THE LATE CORNISH SYNTAX OF WILLIAM BODINAR

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Prelude

§1. There has been scant serious attention paid to the clausal configuration of Cornish over its history. There are no attested verbal sequences in Old Cornish, thus rendering the question for that period moot, though, to judge from Old Southwest Brittonic,[1] root clauses had moved towards becoming verb-second (V2),[2] e.g.:[3]

(1) Ang. 277, f. 62[b]:[4]
  [*do*[*u*] *cuntraid ha dou rebirthi*] *a*   *int*   *im pop un mis*
  2   neap-tide & 2   great-flow AFF   COP.3.PL.PRES in   each 1 month
  'Deux marées de morte-eau et deux grandes marées sont dans chacun mois.'

§2. Lewis, followed by Kille, maintains that both subject-verb-object (SVO) and verb-first (V1) are unmarked configurations in root clauses in Middle Cornish.[5] Williams states 'that Middle Cornish is in essence a SVO language', while recognising certain variations.[6] George compiles all of the surface configurations attested in the play *Beunans Meriasek* (composed ca. 1504), but is satisfied to conclude by listing only the most common ones.[7]

§3. It is clear, however, that Middle Cornish possessed configurational structures like V2 Middle Welsh and Middle and Modern Breton. Cf. the following clausal tokens,

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1. For the terminology, see SCHRIJVER, 2011, p. 4–5.
2. N.B. that not only the initial subject XP, but also the affirmative particle, is placed prior to the verb.
3. Grammatical abbreviations: AFF = affirmative particle; COP = copula; DEF = definite; DP = Determiner Phrase; FEM = feminine; FUT = future; HAB-PRES = habitual present; IMPF = imperfect; IMPV = imperative; INDEF = indefinite; LOC-COP = locative copula; MASC = masculine; NEG = negator; NP = Noun Phrase; ORD = ordinal; PL = plural; POSS = possessive; PP = Prepositional Phrase; PRES = present; PRET = preterite; REL = relative; SG = singular; SUBJ = subjunctive; V-ADJ verbal adjective; VN = verbal noun; XP = any phrase; & = connective.
4. FLEURIOT, 1964a, p. 151. See FLEURIOT, 1964b, p. 413 for two further tokens.
5. LEWIS, 1946, p. 47; KILLE, 1995, p. 5.
6. WILLIAMS, 2011, p. 334–336.
7. GEORGE, 1991.

and note in (2b) the important diagnostic that the subject follows the verb when another argument/adjunct precedes it:

(2)　a.　Subject-initial (*OM*, p. 92, l. 1205):

　　　　[*my*]　*a*　　*offryn*　　　*scon*　　　*aral*
　　　　1.SG　AFF　offer.3.SG.PRES　immediately　other
　　　　'I will offer another immediately.'

　　b.　Object-initial (RD p. 72, l. 909):

　　　　[*guyr*]　a　　gousaf　　　　thomas
　　　　truth　AFF　speak.1.SG.PRES　Thomas
　　　　'I speak [truth], Thomas.'

　　c.　Adverb(ial)-initial (*PA*, p. 6, §9.1[a] = l. 65):[8]

　　　　[*ragon*]　*y*　*pesys*　　　　*y*　　　*das*
　　　　for.1.PL　AFF　beseech.3.SG.PRET　3.SG.M.POSS　father
　　　　'He beseeched his father [for us]'.

§4. Clausal configuration in Late Cornish is harder to determine:

　　a.　The *Tregear homilies* of ca. 1558, which awaits its first scholarly edition, is a transitional text that possesses some Middle Cornish and some Late Cornish phonological features. Williams states that it is written 'in fairly colloquial prose';[9] indeed, in his judgement, Tregear's 'morphology and syntax are perfect'.[10] However, a close examination of the text, a translation of Edmund Bonner's *A profitable and necessary doctrine, with certayne homelyes adioyned therevnto* (1555), indicates that Tregear's translation closely follows the clausal configuration of his English exemplar, violating a variety of features of Cornish syntax. Eska & Bruch conclude that the *Tregear homilies* is likely a poor, overly hasty, and unpolished translation of Bonner, in which Tregear, though a native speaker of Cornish, tends to preserve the configuration of constituents in his English exemplar whenever possible (perhaps because he was translating one phrase at a time).[11]

　　b.　*Sacrament an alter* is a patristic catena translated by Thomas Stephyn from the 1576 edition of John Foxe's *Actes and monuments* (Frost 2019: 3).[12] It is a text which avoids some of Tregear's extensive use of English word order and lexis, as well as his frequent editorial additions and comments. Despite this, it is perhaps even more problematic as a source of information about

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8.　Stokes, 1860–1861, the edition of *Pascon agan Arluth* that we employ, prints the text in stanzas of four lines, each of which represents two lines of the poem. We cite the text by stanza number, line in Stokes' edition, and suprascript [a] or [b] to indicate the first or second half of Stokes' line; thus §9.1[a] represents the first half of l. 1 in stanza 9. We also cite the line numbers were the text arranged in eight-line stanzas.

9.　Williams, 2011, p. 336.

10.　Williams, 2011, p. 338.

11.　Eska & Bruch, 2020, p. 327–329.

12.　Frost, 2019, p. 3.

Cornish syntax precisely because it is a more accurate – and, therefore, at times, a more literal, word-for-word or phrase-for-phrase – translation of an English text.

c. Three members of the Boson family – Nicholas, Thomas, & John – left Late Cornish texts from ca. 1660 to ca. 1730. They were not native speakers of the language, however, so one must be wary of English influence in the texts that they produced.

d. The Biblical translations of Wella Rowe,[13] which date from ca. 1690, are thought to represent some of the latest surviving works written or translated by a native speaker of Cornish. As translations, however, one must be cautious about his Cornish replicating the configuration of his exemplar, the King James version of the English Bible. There may be a bit of evidence that bears upon syntactic evolution in Cornish, however, in clauses in which the syntactic structures of Rowe's translation differ from those in the English exemplar.[14]

e. William Bodinar's letter to Daines Barrington, written 3 July 1776, is often credited as being the last text in the traditional Cornish corpus. It is worth noting, however, that Bodinar is not considered to have been a native speaker of Cornish because he, as described in his letter, learnt the language as a boy from older fishermen during expeditions out to sea.[15]

§5. In this paper, we focus upon William Bodinar's letter, of which Pool & Padel comment that '[i]t is of great interest as being the latest known piece of authentic Cornish writing before the expiry of the language *c.* 1800'.[16] Our goal is to attempt to determine, to the extent possible, how Cornish syntax had evolved up to the time when Cornish ceased to be spoken.

In their article, Pool prints the text of Bodinar's letter and provides historical context.[17] Padel provides some linguistic commentary.[18] We provide further philological and linguistic commentary and offer reasons to think that the clausal configuration of Cornish had shifted from V2 to SVO, presumably under the influence of English, as well as other observations upon Bodinar's knowledge of Cornish.

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13. Comprised only of Book III of Genesis, the ten commandments, and Books II and IV of Matthew.

14. Eska & Bruch, 2020, p. 330–331.

15. We note, however, that Padel (in Pool & Padel, 1975–1976, p. 235) comments that Bodinar's 'Cornish is authentic – better than that of John Boson some sixty years earlier'.

16. Pool & Padel, 1975–1976, p. 231.

17. Pool & Padel, 1975–1976, p. 231–234.

18. Pool & Padel, 1975–1976, p. 235–236.

The text of Bodinar's letter

§6. We provide here a transcription of the photograph of Bodinar's letter as reproduced by Pool & Padel:[19]

(3) 1. moushole July ye 3[d] 1776
2. Sir I understand you wants to Know my age
3. *Bluth vee Eue try Egence a pemp*
4. my age is three score and five
5. *Theara vee dean Bodjack an poscas*
             puscas
6. I am a poor fisher man
7. *me rig deskey Cornoack termen me vee mawe*
8. I learnt Cornish when I was a Boy
9. *me vee demore gen seara vee a pemp dean moy en Cock*
10. I have Ben to sea with my father and five other men in the Boat
11. *me rig scantlower clowes Eden ger sowsnack cowes en Cock*
12. and have not hard one word of English speek in the Boat
13. *rag sythen ware Bar*
14. for a week togeather
15. *na rig a vee Biscath gwellas lever Cornoack*
16. I never saw a Cornish Book
17. *me deskey Cornoack moas da more gen tees Coath*
18. I larnd Cornish going to sea with old men
19. *na ges moye vel pager po pemp en dreau nye*
20. there is not more then four or fiue in our town
21. *Ell Clapia Corno^ack leben*
22. Can talk Cornish now
23. *poble Coath pager Egance Blouth*
24. old people four score years old
25. *Cornoack Ewe oll neceaves gen poble younk*
26. Cornish is all forgot with young people
27. Sir I Can talk Cornish very well
28. but time will not par mit now to write great deal
29. as I am going to sea Every day
30. tho I am old I must go to sea if I will Eat Bread
31. we gits our living very hard
32. we Can not lay up money in store
33. by our Busness aga[i]nst old age
34. I hope you will be so good as to send somthing
35. to Drink your health

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19. Pool & Padel, 1975–1976, following p. 234.

36. I am Sir your Humble Servant
37. William Bodinar

Philological and linguistic commentary

§7. As Padel notes, though the Cornish lines are followed by their English transla-tions, Anglicisms in ll. 11 & 13 of the Cornish text suggest that the English text was composed first.[20] Our presentation provides the text on the first line, grammatical glossing on the second line, and Bodinar's English text on the third line, followed by our commentary.

§8. Line 3:

(4) *Bluth   vee   Eue   try   Egence   a   pemp*
    year-of-age 1.SG   COP.3.SG.PRES 3.MASC   20   &   5
    'My age is three score and five'

a. The configuration of this clause is consistent both with English – as seen in Bodinar's accompanying English text – and copular clauses in Middle and Late Cornish. Even in Middle Cornish, the 'short' form of the 3. singular present copula, *yv/ew*, – which corresponds to *eue* in Bodinar's letter – is typically preceded by a DP, adjectival complement, or an adverbial. This can be contrasted with the 'long' or locatival present tense form of *bos* 'be', which is never preceded by a subject DP in Late Cornish and which fre-quently – and unusually for Middle Cornish – appears in initial position in affirmative clauses. See comment (b) to l. 5 for further discussion.

b. As Padel notes, *Bluth vee* is the typical Late Cornish construction of noun + pronoun to indicate possession; thus MC *ow X > ow X vy > LC X vee*.[21] This loss of the clitic 1. sg. poss. pron. *ow* can be compared to the loss of the progressive particle *ow*, which occurs in the reduced form *a* or is lost alto-gether in Late Cornish texts.[22] The progressive particle does not appear at all in Bodinar's letter, although the phrase *moas da more gen tees Coath* in l. 17 is presumably intended to be understood as 'going to sea with old men', which would be introduced with *ow mos* 'going' in Middle Cornish. While monosyllabic Middle Cornish possessive pronouns – 1. sg. *ow*, 2. sg. *the*, 3. sg. masc. *y*, 3. sg. fem. (*h*)*y* – are often reduced to null in Late Cornish,[23] it

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20. In POOL & PADEL, 1975–1976, p. 235.
21. In POOL & PADEL, 1975–1976, p. 236.
22. In POOL & PADEL, 1975–1976, p. 236; see also GENDALL, 1991, p. 84, §31B.
23. GENDALL, 1991, p. 18, §6M describes this phenomenon in synchronic terms by stating that, in Late Cornish, '[p]ossession can also be expressed by … [a postposed pronoun] alone'.

is worth noting that the disyllabic plural possessive pronouns 1. pl. *agan*, 2. pl. *agas*, and 3. pl. *aga* are usually reduced to the monosyllabic forms *gun*, *goz*, *go*, respectively, in postvocalic position.[24]

c. Padel also notes that *bluth* is employed in this line to mean 'age', but more commonly means 'year of age'.[25] This usage of *bluth* seems ungrammatical, as noted by Loth and followed by Padel.[26]

§9. Line 5:

(5) *Theara   vee   dean   Bodjack   an   puscas*
    LOC-COP.1.SG.PRES 1.SG   man   poor   DEF   fish.PL
    'I am a poor fisher man'

a. Initial <th>- in *theara* originally belonged to the pre-vocalic variant of the ptcl. *y*, viz., *yth*. The <th> was reänalysed as belonging to the following vowel-initial verb, and medial /s/ > /r/ by rhoticism; thus, MC *yth esof* > LC *theara* with usual loss of a final fricative.

b. As noted in comment (a) to l. 3, the verbal form *theara* is an example of the 'long' or locatival 3. singular present form of the verb *bos* 'be'. As such, it is most typically encountered in clauses describing the physical location of an object (expressed via a PP or adverbial) or containing a present participle (since the sequence of long form of *bos* + present participle forms a periphrastic present or present progressive construction in Cornish). In this line, however, it is used as a copula to equate two DPs, the 1. singular subject *vee* and its complement *dean bodjack an puscas* 'a poor fisherman'. Normally, we might expect the 'short' form of *bos* – which appears in the 3. singular as *eue* in l. 3 – in such an instance, but Gendall notes that the '[p]resent Locative [long form]' may be used 'to describe a person's condition: this includes occupation, state of life or death, and social status,' adding that '[t]his tense is not used exclusively for these conditions, but there is a tendency to it' in Late Cornish, and citing a number of tokens of such usage, including this line from Bodinar's letter.[27] It may also be the case that in Late Cornish the distinction between the 'short' and 'long' forms of *bos* had begun to break down somewhat, such that the locatival form could be used in place of the usual copula. Another possibility is that, since Bodinar's intention seems to have been to translate Engl. 'I am a poor fisher man' with initial subject + verb + complement following the copula, the 'long' form might have been a more natural choice, since it places verb + subject at the beginning of the clause and allows the complement to follow these constituents. While the 'short' form of the copula in Middle Cornish

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24. GENDALL, 1991, p. 16 §6J.
25. In POOL & PADEL, 1975–1976, p. 236.
26. LOTH, 1898–1900, p. 228 n. 5; POOL & PADEL, 1975–1976, p. 236.
27. GENDALL, 1991, p. 42, §21B.

allows for the possibility of beginning a clause with a pronominal subject, this seems to have been done mainly to emphasise the subject, thus '*I* am a fisherman', while the more neutral – and natural – configuration is likely to have been complement + verb + subject. Starting the clause with the locatival form *theara vee*, therefore, enables Bodinar to maintain the relative order of subject and complement found in English, even if the V1 configuration does not correspond to English subject + verb.

c. *Bodjack* continues OC *bochodoc* gl. 'inops ł pauper' (*VC*, p. 137, §297), MC *bohosak* (*BK*, p. 80, l.773), pl. *bohosogyon* (*PA*, p. 14 §37.3ᵃ = l. 293) 'poor' with typical Late Cornish substitution of a fricative or affricate for Middle Cornish medial -<s>- and perhaps contraction of the two /ɔ/s as MC /x/ > /h/ > Ø.

d. The NP *dean bodjack an puscas* is noteworthy, since it suggests that the NP *dean an puscas* 'man of the fish' was the most usual or natural way for Bodinar to express Engl. 'fisherman'. Other Cornish writers differ: the Late Cornish writer – and presumed native speaker – Wella Rowe, for example, uses the agent noun *poscadors* (cf. Bret. *pesketaerien*) to translate 'fishermen' or 'fishers' in Matthew 4:18 & 19 (*KWR*, p. 6), and this presumably continues the OC form *piscadur* gl. 'piscator' (*VC*, p. 115, §234). It is particularly surprising that Bodinar, himself a fisherman, should not have had this lexeme in his active vocabulary, instead employing the phrase *dean an puscas* 'man of the fish', which seems a nonce coinage based upon an analysis of Engl. 'fisherman'. This suggests that, as a person who had learnt Cornish based upon (limited?) interaction with older native speakers, and who presumably had few opportunities to converse in Cornish by the time this letter was written in his old age, Bodinar may not have had as large an active vocabulary as earlier writers for whom Cornish was a native – or even a community – language.

§10. Line 7:

(6) *Me   rig   deskey   Cornoack   termen   me   vee   mawe*
    1.sg do.3.sg.pret learn.vn Cornish   time   1.sg cop.3.sg.pret boy
    '*I learnt Cornish when I was a Boy*'

a. The loss of the affirmative particle *a* before *rig* and *vee* is noteworthy. As Gendall remarks, the expected lenition of the following verb still occurs, even though the particle itself is absent.[28] We are inclined to agree with Padel that, for speakers of Late Cornish, 'the lenited form' of a conjugated verb 'was probably felt to be the radical'.[29] In other words, we suggest, speakers such as Bodinar may well have acquired the conjugated forms of verbs

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28. Gendall, 1991, p. 95, §34.
29. In Pool & Padel, 1975–1976, p. 236.

in their lenited forms and simply associated them with unlenited verbal
nouns. While this would likely have led to a greater perception of irregula-
rity in the verbal paradigms on the part of speakers – since the initial seg-
ments of the verbal noun, verbal adjective, and other related forms would
differ from those of the finite verb forms – it should be borne in mind that, to
judge from Bodinar's letter, he and speakers like him probably spoke a form
of Cornish that relied heavily on periphrastic expressions involving forms of
'be', 'do', and a handful of other common auxiliary verbs, thus significantly
reducing the number of paradigms that needed to be learnt.

b. The use of the auxiliary 'did' to construct a past tense is typical of Late
Cornish and is also well attested in Middle Cornish, e.gg.:

(7) a. Middle Cornish (*RD*, p. 100, l. 1324):
pan	*wruk*	*an*	*bara*	*terry*
when	do.3.SG.PRET	DEF	bread	break.VN
    'When he broke the bread …'

b. Late Cornish (*BF*, p. 15, §3):
Ea	*reeg*	*thoaz*	*da*	*chei*	*Teeack*
3.SG.MASC	do.3.SG.PRET	come.VN	to	house	farmer
    'He came to the house of a farmer.'

c. Padel notes the unusual use of *termen* as a complementiser.[30] *Termen*
   usually is a noun meaning 'time'. Presumably there was a transitional phase
   in which it was used as part of a phrase such as *y'n termen pan* … 'in the
   time when …' or even *y'n termen may* … 'in the time that …'. It is notewor-
   thy that Bodinar does not use it to introduce an embedded V1 clause, as is
   the norm in Middle Cornish (see §20), but rather a subject + verb + com-
   plement clause.
   Padel cites two Late Cornish tokens of *termen* employed similarly, both
   drawn from the works of the Boson family – recall that they were not native
   speakers of Cornish –, which may shed light upon its use by Bodinar.[31] In
   the earlier token, *termen* is employed with a second complementiser, *dr-*
   < MC *del* 'as':

(8) *LP*, p. 9:
Kennifer	*termen*	*drerany*	*moas*	*durt*	*pedden*	*an*	*wolas*	*do*	*sillan*
as-many-as	time	as-COP.PRES-1.PL	go.VN	from	Land's End			to	Scilly
    '… whenever we are/were going from Land's End to Scilly.'

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30. In POOL & PADEL, 1975–1976, p. 236.
31. In POOL & PADEL, 1975–1976, p. 236.

In the second token, from a letter written by John Boson to William Gwavas dated 5 April 1710, however, *termen* is employed to introduce a subject-initial clause, as it is in Bodinar's letter:

(9) *LP*, p. 46:

Gomar mab Japhet, mab Noah vo   an Den reg   clapia
G.   son J.   son N.   COP.3.SG.PRET DEF man do.3.SG.PRET speak.VN
kernuak en Termen an Tur   Babel vo   Derevalz
Cornish in time   DEF tower B.   COP.3.SG.PRET raise.V-ADJ
'Gomar son of Japhet, son of Noah, was the man who spoke Cornish when the Tower of Babel was raised.'

d. Also noteworthy is the use of 3. sg. pret. *vee* 'was' for what would likely have been impf. *o* or habit. impf. *vethe* in traditional Cornish. Could this be a sign of confusion about past tenses in Bodinar's Cornish? Or does it represent a nuanced choice on Bodinar's part to indicate – by using a preterite, rather than an imperfect, form – that the state 'when I was a boy' is no longer on-going and should be considered in a perfective sense? In any case, it is remarkable that the – originally preterite or perfect – form *vee* is the only past form of the copula that Bodinar employs in his letter, since the simple 3. sg. impf. *o* is common in other Late Cornish texts, where it may appear as *tho* with a prefixed ˌ<th>- derived from the ending of the ptcl. *y*, as discussed in comment (a) to l. 5 concerning *theara*.

§11. Line 9:

(10) *Me vee   demore gen seara vee a pemp dean moy*
1.SG COP.3.SG.PRET to-sea with father 1.SG & 5   man more
en   cock
in-DEF   boat
'I have Ben to Sea with my father and five other men in the Boat'

a. *Me vee* for 'I have been' evinces the loss of the perf. ptcl. *re* before *vee*. This is not surprising for Late Cornish, since this particle seems to have fallen out of use sometime during the sixteenth century. Gendall 1991: 80 §30J observes that, in Late Cornish, the preterite can be used with perfect meaning;[32] such a usage may well occur, in part, because the *re* particle, one of whose only functions is to distinguish the perfect from the preterite, was no longer employed in the language. The use of the preterite, not the imperfect, – as we might expect for a repeated or habitual action in the past – is somewhat surprising, but in this line may represent a literal translation

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32. GENDALL, 1991, p. 80, §30J.

of the English perfect 'I have be[e]n' in the accompanying English text,[33] particularly if Padel is correct in his suggestion that 'the letter was composed in English' and then translated, perhaps at times word by word, into Cornish.[34]

b. Padel notes the fortition of /ð/ > /d/ in the prep. 'to'.[35] This seems to be a Late Cornish change;[36] cf. MC *the*. It is odd because Cornish originally had initial /d/- in this preposition; N.B. that Breton still has *da*.

c. Padel notes the lack of lenition of *more* 'sea' after *de*.[37] This could be because it continues *the'n mor* 'to the sea'.

d. The translation of ambiguous *en* as 'in the' is based upon Bodinar's English.

§12. Line 11:

(11) *me   rig   scantlower clowes Eden ger   sowsnack cowes*
      1.SG   do.3.SG.PRET hardly   hear.VN 1   word   English   speak.VN
      en   cock
      in-DEF   boat
      'and have not hard one word of English speak in the Boat'

a. It is somewhat surprising that the auxiliary verb is in the preterite, rather than the imperfect, tense, which is expected when indicating a habitual or repeated action in the past. This usage suggests English influence, as it does not distinguish these two forms; however, as noted in comment (a) to l. 9, this may be an instance in which Bodinar uses a preterite form to translate English perfect 'have not h[e]ard'.

b. Padel notes that the adverb *scantlower* 'hardly' is twice attested in *Beunans Meriasek* (ca. 1504).[38] As in these Middle Cornish tokens, Bodinar's Cornish uses *scantlower* in an affirmative sentence; however, both of the attestations in *Beunans Meriasek* are found in clauses with the auxiliary verb *gallos* 'be able', thus conveying the meaning 'can hardly' or 'could hardly'. In Bodinar's letter, the only auxiliary verb employed is *rig* 'did', which is used to create a preterite or perfect tense. The two attested tokens of this adverb in *Beunans Meriasek* occur in adverb + verb + subject + object clauses in

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33. Cf. *BF*, p. 16, §14 ≡ *Pòlîa ve ti mar bèl* (*AB*, p. 252, §14 = *BF*, p. 17, §14):

(a) *Po   leea   ve   chee   mar bel*
     Which   place   COP.3.SG.PRET 2.SG   so   long
     'Where have you been (for) so long?

Lhuyd translates this sentence with the Welsh preterite as *Ple a bŷost tî ỷr hôɭ amser ẏmma?*
34. In POOL & PADEL, 1975–1976, p. 235.
35. In POOL & PADEL, 1975–1976, p. 235.
36. It is not mentioned by WMFFRE, 1998, GEORGE, 2010, or WILLIAMS, 2011.
37. In POOL & PADEL, 1975–1976, p. 236.
38. In POOL & PADEL, 1975–1976, p. 236.

which the verbal noun *kerthes* 'walk' functions as the syntactic object of the auxiliary verb *gallos* 'be able':

(12) a. *BM*, p. 32, l. 543:

schanlour	*y*	*halla*	*kerthes*
scarcely	AFF	be-able.1.SG.PRES	walk.VN

'Scarcely can I walk.'

b. *BM*, p. 258, ll. 4459–4460:

scantlor	*y*	*hylly*			
scarcely	AFF	be-able.3.SG.IMPF			
trewythyov	*kerthes*	*a*	*'y*	*saeff*
at-times	walk.VN	from	3.SG.POSS	stand.VN

'Scarcely could he / walk upright at times'

In both clauses, *schanlour / scantlor* is placed before the particle *y*, such that the auxiliary verb can be seen as occupying second position followed by the object.[39] Bodinar's letter, by contrast, shows subject + verb + object configuration, as would be expected in English. In Bodinar's letter, *scantlower* intervenes between the auxiliary verb and the verbal noun, and is absent from the English text, demonstrating that the Cornish in this line is not a word-for-word translation[40] and, thus, implying a fair degree of Cornish fluency on Bodinar's part – although see comment (d) to l. 5 and comment (d) to l. 7, which suggest that his facility with the language may, nonetheless, have been limited compared to that of native speakers from the previous century.

§13. Line 13:

(13) *rag   sythen   ware bar*
     for   week   together
     'for a week togeather'

a. The writing of *ware bar* as two words – cf. MC *warbarth* at, e.gg., *RD*, p. 100, l. 1317 & *BM*, p. 242, l. 4154 – perhaps is due to the fact that the stress

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39. Alternatively, both tokens can be interpreted as embedded clauses linked to the root clause via the *y* particle, so that the speaker is, in effect, saying 'such and such will happen, (so) that X can scarcely walk.' Should these represent embedded clauses, it is important to note that, in both instances, the adverb 'hardly' has been moved to the left of the preverbal particle, but this is a situation that occurs frequently in Middle Cornish verse, and seems to have been done for poetic effect or emphasis, since, in many instances – as in (12a), though not (12b)! –, there is no clear need to move it for reasons of metre or rhyme.

40. In addition, it should be noted that, while the English text lacks an overt subject and contains a negated verb – 'have not h[e]ard' –, the equivalent Cornish phrase is an independent clause, not linked to the previous clause by a connective, and uses an affirmative verb – *me rig Scantlower clowes* 'I (have) scarcely heard'.

falls upon the second element.[41] The orthographic final -<e> of *ware* is unexpected.[42]

   b. Padel describes this line as an 'Anglicism', implying that it is calqued upon the English text 'For a week togeather', which it translates in an essentially word-for-word fashion.[43] However, there are tokens in Middle Cornish in which the prep. *rag* 'for' is used in the English sense of 'for (a given length of time)'. For example, in both *Beunans Meriasek* and *Gwreans an bys*, the PP *rag nefre* occurs in the meaning 'for ever', e.gg.:

(14) a. *BM*, p. 251, ll. 4302–4305:
     Ov   gol   a   veth   suer
     1.SG.POSS festival AFF COP.3.SG.CONS-PRES surely
        in   mes   metheven
        in   month   June
     an   kynsa   guener
     DEF   1.ORD   Friday
        rag   nefre   certen
        for   never.FUT   certainly
     'My festival shall be surely / in the month of June, / the first Friday, / for ever certainly.'

   b. *GB*, p. 202, l. 2530:
     Ha   thethe   worthya   rag   nefra
     &   2.SG.POSS   worship.VN   for   ever.FUT
     '… and (we shall) worship you for ever.'

There are also some tokens in which *warbarth* 'together' appears to be employed with a meaning closer to Engl. 'altogether', e.g.:

(15) *BK*, p. 15, ll. 138–140:
     neb   a   rug   nef
     INDEF   AFF   make.3.SG.PRET   heaven
        ha   mmyns   us   gwrys
        &   all-that COP.PRES.REL   make.V-ADJ
          i   'n   bys   warbarth
          in   DEF   world   altogether
     '… who made heaven / and all that which is created / in the world altogether.'

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41. We note that *war barth* is written as two words at *GB*, p. 10, l. 112.

42. We note that the addition of final orthographic -<e> is not uncommon commencing with *Gwreans an bys*, e.g., *marowe* at *GB*, p. 128, l. 1568, rhyming with *assow* 'ribs' beside *marow* at *GB*, p. 128, l. 1572.

43. In POOL & PADEL, 1975–1976, p. 235.

This suggests that this line may, in fact, be interpreted as conforming to the standards of Cornish usage established in Middle Cornish texts – which themselves incorporate a number of English loanwords and idiomatic phrases derived from contemporary English usage.

§13. Line 15:

(16) *na   rig   a   vee Biscath   gwellas lever Cornoack*
     NEG do.3.SG.PRET ? 1.SG never.PRET see.VN   book Cornish
     'I never Saw a Cornish Book'

    a. As noted by Padel, *na* is generalised as the negator in all syntactic construc-tions in Late Cornish.[44]
    b. The *a* in *rig a vee* is unexplained. It does not continue any known construc-tion in Middle Cornish, unless it represents part of the 'emphatic' 1. singu-lar clitic pron. *evy*, or an overgeneralisation of 1. sg. pres. *-af > -a*.[45]
    c. *Biscath* is the correct form of 'never' employed with past tense verbs in Cornish; the other form is *nefre*, which is used with the present/future tense. Note again the position of the adverb between the subject and the verbal noun.

§14. Line 17:

(17) *me   deskey   Cornoack moas da more gen tees   Coath*
     1.SG learn.VN Cornish go.VN to sea with man.PL old
     'I larnd Cornish going to sea with old men'

    a. The absence of the auxiliary verb *rig* after *me – deskey* is a verbal noun – is distinctly odd. Perhaps this is an oversight or copying error by Bodinar? Padel seems to think so and we are inclined to agree.[46]
    b. Padel notes that the progressive particle *a* < MC *ow* is missing before *moas*;[47] as discussed in comment (b) to l. 3, however, Gendall observes that such an omission is common in Late Cornish,[48] e.g:

44. In POOL & PADEL, 1975–1976, p. 236.
45. Forms such as *ow bosa(f)* 'my being' (*ow* 'my' + *bos* 'be' + 1. sg. *-af*) are attested as early as the *Ordinalia*, e.g., *PC*, p. 311, l. 1120.
46. In POOL & PADEL, 1975–1976, p. 235.
47. In POOL & PADEL, 1975–1976, p. 236.
48. GENDALL, 1991, p. 84, §31B.

(18) Wella Rowe, Matthew 4:21 (*KWR*, p. 6):

Jamez   mâb   Zebde,   ha   Jowan   e   broder   en   goral   gen   Zebde go

J.   son   Z.   &   J.   3.SG.POSS   brother   in   ship   with   Z . 3.PL.POSS

zeerah   owna   go   rôza

father   mend.VN   3.PL.POSS   net.PL

'James, son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, in a ship with Zebedee, their father, mending their nets.'

c. *Coath* is not lenited after masc. pl. *tees*, but this may be due to the usual suppression of lenition of voiceless stops after a preceding -/s/,[49] so this is not clear evidence that Bodinar did not consistently observe the traditional mutation rules of Cornish.

§15. Line 19:

(19) *na   ges   moye   vel   pager   po   pemp   en   dreau   nye*
      NEG   COP.3.SG.PRES.INDEF   more   than   4   or   5   in   town   1.PL
      'there is not more than four or fiue in our town'

a. The original final -<g> of *nag*, the prevocalic form of the negator in Middle Cornish, has been reänalysed as belonging to the following vowel-initial verb, hence *ges < -g + eus*.

b. Padel notes that *vel* in this line has taken on the meaning 'than',[50] although in Middle Cornish it is generally used to mean 'as' in equative comparisons,[51] e.g.:

(20) *RD*, p. 170, l. 2274:
      kyn   fo   mar   pos   avel   men
      though   COP.3.SG.PRES.SUBJ   as   heavy   as   stone
      '… though it be as heavy as stone.'

c. *Dreau nye* is another token of the construction of noun + pronoun to indicate possession; thus MC *agan tre* > *agan tre ny* > LC *tre nye*. Padel suggests that the lenited initial of *dreau* 'is probably fossilised, from the adverbial usage perhaps'.[52] Another possible explanation for the apparently fixed lenition in *en dreau nye* is because this feminine noun is usually encountered with a preceding

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49. GENDALL, 1991, p. 13, §6C. It is possible that 'man' may have ended in -/z/, at least to judge from Lhuyd's transcript of it as *Tîz*.
50. GENDALL, 1991, p. 27, §10C, notes that this development is the norm in Late Cornish.
51. In POOL & PADEL, 1975–1976, p. 236.
52. In POOL & PADEL, 1975–1976, p. 236.

article which triggers lenition. The shift from preposed possessive pronoun in Middle Cornish to possession being indicated by a postposed pronoun in Late Cornish is discussed in comment (b) to l. 3, and is also noted by Padel.[53] Gendall observes that, in Late Cornish, the postposed pronoun may sometimes be 'reinforced by the Definite Article (placed before [the noun])'.[54] This Late Cornish usage provides an interesting parallel with the construction used for demonstratives in both Middle and Late Cornish, in which the noun is preceded by the definite article and followed by a clitic – =*ma* 'here' or =*na* 'there' – so that the Middle Cornish equivalent of Engl. 'this town' and 'that town' would be *an dre ma* and *an dre na*. The form *en* is ambiguous in Late Cornish and can be interpreted as either the preposition 'in' with no following article, or as a contraction of *en* 'in' + the definite article *an*. Under the first analysis, the initial <d>- in *dreau* would be best understood a token of 'fossilised' lenition, and not evidence that Bodinar was actively following traditional Cornish mutation rules; under the second analysis, by contrast, the lenition of the initial consonant of *dreau* would presumably have been triggered by the definite article acting on a feminine singular noun, as in Middle Cornish and other Insular Celtic languages, implying that this rule – and the distinction between masculine and feminine nouns – was still part of Bodinar's Cornish. Regrettably, though, the evidence from this phrase is unclear, and, as Padel notes, the other instances in the letter in which words appear to have undergone lenition all involve conjugated verbs, for which, in the final stages of Late Cornish, 'the lenited form was probably felt to be the radical'.[55]

Padel speculates that orthographical final -<u> could represent either the fricative -/v/ (cf. W. *tref*) or the approximant -/w/, either of which could have been the result of Breton influence, particularly as the original final fricative – preserved in Welsh and Breton – appears to have been lost in the singular in Cornish, viz., *tre*, although it is preserved in the Middle Cornish plural, viz., *trefov / trevow*.

d. The use of 'there is not' for Corn. *na ges* perhaps is due to Cornish interference, since Cornish employs a singular verb. However, such usage is not uncommon in numerous dialects of English.

§16. Line 21:

(21) *Ell   Clapia   Corno[a]ck   leben*
be-able.3.SG.PRES   talk.VN   Cornish   now
'Can talk Cornish now'

a. The rel. ptcl. *a* is missing at the beginning of this clause, and one must be supplied to make sense of the text. As mentioned in comment (c) to l. 19,

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53. In Pool & Padel, 1975–1976, p. 236.
54. Gendall, 1991, p. 18, §6M.
55. In Pool & Padel, 1975–1976, p. 236.

the lenition normally caused by the relative particle is preserved in the verb form *ell* 'be able' (cf. MC *a yll* from *a* + *gyll*), which may – like other common auxiliary verbs – have become permanently lenited in Bodinar's Cornish. It is also worth noting that both the Cornish and the English texts lack an overt relative pronoun/particle ('who' or 'that' in English; the rel. ptcl. *a* in Cornish), so it may well be that the absence of the particle in the Cornish text is after the English text.

§17. Line 23:

(22) *poble   Coath   pager   Egance   Blouth*
     people   old   4   20   year-of-age
     'old people four score years old'

   a. Padel notes the lack of lenition of the *Coath* 'old' following the feminine noun *poble* 'people'.[56] This is not an environment in which lenition of a following adjective would normally be blocked, as *poble* 'people' ends in a sonorant.
   b. In this line, unlike in l. 3, *Blouth* has its usual meaning, 'year of age'.

§18. Line 25:

(23) *Cornoack   Ewe   oll   neceaves   gen   poble   younk*
     Cornish   COP.3.SG.PRES   all   forget.V-ADJ by   people   young
     'Cornish is all forgot with young people'

   a. Padel notes the metathesis of *neceaves* ← *ankevys*,[57] e.gg., *BK*, p. 165, l. 1609 & *GB*, p. 110, l. 1346.
   b. It is very interesting that Bodinar correctly uses the preposition *gen < gans* as the equivalent of Engl. *by* – as also in Welsh and Breton –, but translates it 'literally' using the more common meaning of *gen*, viz., 'with' (cf. ll. 9 & 17), in his English version of the text.

## Configurational syntax commentary

§19. The loss of the affirmative particle *a* in ll. 7 (*me rig* & *me vee*), 9 (*me vee*), and 11 (*me rig*) and the perfective particle *re* in l. 9 (*me vee*) removes significant evidence for language learners of V2 configuration. Since it is always the subject that precedes

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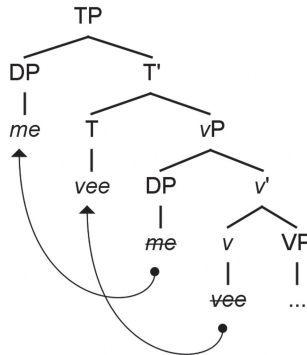56. In Pool & Padel, 1975–1976, p. 236.
57. In Pool & Padel, 1975–1976, p. 235.

the verb in Bodinar's letter, this phonological change would have allowed language learners to construct SVO configuration, thus (a) V2 → (b) SVO:

(24) a.
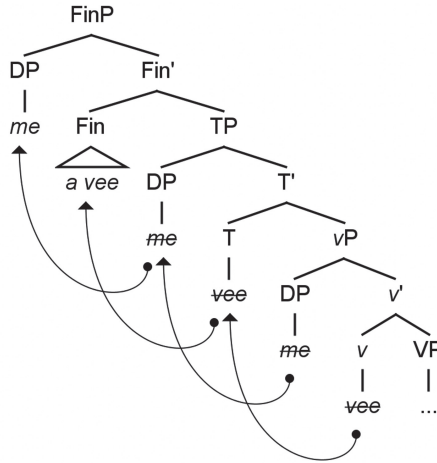
b.

§20. Such a conclusion is also supported by the embedded clause in l. 7, *termen me vee mawe*, which displays SVO configuration after the complementiser *termen*:

(25) | *Me* | *rig* | *deskey* | *Cornoack* | *termen* | *me* | *vee* | *mawe* |
|------|-------|---------|-----------|----------|------|------|--------|
| 1.SG | do.3.SG.PRET | learn.VN | Cornish | time | 1.SG | COP.3.SG.PRET | boy |

'*I learnt Cornish when I was a Boy*'

In Middle Cornish, like Middle Welsh and Middle Breton, while root clauses are V2, embedded clauses are always V1, e.g.:[58]

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58. The embedded clause is fronted in this token.

(26) *OM*, p. 64, ll. 845–846:

   Pan *vo*   *tryddyth* *tremenys*
   when COP.3.SG.PRES.SUBJ 3-days pass.V-ADJ
    ty *a* *thascor*   *the*   *enef*
    2.SG AFF return.3.SG.PRES 2.SG.POSS soul
   'When three days are gone / thou wilt give up thy soul.'

Summary remarks

§21. It seems clear that William Bodinar possessed a good knowledge of Late Cornish largely consistent with what we know of the language in its latest stage. Though there is some reason to think that the Cornish text of his letter may largely have been translated from the English text, there are clear signs that it was not a simple word-for-word translation, e.gg., the non-literal translation in l. 11 and the correct use of the prep. *gen* consistent with Welsh and Breton usage in l. 25. But there are also indications that Bodinar's control of Cornish may not have been of a fluent level, in lexis, e.gg., in the ungrammatical use of *Bluth* in l. 3 – though not in l. 23! – and the coinage of *dean bodjack an puscas* in l. 5 in preference to the native form. In syntax, his positioning of the subject before the complement in l. 5 and use of SVO configuration in an embedded clause in l. 7 could suggest that he was influenced by the grammar of the English text. It seems somewhat more likely to us, however, that these are indications that the syntax of Late Cornish had been influenced by English in view of his obvious control of Cornish grammar in other aspects of his letter.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB: *Archæologica Britannica* i, *Glossography*; see Lhuyd, 1707.

BF: see Padel, 1975.

BK: *Bewnans Ke*; see Thomas & Williams, 2007.

BM: *Beunans Meriasek*; see Stokes, 1872.

GB: *Gwreans an bys*; see Neuss, 1983.

KWR: see Lyon, 1998.

OM: *Ordinale de origine mundi*; see Norris, 1859, i, p. 1–219.

PA: *Pascon agan Arluth*; see Stokes, 1860–1861.

PC: *Passio domini nostri Jhesu Christi*; see Norris, 1859, i, p. 221–479.

RD: *Ordinale de resurrexione domini nostri Jhesu Christi*; see Norris 1859, ii, p. 1–216.

VC: *Vocabularium Cornicum*; see Graves, 1962.

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