinitive _recobrar_, the latter seemingly quite superfluous. This _a_ appears only if the infinitive is preceded by what seems to be its object (here, _los castels_).

Tobler and Lommatzsch (I, 22-24) offer a great many examples of the Old French parallel of our _a_. For Provençal, such a statement has not yet been made, though some editors of Provençal texts have pointed to the special nature of this _a_, while others failed to recognize it and prefixed it to the following infinitives, thus forming compound verbs beginning with _a_. The following quotations will show that our _a_ was no less frequent than in Old French.

_A. The governing preposition is “per”:_

1. _Quecx, per enugz a dir fos natz e per parlar vilanamentz._
   (“Jaufre,” ed. Breuer [Göttingen, 1925], line 144)
2. Malvas rei, *per* te *az* aunir
   o ai fait. . . .

   (*Ibid.*, ed. Brunel, line 585)

3. Q'escut ni espasa ni lansa
   non penrai *per* vos a contendre
   ni per vostre plaser defendre.¹³

   (*Ibid.*, line 3639)

4. Seiner, *per* nos a salvar
   muris e · us laises clavelar.

   (*Ibid.*, line 5747)

5. E tuit escoutavan goglars¹⁴
   per la sala, si que · ls manjars
   n'an laissat *per* els *a* ausir.

   (*Ibid.*, line 9817)

6. Qe cel que venc a naissance
   *per* totz nos autres *a* salvar. . . .

   (*Ibid.*, line 10947)

7. Be · m miravill qu'usquecs no · s pena
   de far be e de viure gen
   *per* gaug *ad* aver solamen.

   (*Sordel, Docum. hon.,* ed. De Lollis,
   p. 219, line 454)

8. . . . feyron venir
   rics metges *per* lyes *a* guerir.

9. Car ins en Tarn, de bruncs en broncs,
cezon belencs, rocas e rancs . . .
\textit{pel} fer drago a sebelhir.\textsuperscript{15}

\textit{(Ibid., line 1233)}

10. Ab aquel ne societatem cum illo vel cum illis non auria,
for \textit{per} lo castel \textit{a recobrar}.

\textit{(Brune, Chartes, I, No. 10 [A.D. 1103])}\textsuperscript{16}

11. Finem ne societatem cum illo vel cum illis non auria,
for \textit{per} lo castel \textit{a recobrar}.

\textit{(Ibid., No. 18 [A.D. 1130])}

12. Ab aquel ne ab aquella ne ab aquel ne ab aquellas
fin ne societad non auria, for \textit{per} lo castel \textit{a recobrar}.

\textit{(Ibid., No. 25 [around 1138])}

13. Aquest do faim e guirpem . . ., eu Beatritz e mei effaint,
a jassen, per totz terminis, \textit{per} tota lor voluntat \textit{a ffar}.\textsuperscript{17}

\textit{(Ibid., No. 108 [A.D.] 1166)}

14. Aquel glorios Dieus que son cors det a venda \textit{per} totz
nos \textit{a salvar} . . .

\textit{(Folquet de Mars, P.C. 155, 26, ed. Stronski,
No. 28, V, 2)}

15. Si capellan \textit{per} trop beure anoal [?]
ni legistas \textit{per} tort \textit{a mantener} . . . \textsuperscript{18}

\textit{(Peire Card[?], P.C. 335, 37, ed. Lavaud,
V, 12)}
16. Avans de jorn deu hom levar
per son auzel a regardar.

(Daude de Pradas, Dels Auzels Cassadors, ed. Schutz, line 702)

17. Restrenha e se e sa maynada de beure e de manjar per lo sieu ad estalbiar.

(V. et Vert., fol. 18 [Sternbeck])

18. Per qu’er escur so qu’ar es clar
lai on Dieus mostra l martir
qu’elh sostenc per nos a garir.

(Peire d’Alvernhe [Sternbeck])

19. . . . m’es bon e belh hueymais que m’entremeta
d’un sirventes per els a conortar.

(Bertran de Born [Sternbeck])

20. . . . per nos ad essenhar a fugir la lauzor e la favor
del pobol et tot movement de vana gloria.

(V. et Vert., fol. 55 [Sternbeck])

21. Quan venc en terra per lo mon a salvar. . . .

(Declaramens de motas demandas [Sternbeck])

22. . . . per mort e passio per nos autres peccadors a salvar.

(Ibid.)

23. . . . per nos, mals sers desconoissens, a restaurar de mort.

(V. et Vert., fol 36 [Sternbeck])
24. *Per* los murs *a* fendre
fan engenhs e castels.\textsuperscript{22}

(Raïmb. de Vaucéiras [Sternbeck])

In the following two passages, the governing preposition (*per*) is followed by an adverb, not a noun. They show that our construction has lost any meaning.

25. En motas de manieras si prohet li certez del[s] sieus
vers raubamens; car alcunas personas *per* plus fort
*a* prohar li plantavan alenas e la poinhian amb
agulhas.\textsuperscript{23}

(Appel, *Chrest.*, No. 119, 118
[Santa Doucelina])

26. Tota nostra compaynha es lassa, e mays val que sian
pausatz *per* mielhs *a* batalhar.

(Philomena [Sternbeck])

B. The governing preposition is "*de*":

27. Qecs, ja no estaretz en pas
ni-us laisares *de* mal a dir.

("Jaufre," ed. Brunel, line 619)

28. Per que fa ades bon servir
a om estrain, qui·1 ve venir
o d'aculir, o de parlar
o *de* sun aver *a* donar.

(Ibid., line 5820)
29. De favas a desgranar
de notz a scofellar,
lamcant hom las escofena,
e de gran ga a nadar,
e de figas a pellar
lo vencerai ses conten.

(Marcoat, P.C. 294.1 [Jeanroy (ed.),
Jongleurs, p. 12, lines 13–18)

30. En entencio de lui a diffamar. . . .

(V. et Vert., fol. 3 [Sternbeck])

31. Aquo fon tot son mestier de sas fedas a pastorgar.

(Trad. d’un évangile aprrov. [Sternbeck])

32. Es tengutz . . . de tot a restaur.

(Statuts de Montpellier, de 1204 [Sternbeck])

33. Enquer no-us passa,
fi mi eu, la manera
de mi a chuflar.

(Guir. Riquier, P.C. 248.22 [Mahn (ed.), IV,
190], III, 3 [Sternbeck])

34. Verges, en vos ai mes auzar
d’aquest escrig a romansar.

(Passio de Maria [Sternbeck])

C. The governing preposition is “en”:

35. Qe non pot aver alegrier,
ans l’ave lo jom a lassar
catre ves e [:=en] gran dol a far.

(“Jaufre,” ed. Brunel, line 3156)
36. Que-s lassavon. III. ves lo dia
e la nueg en gran dol a ffar.  

(Ibid., line 6459)

37. E que vos en par
de ric home quan pesa
   en grant tort a far?

(Peire Cardenal, P.C. 335.38
[Lavaud (ed.), No. 61, V, 3)

D. The governing preposition is “a”:

38. E Brunissens ab sas donselas
    sun si al dol a far enpresas.

(“Jaufre,” ed. Brunel, line 3928)

39. E l’enfan sun d’aisi mogut,
    e sun gran e fort e cregut,
    e sun si pres al mal a faire.

(Ibid., line 3541)

40. Enaissi apren hom a mal a fugir et a conoysser . . .
    tot pecat.

(V. et Vert., fol. 28 [Sternbeck])

A great number of the above quotations are taken from the
romance of “Jaufre.” Indeed, Breuer says in his edition (page
371 n): “In ‘Jaufre,’ the infinitive, where it follows its
object, is always accompanied by a.” Such consistency in the
use of a has not always been observed by other writers. We
have already pointed out two such cases (see footnotes 13 and 18). Here are some additional examples:

41. A mos ops la vuclh retenir
per lo cor dedins refrescar
c per la carn renovellar.

(Guillem, IX, P.C. 183.8 [Jeanroy (ed.), No. 6], VI, 4 and 5)

42. Et om no deu temer
mal per Deu gazanhar.

(Guir. de Born., P.C. 242.74 [Kolsen (ed.), No. 51], VI, 8)

43. Selui qu'el mon vole venir
per nostres peccatz delir. . . .

(Peire d'Alv., P.C. 323.21 [Zenker or Del Monte (ed.), No. 19], III, 2)

44. Guiraut, ieu chant per mon cor alegrar.

(Guir. Riquier-Bonfils, P.C. 248.16 [quoted after Raynouard, Lex. Rom., IV, 508])

Among the governing prepositions, *per* is the one used in the majority of examples quoted above, whereas in Old French, according to Tobler-Lommatzsch, *de* prevails in this function. For *ses*, *sobre*, and *sus*, we cannot provide examples, as Tobler and Lommatzsch do for Old French *sans*, *sor*, and *sus*. These prepositions seem to have been rare anyhow, in view of the few examples provided by Tobler and Lom-
matzsch. For sus, for instance, they have only one: “Sus a perdre leur terre.” But does this example really belong here? The object (leur terre) does not precede but rather follows the infinitive, and a stands immediately after the governing preposition.30

We do not remember having ever met with this a in Provençal cansos, and the situation seems to be similar in Old French since Tobler and Lommatzsch quote only one example, the first one, taken from the song manuscript of Bern. The reason for this phenomenon may be that the construction a with infinitive belonged to a more popular way of speaking—as in epic poetry, for example, sirventes and so forth; it was spurned in the more sophisticated style of courtly love poetry.

There is no commonly accepted explanation of the origin of this seemingly superfluous a.31 The latest theory, so far as I know, is that of Ernst Gamillscheg.32 He speaks of this a as an “a-prefix isolating the content of the infinitive.” I prefer to go back to an incidental remark of Tobler’s 33 and to see in the infinitive with a a qualifier of what could logically be regarded as the object of the infinitive.34

Let us take example 37: “E que vos en par De ric home quan pessa En gran tort a far?” Here the original meaning of the infinitive with a seems to be recognizable: the rich man meditates on great harm (that is) to be done (by him). Lavaud’s translation seems to reflect the same interpretation of this passage.35 In example 29, “E de gran ga a nadar E de figas a pellar Lo vencerai ses contena,” the poet is sure that he will surpass his adversary with regard to a great ford (which is) to be swum through or with regard to figs (which are) to be husked. And in a last example (16), “Avans de jorn deu hom levar Per son auzel a regardar,” the owner of a bird has to get
up before dawn because of his bird (which is) to be looked after.

We do not know whether the Provençal (or Old French) writers really conceived of such an *a* with infinitive as a qualifier, a kind of attribute, to the preceding noun, if, indeed, they gave any thought at all to the nature of the construction. It may have been a stereotyped, fossilized way of speaking at the time that the first examples appeared in writing, which was misused in later times, as in examples 25 and 26.

Our *a* with infinitive cannot be traced back to classical Latin because this language did not know the infinitive preceded by a preposition, for Latin used the gerundive to express the same idea. One may compare the following Latin examples:

1. "... paratiores ad omnia pericula subeunda," which the authors render as "readier to undergo all dangers." More literally it would be, however, "readier for all dangers (that are) to be undergone." Translated into Provençal, the sentence could have run thus: "*plus volontos a totz perilhs a sotzpor­tar." But with this difference only: in Latin the qualifier of the noun (*pericula*) is the adjectival gerundive (*subeunda*); in Provençal, it is the infinitive with *a*.

2. "Veniunt ad pacem petendam." The authors' translation is, "They come for peace (which is) to be sought," or in Provençal, "*Venon per patz a demandar." Here again the Latin gerundive (*petendam*) corresponds to the Provençal infinitive with *a* (*a demandar*).

Do not the above comparisons between Latin and Provençal sentences corroborate the theory that our infinitive with *a* is—or originally was—like the Latin gerundive, a qualifier of the preceding noun?
1. Cenaire ("senator").

2. It is, however, possible that the poet added the relative clause only to have a word rhyming with *mantenem*. If so, this example would not belong to the stereotyped kind of clauses we are dealing with here.

3. The pronominal adverb *en* may refer to a person one is speaking to. Cf., "Pueys fus joglars de dir vers e chansos; Ar iest poyatz a major onramen, Que'l conzs n'a fag ['the count has made of you'] cavaier salvatge"—Bertr. d'Alam., P. C. 76, 1 (ed. Salv. de Grave, p. 76) I, 8. So the *en* of our second example probably means "of you" (sc., leave-taking) with which the saint is addressed by her sister. This *en* needed a verb, because it could not join the substantivized infinitive *al partir*, to which it logically belongs. Therefore, I assume, the author formed the relative clause *qu'en farai*, which then is less senseless than it would seem at first sight.

4. Of Miss Suwe's edition only the first volume was published, her text ending with line 4127.

5. Latin translation of the *Philomena* significantly does not take care of the relative clause: *gaudio fientes dixerunt ei*.

6. *Pens* ("as pawns").

7. Similar exclamations might well be uttered in modern English: "Oh, the ordeal [that] he had to go through!" or, "And the fun [that] we had!"


9. *fin* ("accord"). (Brunel).

10. *pels* (*per los*).

11. So did Raynouard, at whose time this kind of *a* was still unknown to scholars. H. Sternbeck (*Unrichtige Wortaufstellungen und Wortdeutungen in Raynouard's Lexique Roman* [Berlin, 1887], p. 36), in correcting Raynouard's *a*-prefixed verbs, brought to light a larger number of examples. We have incorporated his findings in our list, marking them with the name of their discoverer.

Sternbeck's book was not available to me when I was writing this paper. My thanks go to Mr. Frederick Goldin of Rutgers University, who had an opportunity to look it up and who has provided me with a report on what Sternbeck had to say on page 36 of his dissertation.

12. Brunel, following another manuscript, has a different text.

13. It is worth mentioning that, in the third line, the poet fails to use this *a* (before *defendre*).

14. *goglars* (*joglars*).

15. Brunel's text shows *asebelhir*.

16. See footnote 8, *supra*.

17. Brunel reads *affar*.

18. Lavaud translates line 2 thus: "... Les légistes pour injustice à sou-
tenir." It is noteworthy that, in the following line, "ni albergier per lor oste trair," the poet does not make use of the a dealt with here.


21. All editions have *per lor assegurar* (Appel [ed.], No. 11, line 6).


23. *Prohet, Prohar (proet), proar* (Latin *probare*) ("to examine"); *alena* ("awe").

24. The verbs *desgranar, escofelar, and escofenar* are synonyms meaning "to husk."


27. Brunel reads *affar.*

28. Lavaud translates: "... Il songe a de grandes injustices a commettre."

29. There is, however, one exception at least; see footnote 13.

30. Similar cases are also listed under *por* and *sans* (Tobler-Lommatzsch, I, p. 24, lines 3, 4, 9, 13, 15).

31. See the literature in Tobler-Lommatzsch, I, p. 22, 45–23, 3.


34. Sternbeck (see footnote 11), starting from the same remark of Tobler's, came to a similar result.

35. See footnote 28. The same is true of his translation of example 15 in footnote 18.

36. See also Gamillscheg, op. cit., p. 463.

37. These are taken from Allen and Greenough, *New Latin Grammar* (Boston, 1931), § 503.