

ON THE (NON)ISOMORPHISM OF ROMANCE
DEFINITE ARTICLES AND CLITIC PRONOUNS: A
DIACHRONIC PERSPECTIVE*

JUDY B. BERNSTEIN
WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY

FRANCISCO ORDÓÑEZ
STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY

FRANCESC ROCA
UNIVERSITAT DE GIRONA

ABSTRACT The observed isomorphism of Romance definite articles and 3rd person clitic pronouns, both typically *l*-forms descended from Latin *ILLE*, suggests a shared syntactic structure (Uriagereka 1995, Roca 1996). Less-studied Romance varieties such as Balearic Catalan, which displays *s*-articles descended from Latin *IPSE* as well as *ILLE*-derived 3rd person clitics, invite further consideration. The historical development, distribution, and function of the forms are accommodated via a multilayered structure for DP, one that encodes different features in a higher DP projection (for *IPSE*-derived *s*-articles) than in a lower one (for *ILLE*-derived *l*-clitics). Properties of these forms in the modern languages can be traced back to their Latin ancestors (Vincent 1997, Ledgeway 2012). In the uniform Romance languages (*l*-forms for articles and clitics), the same multilayered approach applies, though the evidence is masked.

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1 INTRODUCTION: ROMANCE ARTICLES AND CLITIC PRONOUNS

Romance definite articles and accusative 3rd person clitic pronouns (both descended from Latin *ILLE*) are typically isomorphic, as shown in the paradigms in (1) and the examples in (2)–(3). Examples (2 a) and (3 a) illustrate definite articles and (2 b) and (3 b) illustrate the isomorphic clitics.

(1)	<u>definite articles</u>		<u>clitic pronouns</u>	
	<i>el, la, los, las</i>	↔	<i>lo, la, los, las</i>	Spanish
	<i>el/lo, la, els/los, les</i>	↔	<i>el/lo, la, els/los, les</i>	Catalan
	<i>le, la, les</i>	↔	<i>le, la, les</i>	French
	<i>o, a, os, as</i>	↔	<i>o, a, os, as</i>	Portuguese
(2)	a.	<i>La fille est arrivée tard.</i>		French
		'The girl arrived late.'		
	b.	Je <i>la</i> vois.		
		'I see her .'		
(3)	a.	<i>Els nois han arribat tard.</i>		Catalan
		'The boys arrived late.'		
	b.	<i>Els hem vist.</i>		
		'We saw them .'		

This isomorphism is no accident, and several authors have proposed that the correspondence points to a shared syntactic structure, both elements corresponding to the same D head (e.g., Uriagereka 1995, Roca 1996).

In this paper we focus on Romance varieties that do not display the usual isomorphism of definite articles and clitic pronouns. As it turns out, all Romance languages we are aware of display clitics that developed from Latin *ILLE*. The same is not true for the definite articles. For example, Sardinian displays definite articles descended from Latin *IPSE*. The definite article and clitic paradigms for both languages are shown in (4); examples (5 a) and (6 a) illustrate definite articles in their syntactic contexts and (5 b) and (6 b) clitic pronouns in theirs.

- (4) definite articles \leftrightarrow clitic pronouns
su, sa, sos, sas \leftrightarrow *lu, la, los, las* Sardinian
*es/so, sa, es/sos, ses*¹ Balearic Catalan
el/lo, la, els/los, les \leftrightarrow *el/lo, la, els/los, les*
- (5) a. *A connoskes **su** babbu de Maria?* Sardinian
 ‘You know **the** father of Maria’ (Jones 1993: 34)
 b. **Lu** piket!
 ‘Take **it!**’ (Jones 1993: 28)
- (6) a. ***Sa** muntanya vs. **la** muntanya.* Balearic Catalan
 ‘**the** mountain’ (specific) vs. ‘**the** mountain’ (non-specific)
 b. **L’he** vista.
 ‘I saw **her.**’

In this paper we explore the isomorphism, as well as its absence, between Romance definite articles and clitic pronouns. In section 2, we trace the historical development of definite articles and accusative clitic pronouns in Old French, Old Sardinian and Old Catalan and compare these with the patterns in the present-day varieties. In section 3, we take up the issue of the relationship between Latin demonstrative *ILLE* and the clitics and definite articles that developed from it, a path that is consistent across the Romance languages. We compare this to the relationship between *IPSE* and the definite article that developed from it. Building on the articulated DP structure of Bernstein, Ordóñez & Roca (2021), we consider interpretive differences between forms in both the diachronic and synchronic data. We adopt an articulated DP structure that accommodates the range of synchronic and diachronic facts we have examined. We offer some concluding remarks in section 4.

2 DETERMINERS AND CLITICS AND THEIR EVOLUTION FROM LATIN TO ROMANCE

Clitic pronouns and definite articles are two of the most important grammatical features that distinguish Latin from Romance languages. Latin lacked these two grammatical forms that are now present in all Romance languages.

¹ The masculine forms *so* and *sos* are only used after the preposition *amb* ‘with’): *amb so càvec* (‘with the hoe’), *amb sos cavalls* (‘with the horses’). These forms are not general to Balearic Catalan: they are used mainly in Ibiza and in some areas of Mallorca, though not in Palma (see Veny 1999: 71–72; Veny & Massanell 2015: 193).

The definite article forms and the non-reflexive third person clitic pronouns have in common the fact that they originate from Latin pronouns. The distal demonstrative pronoun *ILLE* yielded the clitic pronouns and the definite *l*-article (*el, le, la*, etc.) of most Romance languages; the originally emphatic pronoun *IPSE* yielded the definite *s*-article (*es, su, sa*, etc.) that we find today in Sardinian and in some Catalan dialects, and that formerly was also present in linguistic varieties (e.g., Occitan, Gascon, Sicilian) of the southern Romania (see [Vincent 1997](#), [Ledgeway 2012](#), [Aebischer 1948](#), among others).

Both the accusative clitic pronoun (*l*-forms) and the definite determiner (*l*-forms and *s*-forms) were present in early stages of Romance languages. However, the development in the use of each element presents an asymmetry: while the use of clitic pronouns has remained essentially the same from an interpretative point of view, the use of the definite article has undergone a remarkable evolution, progressively extending to new contexts ([Roberts 2019](#)) and, consequently, encoding different semantic and pragmatic values. In addition, while definite determiners had two sources in Latin, *ILLE* and *IPSE*, Romance clitics derive only from *ILLE*.

In section 2.1 we discuss the development of the determiners and in section 2.2 we discuss the development of the clitic pronouns.

2.1 *ILLE-* and *IPSE-*derived determiners

ILLE in classical Latin was a demonstrative and *IPSE* was an emphatic pronoun. Both *ILLE* and *IPSE* underwent a process of grammaticalization ([van Gelderen 2011](#), among others) involving semantic, morphological, and phonological simplification and reduction that led to the modern *l*-articles in (7) and *s*-articles in (8):

- | | | | | | |
|-----|----|--|---|----------------------------------|-----------|
| (7) | a. | <i>ille</i>
(pronoun) | > | <i>l</i> -
(definite article) | |
| | b. | <i>el</i> <i>niño</i>
the.M boy | | | Spanish |
| (8) | a. | <i>ipse</i>
(emphatic pronoun) | > | <i>s</i> -
(definite article) | |
| | b. | <i>su</i> <i>babbu de Maria</i>
the.M father of Maria | | | Sardinian |

Examples of *ILLE* and *IPSE* can be found in Late Latin in the *Peregrinatio Aethiopiae*. In this text *ILLE* and *IPSE* appear internal to a DP. In the example below, [Ledgeway \(2012: 92\)](#) points out that *illam montis* is most likely translated with

a demonstrative, ‘that mount’, and *ipsa summitate* is most likely translated as ‘that-very summit’, with an emphatic value:

- (9) *ergo quarta pervenimus in summitatem illam* Late Latin
 thus fourth arrived.1PL in summit that.F
montis Dei sancti Syna, ubi data est lex (...)
 mount God saint Sinai where given is law
persubissemus in ipsa summitate
 reach.1PL in that-very.F summit
 ‘The fourth day we arrived at that summit of Mount Sinai, where law
 is given (...) we reached that very summit.’
 (*Peregrinatio Aetherae*; 4th–5th c.)

We assume that the examples in which *IPSE* and *ILLE* modify a noun, as in (9) above, represent an intermediate stage of these demonstrative pronouns on the path to becoming determiners. This is schematized as follows:

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|
| <i>IPSE</i>
(emphatic pronoun) | → <i>IPSE</i>
(noun modifier) | → <i>IPSE</i> | Late/Medieval Latin
(article) |
| <i>ILLE</i>
(deictic pronoun) | → <i>ILLE</i>
(noun modifier) | → <i>ILLE</i> | Late/Medieval Latin
(article) |

The path to definite article status included a change in the featural character of the forms. While *IPSE* lost its emphatic value, *ILLE* lost its deictic one in the transition to Medieval Romance. Some Medieval Romance languages followed the path of an *ILLE*-derived article, such as French, Italian and Spanish; others followed the path of an *IPSE*-derived article, such as Sardinian; and others maintained a mixed system, like Medieval Catalan. Both *ILLE* and *IPSE* forms retained their anaphoric value and were well-suited to becoming determiners. The development of the forms is schematized here in terms of formal features:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| (10) <i>IPSE</i> (Latin) | → | <i>s-</i> article (Medieval Romance) |
| [+anaphoric, +emphatic] | | [+anaphoric] |
| <i>ILLE</i> (Latin) | → | <i>l-</i> article (Medieval Romance) |
| [+anaphoric, +deictic] | | [+anaphoric] |

As a result of this evolution and as we show in (11)–(13) below, French became a uniform *l*-article language, Sardinian a uniform *s*-article language, and Catalan a language where *s*-articles and *l*-articles competed during the medieval period and still survive with different distributions in some dialects

(see [Ledgeway 2012: 100–105](#)):²

- (11) a. *Elle no'nt eskoltet les mals conseliers* Old French
 she not listened the.M.PL bad.PL counselors
 'She didn't listen to the villains who advised her.'
 (*Cantilène de Sainte-Eulalie*, 5; 9th c.)
- b. *Niule cose non la pouret omque pleier / la polle*
 none thing not her could ever bend the.F girl
sempre non amast lo Deo menestier
 always not love-SUBJ3SG the.M God.GEN service
 'Nothing could ever deter the girl from always loving the
 service of God.' (*Cantilène de Sainte-Eulalie*, 9-10; 9th c.)
 'Nothing could ever persuade the girl not to continually love
 the service of God.' [[Ayres-Bennett \(1996: 32\)](#) translation]
- (12) a. *et levate vois sas filias:* Old Sardinian
 and take.2PL you.2PL the.F.PL daughters
Furata integra et ambos sos filios
 Furata whole and both.M.PL the.M.PL sons
 'And you, take his daughters: Furata entirely and both her sons.'
 (*CSNT*, 164.4; 12th c.)
- b. *ca cun liuertu suo l'ockisit su seruu*
 since with freedman his him-killed.3SG the.M servant
uostru su seruu meu
 your the.M servant mine
 'since with his freedman my servant killed your servant'
 (*CSPS*, 110; 11th–13th c.)
- (13) a. *Met.se en convenenza ab zos cavalers* Old Catalan
 put.REFL in agreement with the.M.PL knights
e ab los homes
 and with the.M.PL men
 'He gets into an agreement with the knights and the men.'
 (*Greuges dels homes de Sant Pere Graudescale*; 12th c.)

² The Old Sardinian examples are taken from [Cennamo, Cicone & Andriani \(2022\)](#) and belong to three documents of two different varieties: *Condaghe di San Pietro di Silki* (*CSPS*) from the 11th–13th c. and *Condaghe di San Nicola di Trullas* (*CSNT*) from the 12th c. in the case of Old Logudorese, and *Condaghe di Santa Maria di Bonarcado* (*CSMB*) from the 12th c. in the case of Old Arborese. All the Old Catalan examples are from documents contained in the *Corpus Informatizat del Català Antic* (*CICA*).

- b. *des mas d'en Ramon de sa Scara sa*
of.the.M farm of-ART Ramon of the.F Scara the.F
jova (...) *del mas de Pere de sa Guardia*
plow.duty of.the.M farm of Pere of the.F Guardia
sa jova
the.F plow.duty
‘from Ramon de sa Scara’s farm, the plow duty (...) from Pere
de sa Guardia’s farm, the duty of plowing’
(Capbreu de Castellbisbal; 12th c.)

In Old Romance the definite article was not systematically present in all the contexts where it is used today. Vincent (1997: 161–162) pointed out that, initially, the use of the article was favored in contexts such as the subject position and in establishing anaphoric relations (repeated items, discourse continuity). Dufresne, Tremblay & Déchaine (2018: 27) identify additional factors favoring bare nouns Old French: singularity, mass/abstract nouns, generic nouns and indefiniteness. In the above examples the definite article displays a more advanced stage where it can introduce nominal expressions that perform other syntactic functions (direct object, complement of preposition) and denote entities interpreted as definite in the context (with no need of an anaphoric relation), but it is not until the end of the medieval period that the definite article is consolidated in all the syntactic positions and semantic functions that characterize it now. The following examples show that the definite article was absent in contexts where it would generally be required today:³

- (14) a. *Voldrent la faire diaule servir* Old French
wanted.3PL her make devil serve
‘They wanted to make her serve the devil.’ (Cantilène de
Sainte-Eulalie, 4; 9th c.)
- b. *Li rois ama tant verité que n’is aus*
the king liked so-much truth that not-even the
Sarrazins...
Sarrazins...
‘The king liked the truth so much that not-even the Sarrazins...’
(Joinville; 13th c.)
- c. *Soz ciel n’at home qui puisset conforter.*
under heaven not-has man that can comfort
‘There is no man under heaven who can comfort.’
(Alexis; 11th c.)

³ The original source of the Old French examples in (14b,c) was Anglade (1958: 159,177).

- (15) a. *Ego deili ad iss a ccoda de* Old Sardinian
 I gave-him to him DOM canyon of
clesia et isse deitimi a mimi a balle Savina
 church and he gave-me to me DOM valley Savina
 ‘I gave him the canyon of the church and he gave me the Savina
 valley.’ (CSPS, 276.1-3; 11th-13th c.)
- b. *Judice levedi a Ciçella et clesia ad Stephane*
 judge took.3SG DOM Ciçella and Church DOM Stephane
 ‘And the judge took Ciçella and the Church (took) Stephane.’
 (CSMB, 89.7; 12th)
- c. *Posit ad su prideru d’Arriora a kertare,*
 put.PST.3SG DOM the priest of-Arriora to quarrel.INF
donnu Trogodori Coco, in corona de sinodu
 sir Trogodori Coco in assembly of synod
 ‘(On his behalf he) put the priest of Arriora, sir Trogodori Coco,
 to (lead the) quarrel at the assembly of the church council.’
 (CSMB, 178; 12th)
- (16) a. *Totes qüestions que seran entre • ls* Old Catalan
 all issues that be.FUT.3PL between-the.M.PL
habitadors de la ciutat sien ménades en lochs
 inhabitants of the.F city be.SUBJ.3PL taken in places
públics (...) e no ve[n]drets a casa de cort
 public and not come.FUT.2SG to house of court
ne de battle
 nor of major
 ‘All the disagreements between the inhabitants of the city
 should be dealt with in public places (...) and shall not come to
 the house of the court nor to the house of the major.’
 (Carta de franquesa, 119; 13th c.)
- b. *...ni quant o[m] póc creure que Déus*
 nor however much man can believe that God
fos home ni que verge après l’enfantament
 be.SUBJ.3SG man nor that virgin after the-delivery
estegués verge
 be.SUBJ.3SG virgin
 ‘...nor how many men can believe that God was a man nor that
 the Virgin remained a virgin after giving birth.’
 (Vides de Sants Rosselloneses, 71; 13th c.)

- c. *E adoncs Sen Gregori, per revelacion de Sant Esperit,*
 and then Saint Gregory by revelation of Holy Spirit
conec que diable s'era mès en él
 knew that devil REFL-was put in him
 'And, because of a revelation of the Holy Spirit, St. Gregory
 knew that the devil had gotten inside him.'
 (*Vides de Sants Rosselloneses*, 307; 13th c.)

The kinds of nominal phrases that were interpreted as definite and that used to appear without a determiner include nouns denoting unique referents ((14 a,c) (15 a,b) (16 b,c)); abstract nouns ((14b)); nouns preceded by a universal quantifier ((16a)); and nouns preceded by a preposition ((15c)). The contrast between the older stages of the languages, where the definite article was (or could be) absent, and the modern stages, where the definite article is required, can be observed by comparing (a) and (b) in the following examples:^{4,5}

- (17) a. *In figure de colomb volat a ciel* Old French
 in form of dove flew.3SG to sky/heaven
 'In the semblance of a dove, she flies to heaven.'
 (*Cantilène de Sainte-Eulalie*, 25; 9th c.)
- b. *Sous la forme d'une colombe, elle* Modern French
 under the.F form of.a.F dove she
s'envole au ciel
 REFL-is flown to-the sky/heaven
 'In the semblance of a dove, she flew to heaven.'
- (18) a. *Parthivi fijos de Gavini Troccu* Old Sardinian
 divided.1SG children of Gavini Troccu
cun Jorgi de Tanar, a Maria et a Justa.
 with Jorgi from Tanar DOM Maria and DOM Justa
 'I shared Gavinus Troccu's children, Maria and Justa, with Jorgi
 of Tanar.'
 (CSPS, 296. 1-2; 11th-13th c.)

⁴ Examples from the *Cantilène* are from Ayres-Bennett (1996). The Modern French translations of (17a) and (17b) are from de Nantes (1898).

⁵ We thank Franck Floricic for providing the Modern Sardinian example (18b).

- b. *Paltei sas fidzas de* Modern Sardinian
 divided.1SG the.F.PL children of
Gavino Troccu, (a) Maria e Giusta, kin Giorgio
 Gavino Troccu DOM Maria and Justa with Giorgio
de Tanar.
 from Tanar
 'I shared Gavino Troccu's children, Maria and Justa, with
 Giorgio of Tanar.'
- (19) a. *del remedi d'infern e de la* Old Catalan
 of.the avoidance of-hell and of the.F
glòria de paradís
 glory of paradise
 'of the avoidance of hell and of the glory of paradise'
 (*Homilies d'Organyà*; 13th c.)
- b. *del remei de l'infern e de* Modern Catalan
 of.the avoidance of the-hell and of
la glòria del paradís
 the.F glory of.the paradise
 'of the avoidance of hell and of the glory of paradise'

This means that the use of the definite article was progressively extended in Romance from its first uses – essentially linked by the discourse or pragmatic context to definite and specific identification – to its use with nouns denoting unique referents, as well as with abstract nouns. The latter types of nominals tended to appear, to a greater or lesser extent, without a determiner until the last medieval centuries in several Romance languages. There is, then, a hierarchy of contexts to which the definite article extended. [Dufresne et al. \(2018: 26–27\)](#), adapting previous work by [Boucher \(2005\)](#), gives the following hierarchy for the use of determiners in French:

- (20) Demonstratives, possessives and quantifiers > Definite specific
 reference > Indefinite specific reference > Generic
 reference/non-specific/abstract nouns > Mass nouns

According to this hierarchy, at the very first stages (i.e., Gallo-Romance) the only nominal expressions obligatorily headed by an overt D element were those introduced by a demonstrative, a possessive, or a quantifier. In Old French the presence of determiners increased: nominal constructions with specific reference were introduced by a determiner, and generics, non-specific, abstract and mass nouns appeared systematically as bare NPs.

Finally, in Middle and Classical French an overt determiner is required with many types of nominals.^{6,7} A similar characterization is sketched by Ortiz Ciscomani (2009: 367–375) in relation to the definite article in Spanish: a) the definite article was initially used pragmatically to identify or individualize specific referents in the context; b) it started to introduce generic, abstract and mass nouns in the 12th c. and, primarily, from the 13th c. on; and c) it was generalized by the 15th c. Over time, overt articles will appear obligatorily in all of these contexts. This progression applied more generally across Romance, though there is some cross-linguistic variation in the endpoint of the progression.

Ortmann (2014), building on Löbner (1985, 2011; see also Schwarz 2013), characterizes such a hierarchy in terms of uniqueness and distinguishes ‘pragmatic uniqueness’ and ‘semantic uniqueness’, the former more likely to appear with overt definite articles than the latter. For Ortmann, in contexts of pragmatic uniqueness (when a definite article is more likely) a nominal expression’s reference is unambiguous due to the linguistic ‘context of utterance’ (e.g., deictic or anaphoric nominal expressions). In contexts of semantic uniqueness (when a definite article is less likely), a nominal expression’s reference is unambiguous due to the lexical semantics of the noun (e.g., unique nouns like ‘the sun’).⁸ Ortmann’s ‘uniqueness hierarchy’, as well as the hierarchy of Dufresne et al. (2018) above, are consistent with both the synchronic and diachronic facts concerning the appearance of overt definite articles in Romance languages. In other words, these hierarchies predict the presence vs. absence of a definite article at a particular stage of the language, as well as predict in which direction a language will change over time.

In summary, the emergence of determiners was made possible by the loss of deictic and emphatic features of *ILLE* and *IPSE* respectively. Determiners did not appear in all contexts systematically and were subject to various semantic and pragmatic conditions that differ from the modern uses. The emergence and evolution of clitic pronouns was very different, as we will see in the next section.

6 Dufresne et al. (2018: 42–43) shows that in 12th century Old French the frequency of object bare mass nouns remains more or less constant over time, while that of object bare abstract nouns actually increases.

7 Mathieu (2009: 152) ties the increase in frequency of determiners in Old French to the loss of overt interpretable φ -features of nouns.

8 See Heim (2011) for a historical overview for the semantics of definite articles. Heim assumes that semantic uniques like *the hospital* and *the sun* should be treated as having idiom-like properties. See Ludlow & Segal (2004) and Carlson, Sussman, Klein & Tanenhaus (2006).

2.2 Only ILLE-derived clitics

As mentioned above, none of the Romance languages developed an IPSE-derived object clitic. Even languages that had an IPSE-derived determiner, like Balearic Catalan and Sardinian, developed an ILLE-derived clitic. In the schema above in (10) IPSE has an emphatic feature that ILLE lacks. We take this feature of IPSE to be the reason for why no Romance language developed an IPSE clitic pronoun. Vincent (1997: 162) also points out that there is an underlying asymmetry between Latin ILLE and IPSE, the latter associated with second mention, topichood, and contrast, and the former with repeated mention and items “taken as a given.” Along the same lines, Ledgeway (2012: 90) states that “IPSE, unlike ILLE, performed a topic-marking function (...) only picking out informationally prominent second-mention items (and hence an unsuitable candidate for the object clitic paradigm).”⁹ This difference in feature make-up is crucial to understanding the lack of IPSE clitics.

The following data from Old French, Old Sardinian, and Old Catalan show that ILLE-derived accusative clitics were already present in relatively early stages of these languages and that they served to identify, usually through an anaphoric relation, the referent of the direct object:

- (21) *Buona pulcella fut Eulalia (...)* Old French
 good nice-girl was Eulalia
Voldrent la veintre li Deo inimi
 wanted.3PL her beat the.PL God enemies
 ‘Eulalia was a good girl (...) the enemies of God wanted to conquer her.’
 (*Cantilène de Sainte-Eulalie*, 1,3; 9th c.)
- (22) *Nârrunmi ca: « Homines amus* Old Sardinian
 told.3PL-me that men have.1PL
fugitos intro in Bulluso: a Iorgi de Contra et issa
 escaped into in Bulluso DOM Iorgi of Contra and the.F
muliere et ii filios suos, Iohanne et Susanna.
 wife and two children their Iohanne and Susanna
Batugitendelos!». Et ego batusindelos.
 bring.2PL-LOC-them and I brought.1SG-LOC-them
 ‘They told me that: “we have people who run away, inside of Bulluso: Iorgi de Contra and his wife and their two children, Iohanne and Susanna. Bring them here!”. And I did that.’ (CSNT, 208; 12th c.)

⁹ The special nature of accusative clitic pronouns (morphological, syntactic, semantic and prosodic) is also captured in the tripartition of pronouns detailed in Cardinaletti & Starke (1999).

- (23) *et fuit dit quod una fēmina l'avia* Old Catalan
 and was said that a woman him-had.3sg
mort (...) et anaren ad femina et fuit presa. Et
 killed and went.3PL to woman and was captured and
P. de Lobeira mès-la in sua domo (...) e ipse P. de
 P. de Lobeira put.3sg-her in his house and that P. de
Lobeira dis que ja no la trairia a jutgament,
 Lobeira said.3sg that yet not her bring.3sg to judgment
que malauta era de febres.
 that ill was of fever

'and people said that a woman had killed him (...) and they went to the woman and captured her. And P. de Lobeira put her in his house (...) and P. de Lobeira said that he wouldn't bring her for trial yet because she was ill.'

(*Abusos comesos a Lleida per Petrus de Lobeira*, 91; 12th c.)

In all these examples, the accusative pronoun refers back to a discourse antecedent: in the Old French example, the antecedent is the proper name *Eulalia*, which denotes an inherently specific referent; in the Old Sardinian one, the clitic refers to the people who have just been mentioned (*Iorgi de Contra*, *issa muliere*, and *ii duos filios*, *Iohanne et Susanna*); finally, in the Catalan example, the referent is introduced into the discourse by means of the indefinite *una* (*una fēmina* 'a woman') and, then, it is resumed in the discourse by the accusative clitic.

Significantly, clitic pronouns are also found referring back to bare NPs, i.e., referring to nominal expressions that are not introduced by any determiner, as in (24)–(25):

- (24) *Iudicarunmi ad testimonios et ego* Old Sardinian
 ordered.3PL-me DOM witnesses and I
batusilos et vinkilu
 brought.1sg-them and defeated.1sg-him
 'And they ordered me to provide witnesses and I brought them and defeated him.'
 (CSNT, 211.8-9; 12th c.)

- (25) *Et de les chasteles che vós mi* Old Catalan
 and of the.PL castles that you me
comendaretes, potestate no vos ende vetaré, ni
 entrust authority not you from-it deprive.FUT.1SG nor
vetare non la vos ende faré, ni de dia ni de
 deprive not it you from-it do.FUT.1SG nor of day nor of
nuit
 night
 'And I won't deprive you of your authority on the castles that you
 entrust to me during day or night, nor will I deprive you of it.'
 (*Jurament feudal de fidelitat*; 11th c.)

This indicates that the appearance of the accusative clitic pronoun did not correlate with that of the definite article: while the article follows a progression with various steps sensitive to the content of the nominal expression, the clitic pronoun is employed as an identifier of a grammatical function (direct object) regardless of whether or not the noun phrase with which it is co-referent is introduced by a determiner.

The fact that in languages with *s*-articles, such as Sardinian and Catalan, no cases of clitic pronouns with *s*- are documented supports the hypothesis that the introduction of accusative clitic pronouns and definite articles (and also strong pronouns) followed different patterns. The following examples show clitic pronouns in contexts with several different forms of definite articles and strong pronouns:

- (26) a. *a llarga la levait su servo tuo* Old Sardinian
 away her took.3SG the.M servant your
sa coliberta mea
 the.F servant mine
 'Your servant took away my servant.' (CSPS, 111; 11th-13th c.)
- b. *...cun ken la aveat ad issa scu. Petru*
 with whom her had.3SG DOM she saint Petru
 '...with whom saint Peter had her' (Lit.: with whom her_i had
 her_i saint Petrus) (CSPS, 28.4; 11th-13th c.)
- (27) *Et monstre Remon ipso termine ke* Old Catalan
 and shows Remon the limit that
proclame per Ribeles, que est de Cion ad enlà, tan
 claims for Ribelles that is from Sió towards there so
ample lo monstre de là (...) ad riba de Scio. (...) E
 wide it shows from there to bank of Sió and

ke sia en so assemblament de ipso episcopo si (...)
 that be.SUBJ.3SG in the opinion of the bishop if
ipsos omnes quin faciant ipsa batalla, dicat ipso
 the men who make.SUBJ.3PL the battle say.SUBJ.3SG the
episcopo si pharà n el primers ipso fromiment (...) o.l
 bishop if do.FUT.3SG in the first.PL the supply or-it
rechulirà de Remon Gonball
 get.FUT.3SG from Remon Gonball

‘And Remon shows the limit that he claims for Ribelles, which is from Sió on, so wide does he show it as from there (...) to Sió river. (...) And let it be in the bishop’s opinion if (...) the men who fight in the battle, let the bishop decide if he will get the supply from the first ones (...) or he will get it from Remon Gonball.’

(*Disputació referent als límits entre Guissona i Ribelles*, 65; 11th c.)

In the Old Sardinian examples the use of the clitic pronoun is closely related to the DP *sa coliberta mea* (‘my servant’) in (26 a) and to the strong pronoun *issa* (‘she’) in (26 b) in a kind of clitic doubling construction with right dislocation of the DP, according to Cennamo et al. (2022). If the evolution of the pronoun IPSE in this language had been parallel to that of clitic pronouns, definite articles and strong pronouns, it might be expected that in cases such as these the three entities would be isomorphic. In the Old Catalan example there are plenty of determiners derived from IPSE (most in a Latin form *ipso/ipsa*, but also in the reduced form *so* of the Catalan article) and one instance from ILLE (*el primers* ‘the first ones’), but the clitic pronoun is consistently realized as an *l*-form in this excerpt and throughout the whole document.

To sum up, in this section we have provided evidence of definite articles and accusative clitics in three Romance languages of the Middle Ages (Old French, Old Sardinian, and Old Catalan). The clitic pronoun follows paths different from those of the definite article. Whereas the definite article is sensitive to the nature of the noun it introduces, the semantic interpretation of the nominal expression, and the syntactic function, the clitic pronoun seems to act instead as a function marker linked to resumption of an argument in direct object position (see Vincent 1997: 161).

3 ROMANCE DPs: THE SYNTAX AND A SEMANTIC MAPPING

In this section, we consider the structural implications of the differences between definite articles and accusative clitic pronouns. To that end, we adopt Bernstein et al.’s (2021) complex DP structure and map the different functions and interpretations onto it, and then we extend this analysis to incorporate the clitic pronouns.

3.1 An articulated structure for DPs: definite articles vs. clitic pronouns

Present-day Balearic Catalan has both the *s*-definite article (from Latin *IPSE*) and the *l*-definite article (from Latin *ILLE*). The first one is found in anaphoric and deictic contexts and with relative clauses, contexts associated with topic-hood (Vincent 1997: 162), and the second one with uniques and what Lyons (1999: 162) describes as “identifiable in the wider situation.” In the following examples we show that the *s*-article introduces a noun that heads a relative clause, as in (28 a), its unambiguous reference related to its syntactic structure due to the ‘context of utterance’ (i.e., its syntactic or semantic context; Ortman 2014: 294); a noun phrase interpreted anaphorically with the indefinite *un rem* (‘an oar’), as in (28 b); and a noun phrase interpreted deictically, as in (28 c).

- (28) a. *Sa muntanya que veus és molt alta.* Balearic Catalan
 the.F mountain that see.2PSG is very tall
 ‘The mountain that you see is very tall.’
- b. *Això és un rem (...) I seguí camí envant*
 this is a.M oar and continued.3SG path ahead
amb es rem...
 with the.M oar
 ‘This is an oar (...) and he went ahead with the oar...’
 (Veny 1999: 156)
- c. *Veus sa casa d’allà?*
 see.2SG the.F house of-there
 ‘Do you see the house over there?’

In contrast, *l*-articles introduce uniques, their reference understood between speaker and hearer due to shared experience, as is the case of nouns like those in (29 a) and *la mar* (‘the sea’) in (29 b):

- (29) a. *el cel, la terra, la muntanya, l’hospital, el re* Balearic Catalan
 ‘the sky’, ‘the earth’, ‘the mountain’, ‘the hospital’ ‘the king’
- b. *No en sabrà res de la mar*
 no of-it know.FUT.3SG nothing of the.F sea
 ‘S/he won’t know anything about the sea.’

Thus, the Balearic Catalan *l*-article is used when “the hearer’s general knowledge or knowledge of the wider situation and of appropriate associations is sufficient to identify the referent” (Lyons 1999: 163, discussing the parallel case of Fering definite articles). These are the same contexts that

align with [Ortmann's \(2014\)](#) 'semantic uniqueness' (i.e., independent of pragmatic/discourse or syntactic configuration, which would instead align with 'pragmatic uniqueness'). An overview of syntactic or semantic contexts favoring one or the other form of definite article is provided in (30) and the structure adopted to accommodate the data is provided in (31) (additional data and discussion are found in [Bernstein et al. 2021](#)):¹⁰

- (30) a. *s*-articles: individuated common nouns, nouns modified with relative clauses or adjectives, prepositional complements
 b. *l*-articles: uniques, 'shared experience' nouns, proper names, pronouns

(31) [DP₁ [D₁ *s*- [DP₂ [D₂ *l*- [NP N]]]]]

In that work the authors pursue a multilayer approach to DPs, along the lines of [Zamparelli \(1995\)](#) and [Ihsane \(2008\)](#). However, Bernstein et al. add an extra layer, DP₂, for definite articles corresponding to unique referents. Thus, it is claimed that the ILLE-derived article (i.e., the *l*-article) in Balearic Catalan is a suitable candidate for D₂ and that the IPSE-derived article for D₁. The evidence for the claims were based on syntactic distribution, (non)adjacency to the noun, interpretive patterns, as well as instances of co-occurrence of D₁ and D₂ elements.¹¹

How do clitics fit into the structure in (31)? We address this issue next.

3.2 *The clitic pronoun in the DP system*

On the basis of data from Old Catalan, [Bernstein et al. \(2021: 22\)](#) shows that in early Romance both IPSE- and ILLE-derived articles could occupy D₁, but only ILLE-derived articles could occupy D₂, and only to a limited extent. In other words, IPSE forms are found in D₁ only; ILLE forms are found in D₁ and to a lesser extent in D₂, which was often null:

(32) [DP₁ [D₁ *s*-/*l*- [DP₂ [D₂ (*l*-)]]]] Early Romance

¹⁰ The contexts of (30a) would align with Ortmann's 'pragmatic uniqueness' and those of (30b) with his 'semantic uniqueness'.

¹¹ [Bernstein et al. \(2021: 7\)](#) provide evidence that D₁ and D₂ elements can co-occur:

- (i) *es conco en Toni* Balearic Catalan
 the uncle ART Toni
 'Uncle Toni'
- (ii) *es l'amo*
 the the-boss
 'the boss'

Moreover, they motivate movement of DP₂ to DP₁ when the nominal expression is an argument.

In section 2 above, we observed these patterns and also provided examples (recall (21)–(23)) illustrating accusative *l*-clitics in early Romance. We will propose that these *l*-clitics occupy D2. The claim then is that D1 is contemporaneously filled with the definite article (*ILLE*- or *IPSE*-derived form) and D2 is filled with an *ILLE*-derived form, either an *l*-clitic or, to a lesser extent, an *l*-article. Interestingly, the D2 *l*-clitic has continued to function continuously up until the present time.

We interpret the continuity of the 3rd person accusative *l*-clitic as evidence of it being established early in Romance. The question we must consider is whether there is empirical evidence that connects D2 determiners and D2 clitics. We believe there are phonological and pragmatic reasons for assuming such a connection.

At the phonological level, Balearic Catalan D2 *l*-articles and clitics differ in important respects from D1 *s*-articles. Whereas D2 *l*-articles and clitics resist stress and emphasis, D1 *s*-articles may be stressed. Observe these contrasts between *s*-articles (33 a), and *l*-articles and clitics (33 b,c):¹²

- (33) a. *SA casa* (D1 article; deictic/anaphoric) Balearic Catalan
 ‘THE house’
- b. **LA muntanya* (D2 article; unique) Balearic Catalan
 ‘THE mountain’
- c. **LA veuré* (D2 clitic) Balearic Catalan
 it.F will see

In other words, only the *s*-forms, as D1 elements may be stressed; the *l*-forms, whether definite articles or clitics, may not be stressed.

Semantically, we have already observed that clitics can refer back to nominal expressions that are full DPs or even bare NPs (recall (24)–(25)). This is because D2 clitics, like personal pronouns, are anaphoric by their nature and independent of the pragmatic context or syntactic configuration they appear in (Ortmann 2014, Löbner 2011). In other words, they embody Ortmann’s no-

¹² Another relevant aspect of Romance clitics, arguably linked to their status as D2 elements, is the fact that the 3rd accusative *l*-clitics may fail to be expressed in contexts where they would co-occur with dative 3rd person clitics. We illustrate with present-day French and Old French (examples from Anglade 1958: 177):

- (i) Je lui ai dit. (< je la lui ai dit) present-day French
 ‘I to-him/her has said it.’
- (ii) Tient une chartre, mais ne li puis tolr. (< le lui) Old French
 ‘He has a charter, but I cannot take it from him.’ (*La Vie de St. Alexis*, 11th c.)

tion of ‘semantic uniqueness’, akin to proper names. Across most of present-day Romance, both pragmatic uniqueness and semantic uniqueness are associated with *l-* for both definite articles and accusative clitics. Previous analyses appealed to this isomorphism to claim that both the *l*-articles and clitics correspond to a unique D head. However, Balearic Catalan shows that this cannot be the case. This is because the language makes use of a morphological distinction that coincides with a semantic distinction: the *s*-definite article signals pragmatic uniqueness (i.e., D1); *l-* signals semantic uniqueness (i.e., D2), either as a definite article or as a clitic pronoun. Thus, the articulated DP we adopt (recall (32)) more accurately captures the distribution of Romance articles and their relationship to accusative clitics.

At this point one may wonder why *IPSE* was not suitable for D2 in the early stages of Romance. As indicated by [Ledgeway \(2012: 90\)](#) *IPSE*, contrary to *ILLE*, is emphatic and has a topic-marking function. Latin *ILLE*, on the other hand is not emphatic and lacks a topic-marking function. Instead, it “is used when an item is repeated in discourse” and “is taken as given” ([Vincent 1997: 162](#)). D2 does not support emphatic elements and therefore, no *IPSE*-derived form could emerge in D2 in early stages of Romance varieties. By the time *IPSE* lost its emphatic nature, the system had already been set for *ILLE* in all Romance languages. *ILLE*, crucially, was not emphatic.

Definite articles do not play a direct role in identifying arguments, but rather in pinpointing referential properties of a nominal expression. Clitic pronouns, in contrast, do identify arguments. Anaphoric properties of Latin *ILLE* inherited by the pronominal clitics need to be expressed overtly. We adopt [Panagiotidis’s \(2002: 64\)](#) proposal that clitics are D elements that take *pro* as a complement (see (34a)) and that determiners are D elements that take an overt complement (see (34b)).

- (34) a. clitic pronoun with non-overt N
 [DP [D *la* [NUMP [NP [N *pro*]]]]]
- b. definite article with overt N
 [DP [D *la* [NUMP [NP [N *casa*]]]]]
 ‘the house’

As we observed earlier, Romance 3rd person clitics derived from *ILLE* appeared in documents as early as the 9th c. in French and the 12th c. in Catalan and did not change substantially once established. This contrasts with the development of the determiner system across Romance languages. Definite articles appear early in contexts of pragmatic identification and specific reference, at approximately the same time as the clitic pronouns. However, unlike the clitic pronouns, their appearance extended to new contexts (e.g., uniques,

abstract nouns) over a period of time. In other words, new contexts requiring definite articles evolved relatively slowly, unlike the case of clitic pronouns. Moreover, the endpoint of the extension of definite articles varies cross-linguistically across Romance, with some languages (e.g., French) employing them in a greater variety of contexts than other languages (e.g., Italian). The clitic pronouns have been relatively stable and parallel across Romance.¹³

The observations of the last paragraph are nicely illustrated by the patterns in Sardinian, a language with *ILLE*-derived clitics and *IPSE*-derived articles. As in other Romance languages, the pronominal *l*-clitics and *s*-articles appeared early (11th c.). Over time, these D1 *s*-articles extended to D2 contexts (uniques, etc.). As the *s*-article extends to new contexts, it loses its emphatic feature. Once extended to D2 contexts, why doesn't the *s*-form displace the pronominal *l*-clitics? We conjecture that it is now too late to displace the pronominal *l*-clitics, which were well established in D2 across Romance from the outset. Put another way, the historical data suggest to us that there is a 'critical period' for establishing clitics after which they do not change substantially.

4 CONCLUSION

In this paper we have examined the development of Romance accusative clitic pronouns and definite articles. We aimed to shed light on a number of inter-related phenomena: a) the often-observed isomorphism between Romance definite articles and accusative pronominal clitics; b) the etymological origin of clitics; c) the functional and semantic asymmetries between Latin *ILLE* and *IPSE*; and d) the absence of *IPSE*-derived clitics.

The often-observed isomorphism of *l*-definite articles and *l*-clitic pronouns across Romance languages obscures subtle yet important syntactic and semantic distinctions between types of definite nominal expressions, and these are brought to light by languages with two-way definite article systems such as we have seen for Balearic Catalan. What Balearic Catalan reveals is that the actual alignment in Romance is between *l*-clitics and only certain types of nominal expressions such as those whose accompanying *l*-articles convey a redundancy of reference (e.g., when accompanying proper names) or the uniqueness of reference of certain common nouns. The remaining types of nominal expressions, distinguishable semantically and also syntactically across Romance, are further distinguished in Balearic

¹³ Brazilian Portuguese is interesting in that it has lost 3rd person clitic pronouns and allows bare nouns in contexts different from those found in other Romance languages.

Catalan by means of a different form, an *s*-article. The first set of forms, *l*-clitics and *l*-articles, are in D2 and the second set, *s*-articles, are in D1.

We have highlighted in this paper how the present-day patterns were set in motion in the transition from Latin to Romance. That is, semantic and functional properties of Latin *IPSE* (topic-marking function and focus value; Vincent (1997)), which rendered it unfit as a candidate for clitic (but not article), and of Latin *ILLE* (e.g., discourse repetition, absence of emphatic status) set the stage for the development of pronominal clitics as well as articles.

We have shown that the Romance clitic paradigm with *ILLE* is fully developed earlier than the *ILLE* determiner system, which generalizes over time. The more articulated structure for DPs of Bernstein, Ordóñez & Roca (2018, 2021), which we have adopted, accommodates the synchronic and diachronic patterns. We have claimed that the non-emphatic and function-oriented clitics correspond to the lower D2, along with the generalized definite articles, while D1 is reserved for articles with deictic or pragmatic function.

The frequent isomorphism of Romance definite articles and clitics is not to be ignored, only more deeply mined. Patterns displayed in understudied Romance varieties shed light on the syntax and semantics of definite articles and clitics and support distinguishing two different classes, which we have mapped onto an articulated DP structure.

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Judy B. Bernstein
Department of Language, Literature, Culture,
and Writing
William Paterson University
300 Pompton Road
Wayne, NJ 07470 USA
bernsteinj@wpunj.edu

Francisco Ordóñez
Linguistics Department
Stony Brook University
Stony Brook, NY 11794
USA
francisco.ordonez@stonybrook.edu

Francesc Roca
Dept. Filologia i Comunicació
Universitat de Girona
Pça. Ferrater Mora, 1
17004 Girona Spain
francesc.roca@udg.edu