The Modal-Existential Construction

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The topic of this paper is the proper treatment of a peculiar construction found in Early Modern English, exemplified in (1).

(1) Malory 65:15-17
    But kynge Arthur was so currageous that **there myght no maner of knyght lette hym to lande**.

This "modal-existential" construction[1] cannot easily be accounted for within the standard typology of existential sentences across Germanic languages. An adequate analysis, I will argue, should be based on the special relation between the modal verb and the negative subject.[2]

This paper is organized as follows. In the first part (Section 1), I will briefly lay out the main properties of our construction and draw attention to its ancestor in earlier stages of English. Then (Sections 2-4), I discuss the problems that the construction raises for the standard theories of Germanic existentials, arguing specifically against analyses appealing to generalized Verb Second or free CP-Recursion. In Section 5, I turn to the analysis of modal-existentials in Christensen (1991) and point out some difficulties with her approach. Lastly in Section 6, I sketch my own way of looking at the construction which is couched in terms employed in much recent work on the syntax of negation. Many problems remain and will have to receive much closer attention in future research.

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[1]The term is due to Cathy Ball (1991).

[2]In many respects, the modal-existential construction is reminiscent of the well-known facts about negative subjects in Russian and Finnish, as several people at FLSM pointed out to me: Jennifer Engar, Erika Mitchell, and Natasha Kondrashova. This fascinating connection cannot be explored here.

1. The Modal-Existential Construction

The modal-existential construction did its mischief over a fairly short period in the history of English: the earliest clear examples come from the early 1300s and the construction seems to fizzle out in the standard language in the course of the sixteenth century with some late examples in the seventeenth century. Discussion of this construction in the literature is very scarce: I am only aware of Jacobsson (1951), Toda (1982), Breivik (1983, 1989), Ball (1991), and brief remarks in the OED and by Visser (1963-1973). The question of its status in generative syntax had not been addressed before Christensen (1991) to which we will turn in Section 5. The syntactic form of the data is very uniform and idiosyncratic. The schema in (2) gives the shape of most of the examples.

(2)   *there* + modal auxiliary + negative subject + verb + object

The characteristics of this construction are: (i) expletive *there*, (ii) modal auxiliary, (iii) negative subjects, (iv) possibility of transitive verbs, (v) possibility of embedding (as (1) already shows). Some more examples should help to get a feel for the construction.

(3)   a1325(c1280) Sleg.Pass.(Pep) 2206-2207 [F.R. Higgins]
       And of alle Dat Der ete D**er ne durste nouΩt on**
       Segge to him 'what artou'
       'And of all who ate there, not one dared say to him "what art thou"'

Note the negative clitic *ne* in the early example in (3). I will assume throughout this discussion that even in later examples the modal still carries a [+neg]-feature, although it is not directly expressed.

(4)   (1389) Lon.Gild Ret. 50.87-88 [F.R. Higgins, p.c.]
       Also Dat D**er schal non of** D**e wardeyns make none newe statues** ne newe ordinances withoute assent of alle De bretherhede

(5)   a1600 Bullein, A Dialogue, 134 [Jacobsson, p. 208]
       Therefore, let vs bee conuerted, and tourne cleane from our synnes and wickednesse, and so **there shall no synne dooe vs harme**.

(6)   11 Feb 1679 Trial of Sir Thomas Gascoigne, State Trials III.7 [C. Ball, p.c.]
       Mr. *Bolron*. My Lord, he was not so deaf then as they say he is, and he seems to be now. And Esquire *Gascoigne* also, because he would be sure **there should no Damage come to him**, caused all his Goods to be sold off his Ground, and Mr. *Middleton* sold his very Household-Goods.

Although most of the examples I will use in this paper have transitive verbs, the construction also appears with unergative verbs and with passives:

(7)   a1500 Fortescue, Governance of England,119 [Jacobsson, p. 207]
      But we most holde it for vndouted, Dat **ther mey no reaume prospere**, or
      be worshipfull, vndir a poure kynge.
      '…there may no realm prosper…under a poor king'

(8)   a1550 Berners, Chronicle of Froissart, 15 [Jacobsson, p. 206]
      And they answered, that **ther shuld no gate be opyned** without the consent
      of the hole towne.

Finally, it should be noted that modal-existentials survive in several dialects of English, most prominently perhaps in the southern United States. I illustrate this in (9) from Alabama English, in (10) from a Steinbeck novel and in (11) from a British novel where the speaker is from Lancashire.

(9)   Feagin 8.(100)[3]
      They asked four men, but **there didn't anyone want to leave their church**.

(10) Steinbeck, The Wayward Bis, 22. [Jacobsson, p. 210]
      It just breaks down little by little and **there don't nobody know what
      makes them**.

(11) Fuller, Roy. The second curtain. Penguin Books, p. 106 [F.R. Higgins]
      Mr. Kay took the cigarette out of his mouth, tapped the ash off, and said:
      'Well, **there'll no one take Mr. Widgery's place**. There won't that.'

The continued existence of the modal-existential in these dialects places an important constraint on possible parametric accounts. With the possible exception of negative concord, there do not seem to be any correlated differences between the standard language and these dialects. Any appeal to fundamental parametric changes would therefore be highly suspect as an explanation for the rise and decline of modal-existentials.

Before there were modal-existentials, there were structures that looked just like them but lacked the expletive *there*. It was typical of negative sentences in Old English, and quite possibly in Proto-Germanic and even Proto-Indo-

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[3]Feagin does not clearly distinguish between modal-existentials and the more ordinary type of negative inversion which also occurs in the standard language.

European, that the verb was initial. The constraints and patterns of Verb First sentences in Germanic and Indo-European are largely unexplored. For our purposes here, we just need to realize that the modal-existential is the direct descendent of Old English sentences like the one in (12).

(12)   Trin. Hom. 5 27.32-33 [F.R. Higgins]

    Ne mai no man D**ese word seggen** Danne he godes milce bisec∂.

    'There may no man these words say when he beseeches god's mercy'

At the earliest stages the initial negative verb was presumably in the Comp position.[4] Later the construction is also available in embedded contexts as demonstrated in (13) and (14), indicating that the verb now merely raises to Infl with the subject staying in the VP.[5]

(13)   ÆCHom II,32 279.213 [F.R. Higgins]

    He geseah ∂a Dæt **hine ne mihte nan læce gehælan**.

    'He saw then that him might no doctor heal'

(14)   ChronA 897 91.4-5 [F.R. Higgins]

    …Dæt **hira ne mehte nan to o∂rum**.

    '…so that of them might none reach the others'

The modal-existential construction with *there* can be seen as being a direct descendent of these older sentences. In Early Modern English, [Spec,IP] becomes an obligatory position. So *there* gets borrowed from the ever more bleached presentative *there*-construction and is inserted to plug that hole.

2. The Standard Typology of Germanic Existentials

There are usually said to be two types of existential sentences across Germanic languages: (i) the topic expletive construction of German and Icelandic, and (ii) the subject expletive construction of Mainland Scandinavian and English.

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[4]In order to maintain this claim we would have to establish that the negative verb always precedes clitic pronouns at this stage (since clitics are argued to be just to the left of Infl, cf. next footnote). A cursory look at the data makes me hopeful that this may be on the right track.

[5]The preverbal position of the unstressed pronouns in (13) and (14) is typical of this stage of the language and can be used as a diagnostic for the position of the verb if it is assumed that clitic pronouns left-adjoin to Infl. Cf. Pintzuck (1991) and Heycock & Santorini (1992) for discussion. In traditional scholarship on Old French the distribution of clitic pronouns is known as the 'Tobler-Mussafia law', see also Adams (1987).

In this section, I will briefly show that the modal-existential construction cannot be assimilated to either of these types.

2.1 Subject Expletives

English and the Mainland Scandinavian languages have existential constructions in which the expletive occupies the subject position. The surface evidence for this comes from the behavior of the expletive in inversion and embedding contexts. Observe that in (15) the expletive *there* survives inversion and embedding.

(15) a. There was a cat in the garden.
      b. Was there a cat in the garden?
      c. John said that there was a cat in the garden.

The story goes as follows. The expletive is inserted in [Spec,IP] to fulfill the Extended Projection Principle or some such requirement that the subject position be filled at s-structure. Processes like inversion or embedding that involve the CP-projection do not interfere with *there*-insertion (except possibly for a pragmatic aversion against embedding presentatively used sentences).

Another characteristic of subject expletive constructions concerns the range of predicates they occur with. Most conspicuously, they do not allow transitive predicates, illustrated for English in (16).

(16) *There ate a man a pudding.

In the good old days the explanation for (16) was fairly straightforward. The subject of a transitive predicate is base-generated in [Spec,IP], hence there is no place there for *there*. With the advent of the VP-internal subject hypothesis, the story has to be more complicated. The question now becomes: why can't the transitive subject remain in situ inside VP, say in [Spec,VP]? The usual answer is that the subject cannot receive case in that position. This means that in the case of the well-formed existential construction with presentative/unaccusative verbs there must be a special kind of case-licensing at work. Some variant of Belletti's "partitive" case mechanism seems to be the standard account.

The modal-existential construction then cannot be assimilated to a subject expletive structure because of the possibility of transitive verbs. In other words, we need to explain how the negative subject is licensed in modal-existentials.

2.2 Topic Expletives

German and Icelandic have existential constructions in which the expletive occupies the topic position. The expletive does not survive in inverted structures or in embedded contexts, as (17) demonstrates for German.

(17) a. Es   kam ein Jäger   in den Wald.
           Expl came a   hunter in the forest
           'There came a hunter into the forest'
      b. Kam (*es) ein Jäger in den Wald?
      c. Hans sagte daß (*es) ein Jäger in den Wald kam.

In the standard explanation, the topic expletive is inserted into the topic position [Spec,CP] to "satisfy" the Verb Second requirement. Processes involving the CP-projection like question inversion and embedding will interfere with this expletive topic insertion.

Another characteristic of topic expletive constructions is that they can occur with a wider variety of predicates than subject expletives. In particular, German and Icelandic allow transitive predicates, as (18) shows for German.

(18) Es   aß ein Mann einen Pudding.
      Expl ate a   man a   pudding
      '*There ate a man a pudding'

In the good old days the explanation for (18) was fairly straightforward. The subject of a transitive predicate is base-generated in [Spec,IP], the topic expletive is in [Spec,CP], no conflict. With the advent of the VP-internal subject hypothesis, the story has to be more complicated. The question becomes: Is the transitive subject in situ in [Spec,VP] or is it in [Spec,IP]? If it is in [Spec,VP], then why can German and Icelandic (and Old English for that matter) license a VP-internal subject while English and Mainland Scandinavian languages can't? One possible answer is that in these languages nominative case assignment can routinely occur under head government from Infl (or Comp) into the VP. And why aren't there any sentences with two expletives, one in [Spec,CP] and one in [Spec,IP]? The usual answer involves an appeal to the Avoid-Pronoun Principle in some variant or other: These languages allow an empty expletive in [Spec,IP] and the empty one has to be preferred over the overt one. For criticism of such accounts and a possible alternative see von Fintel (1990).

The modal-existential construction doesn't fit in with topic expletive structures because of its embeddability. What to do? In the next two sections, I will argue against two immediately attractive explanations. I will show that modal-existentials cannot be explained by appealing to Generalized Verb Second nor to CP-Recursion.

3. Against a "V2-inside-IP" Analysis

Yiddish is a language that shows Verb Second in embedded contexts (cf. Diesing 1990a, Santorini 1989). With respect to existentials it seems to be a topic expletive language with the peculiarity that the usual subject position is a topic position in this language. Hence the possibility of embedded existentials. Since Early Modern English modal-existentials occur in embedded contexts, one obvious approach would be to say that Early Modern English was a Yiddish-type language with generalized Verb Second in the IP-projection.

For Old English and Middle English, there are very good arguments for the existence of Verb Second in the IP, that is for [Spec,IP] as a topic position (cf. Higgins 1992, Pintzuck 1991). At the time of the flourishing of our construction, however, there is no more evidence for [Spec,IP] as a topic position. In my reading of texts that abound in modal-existentials I have not come across one example of a sentence with the crucial structure in (19).

(19) *[$_{Comp}$ that [$_{IP}$ Object$_{topic}$ or PP$_{topic}$ [$_{I'}$ Verb$_{finite}$ [$_{VP}$ Subject …]]]]

This finding is confirmed by Jacobsson in his study of inversion in this period: "Front-shifting of objects in subordinate clauses is a rare phenomenon. In the few instances recorded the word-order is straight" (1951: 127). Early Modern English is not Yiddish.

I conclude that a Yiddish-style analysis won't work for our construction.[6] In the next section, we will have to dismiss another analysis that tries to assimilate the modal-existential construction to the phenomenon of "selected" CP-recursion.

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[6]The same considerations also apply to an alternative analysis of the Yiddish-type languages, which assumes that CP-recursion is freely available (Vikner 1991).

4. Against a Selected CP-Recursion Analysis

It is widely accepted that languages allow CP-recursion in a limited number of contexts, most prominently bridge verb complements. This possibility is also known as "embedded root phenomena". We might now wish to attempt analyzing embedded modal-existentials as such an embedded root phenomenon.

A problem with this approach is that modal-existentials do occur embedded in non-bridge verb contexts. We saw above that the ancestor construction without *there* could occur in embedded contexts, cf. examples (13) and (14). From the period with *there*, there are quite a number of examples in embedded contexts.

(20) Malory 65:15-17
      But kynge Arthur was so currageous that **there myght no maner of knyght lette hym to lande**.

(21) 1477 Earl Rivers (Caxton) Dictes 19 [OED]
      Lyf in this worlde is so shorte that **ther ought none conceyue hate nor wil harme to other**.

(22) a1325 Sleg.Alban (Corp-C) 241.73 [F.R. Higgins]
      He bihuld Dat D**er nemiΩte . no water come** D**er ney**
      'He beheld that there might no water come near there'

The status of resultative clauses as in (20) and (21) is unclear, as Beatrice Santorini (pc) reminded me. While they are clearly not in a bridge context (extraction out of them is impossible), they do allow negative inversion and so might be analyzed as selected CP-recursion:

(23) a. They arrived so late that only by bribing the porter were they able to gain access to the complex.
      b. He flew into such a towering rage that only with difficulty was he persuaded not to smash all the dishes.
      c. **What$_i$ did he become so angry that he smashed t$_i$?
      d. **Whose work$_i$ is this thesis so thorough that it mentions t$_i$?

Note that the content of the resultative clause does seem to be asserted. A detailed discussion of the issues is not possible here.

The example in (22) may provide a better argument since *behold* is neither a bridge verb nor allows recursion under it (but intuitions about such a basically obsolete item are of course shaky):

(24) a.   *What did he behold that she had destroyed?

　　　b.   *He beheld that only with a lot of effort could he solve the problem.

Another way of making the point that the verb is not in Comp in modal-existentials comes from the facts about clitic placement mentioned earlier. Consider again:

(13)   ÆCHom II,32 279.213 [F.R. Higgins]

　　　He geseah ∂a Dæt **hine ne mihte nan læce gehælan**.

　　　'He saw then that him might no doctor heal'

Since the clitic pronoun *hine* precedes the verb and since clitics are assumed to be left-adjoined to Infl, it seems inescapable to conclude that the negative modal *ne mihte* is in Infl and not in a recursive Comp.

It would be nice to find examples of modal-existentials in relative clauses, adverbial clauses and the like. But so far I haven't seen any.[7] Nevertheless, it is probable that modal-existentials cannot be assimilated to any of the known existential structures in Germanic languages. We must seek for a much more parochial analysis of modal-existentials. In the next section, we will consider the steps towards an account made by Kirsti Koch Christensen.

5. Christensen (1991)

5.1 Modal-Existentials in Mainland Scandinavian

Christensen (1991) marks the first time that modal-existentials, not under this name, have been discussed in the generative literature. She gives the following examples from Mainland Scandinavian languages, taken from Diderichsen (1946: 187), Wallin (1935), Western (1921), and Leira (1988), respectively.

(25) Der   må   ingen   sige det.   (Danish)
　　　there must nobody say that

(26) Det kan ingen   göra den saken bättre än   han.   (Swedish)
　　　it   can nobody do   that thing better than he

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[7]There may of course be interfering discourse conditions on the appearance of existential sentences in such contexts.

(27) Der vil   neppe nogen   by mere for huset.   (Norwegian/
there will hardly anyone bid more for house-the   *riksmål*)

(28) Det fekk ingen   vite   kva som stod   i testamentet.   (Norwegian/
it   got   nobody know what that stood in will-the   *nynorsk*)

The reader will easily recognize these sentences to be exactly isomorphic to the Early Modern English data presented above. It seems then that all Germanic subject expletive languages possess or possessed the modal-existential construction, at least in some stage of their development. Christensen notes that Norwegian speakers rate such sentences as "somewhat archaic and/or stylistically highly marked" (Fn. 10).

Let us consider the Danish modal-existential sentence in (25).

(25) Der   må ingen   sige det.
there must nobody say that

Christensen argues that the expletive in (25) is a topic expletive in [Spec,CP] and that the negative subject is adjoined to VP by a process called QP-movement, which obligatorily fronts VP-internal negative quantifier phrases (QPs), including objects as we will soon see. The structure given to (25) is roughly as in (25').

(25') [$_{CP}$ der [$_{C'}$ må [$_{IP}$ [$_{VP}$ ingen [$_{VP}$ sige det]]]]]

We have already seen that a CP-level analysis cannot be maintained for Early Modern English. This aspect of Christensen's analysis can therefore not be carried over to the analysis of English modal-existentials.[8] What does merit attention is her conception of the role of the negative subject of modal-existentials. To this we now turn.

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[8]An issue that I have to skirt for now is whether the CP-level analysis is correct for Mainland Scandinavian. Christensen's claim that the expletive in modal-existentials is a topic expletive in [Spec,CP] of course predicts that inversion and embedding will drive this expletive away. And she does give some data suggesting that the expletive of modal-existentials unlike the usual subject expletive cannot occur together with another topic or in embedded contexts:

(i) a.   I dag har *(det) kommet lingvister hit.
          today has   it   come   linguists here
     b.   Boken   har (*det) ingen lingvist kjøpt.
          book-the has   it   no   linguist bought

(ii) a.   om *(det) har kommet en lingvist hit.
          if   it   has come   a linguist here
     b.   om (*det) ingen lingvist har kjøpt   boken.
          if   it   no   linguist has bought book-the

5.2 The Nature of QP-Movement

Christensen derives the existence of QP-movement from a requirement that "negation in Scandinavian must take S-structure scope over IP".[9] She shows that QP-movement occurs independently of the existential context: in fact, even negative objects in ordinary declarative sentences have to front, as the Norwegian data in (29) show.[10]

(29) a. Jon   har kjøpt   en bok.   [=(34)]
         John has bought a book

     b. *Jon har en bok kjøpt.   [=(40)]
         John has a book bought

     c. *Jon   har kjøpt   ingen bøker.   [=(36)]
         John has bought no   books

     d. Jon   har ingen bøker kjøpt.   [=(38)]
         John has no   books bought

The position negative phrases front to is VP-adjoined. This can be seen in embedded clauses like (30) where the negative NP occurs before the non-raised auxiliary.

(30) at   Jon   ingen bøker har kjøpt.
     that John no   books has bought

Interestingly, the same kind of movement of negative objects has been documented for Early Modern English, too. Jacobsson (1951: 83f) points out that certain negative objects like *nothing* and *none* could appear in a pre-verbal position in Early Modern English. This is despite the fact that the language had already changed to a VO verb phrase. Two examples are given in (31) and (32).

(31) Malory 44 [Jacobsson p.83]

      ... wherfor the kyng made grete ioye / and sente the kynges and knyghtes

      grete presentes / But **the kynges wold none receyue**.

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[9]Christensen refers to Christensen (1990) for further discussion. I haven't been able to obtain this work yet.

[10]See Rögnvaldsson 1987 for parallel data in Icelandic. Beatrice Santorini (pc) informs me that the same phenomenon seems to appear in Yiddish, although not obligatorily: in 50-60% of all potential instances in modern Yiddish prose negative objects are fronted.

(32)   Berners 97 [Jacobsson p.83]

... he sayde, he thought **he hadde nat yet nothynge done** tyll he hadde seen the Prynce of Wales.

The problem with Christensen's way of motivating QP-movement is that while it may explain why negative NPs front to adjoin to VP, it does not explain how the NP is licensed in that position. The crucial question is why positive NPs cannot front. Just saying that since positive NPs do "not belong to the class of phrases that may undergo QP-movement, adjunction to VP is not an available option" (Christensen 1991: 155) seems somewhat circular.

Another problem is raised by the existence of Early Modern English examples where the modal auxiliary bears a negative clitic *ne*, for example (33).

(33)   c1400(?a1300) KAlex (Ld) 6235-6236 [F. R. Higgins]

Dat neuere in-tyl domesday

D**ere ne shal schip out passe**, …

It would appear that with a negative clitic on the inflected verb negation already has sentence scope. Why should the subject still have to scramble?

We have established that we need an account of modal-existentials that generates modal-existentials internal to the IP without appealing to generalized Verb Second. My suggestion is that it is the special relation between the modal and the negative subject that creates the modal-existential construction. The goal of the next section is to characterize the relation between the modal and the subject as a sharing of a [+neg]-feature.

6. *Negative Case*

In this section, I will propose (i) that the modal auxiliaries in the modal-existential carry a [+neg]-feature, (ii) that this [+neg]-feature needs to be licensed or discharged either by spec-head agreement with a negative XP or by government of a negative XP, (iii) that negative XPs have to adjoin to VP to be accessible to neg-licensing under government (Christensen's QP-movement), (iv) that neg-licensing can rescue the negative subject in modal-existentials from violating the Case Filter, (v) that if the neg-licensing occurs under government, the specifier of the projection of the modal may have to be filled with an expletive. Early Modern English and Mainland Scandinavian then are examples of languages where neg-licensing occurs under government, hence the existence of modal-existentials and of QP-movement. Let me elaborate.

6.1 The Neg-Criterion

The main theoretical problem that the modal-existential construction raises concerns the question of how the subject is licensed in a position where it is not normally licensed in subject expletive languages. The approach I would like to take here is that there is a special licensing relation between the modal auxiliary and the negative subject. I will assume that the modal carries a [+neg]-specification not only at the stage where there is an overt clitic *ne* but also at later stages; the only difference being whether there is a phonetic spell-out of the [+neg]-feature. To understand the licensing relation that obtains in the modal-existential, we have to turn to theories of the syntax of negation.

A very influential view of how morphological/semantic features of heads control syntactic phenomena takes off from Robert May's formulation of the *Wh*-Criterion given in (34) as modified by Luigi Rizzi (1991).

(34) The *Wh*-Criterion:

    A. A *Wh*-Operator must be in a Spec-Head configuration with a [+*wh*] X^0·

    B. A [+*wh*] X^0 must be in a Spec-Head configuration with a *Wh*-Operator.

Since in English preposed negative constituents trigger verb movement to Comp just like *wh*-moved phrases do, Rizzi briefly suggests generalizing the *Wh*-Criterion to other "affective" operators. In the case of the [+neg]-feature the general principle would then be instantiated in a *Neg*-Criterion. This suggestion has been taken up in recent work by Liliane Haegeman and Raffaella Zanuttini. They propose the *Neg*-Criterion in (35) as a principle governing the relationship between negative heads and negative XPs.

(35) The *Neg*-Criterion

    A. A *Neg*-Operator must be in a Spec-Head configuration with a [+neg] X^0·

    B. A [+neg] X^0 must be in a Spec-Head configuration with a *Neg*-Operator.

Empirical arguments for this principle center around the syntax of negation in West Flemish (Haegeman and Zanuttini 1991) and in a wide variety of Romance languages (Zanuttini 1991). The reader is referred to these works for details.

What we have here is a mechanism of feature-sharing, of agreement. In some languages, the [+neg]-feature can be phonetically spelled-out on both the negative head and associated negative XPs: this is the well-known phenomenon of negative concord. For a lucid discussion, Ladusaw (1992) should be consulted.

Can we use the insights of these studies of the syntax of negation for a better understanding of the modal-existential construction? I think so. In the following sections, I will sketch an account of modal-existentials that takes off from the notion of negative agreement which is behind the *Neg*-Criterion. There are three steps to my story: (i) I will argue that the negative agreement in modal-existentials occurs via head government of the subject by the modal, which I take to be an instance of a generally available parametric option of agreement via head government. (ii) I will suggest that in modal-existentials the negated modal is indeed taking the sentential scope indicated by its surface position and that the negated subject does not take scope over it at LF. (iii) I will suggest that the negative subject is licensed in its surface position by the negative agreement which thereby takes over the licensing function usually held by case assignment. This mechanism I will call "negative case".

6.2 Spec-Head Agreement vs. Government

It is now time to think about the exact relation that holds between the [+neg] modal and the [+neg] subject in modal-existentials. If the subject does not raise at LF, how can the *Neg*-Criterion be satisfied? At this point, I have to take sides in a debate of wide-ranging consquences. The tradition in which the *Neg*-Criterion was formulated gives the Spec-Head configuration a privileged place in syntax and tries to reduce many (if not all) agreement and government relations to this configuration (cf. also Chomsky 1991). There is another line of thought, however, in which there are two prototypical licensing relations: the Spec-Head configuration and the relation of Head-Government. For nominative case assignment, for example, the possibility of Infl discharging [+nom] to a governed subject in [Spec,VP], or some other governed position, has been pursued by Koopman and Sportiche (1991) and many researchers working on Germanic languages (among others myself, cf. von Fintel 1990).

I suggest that in the modal-existential construction the [+neg] modal and the [+neg] subject satisfy the *Neg*-Criterion by virtue of their being in a head-governee relation. This is directly applicable to the early stages when there was no expletive *there* there.

(12)   ne mai   no man   πese word seggen

For the analysis of the later stages, we need to get clear about the role of the expletive. There are two obvious possibilities. (i) We could say that expletive *there* and the negative subject form a chain which then constitutes the object that the [+neg] modal stands in the relevant relation to. This is similar to old stories about case transmission in existential sentences. (ii) The appearance of the expletive could be blamed on the increasing specifier-obsession of the English language. [Spec,IP] needs to be filled and the expletive *there* is co-opted from similar constructions. In that case, the expletive would play no role in the special licensing relation in modal-existentials but is there for independent reasons.

I am leaning towards the second position but do not have conclusive arguments at this point. If this view turns out to be right, then Jacobsson's intriguing remark is vindicated: "historically, the use of the introductory *there* is perhaps rather the result of inversion than the cause of it" (1951: 209).

6.3 Negative Modals and Scope

The structure that I am going to assume for modal-existentials is given in (36).

(36) [$_{IP}$ there [$_{I'}$ modal$_{[+neg]}$ [$_{VP}$ subject$_{[+neg]}$ [$_{V'}$ …]]]]

An important issue is why modal-existentials usually have a modal in them. The answer comes from a consideration of the meaning of such sentences. The crucial point is that the (negated) modal has sentential scope over everything else in the clause. A typical example as in (37a) is naturally paraphrased as (37b).

(37) a. c1450 MKempe 233.22 [Ball: 301]
          Why dredist De? D**er schal no man don non harm to** D**e**
          'Why are you afraid? There shall no man do no harm to you'
      b. "It shall not be the case that any man does you any harm."

Now, sentential scope is not usually something that verbs assume. Small wonder then that we don't find full finite verbs in the same place as our modals.

Of course, for the modern English dialects where the construction survives the question of why only modals occur finds another answer in the fact that modern English only allows auxiliaries in Infl anyway. No full verb could occur there

these days. But this is not enough to explain the facts in the Early Modern English period where full verb raising was still available.[11]

Another question that naturally arises is why the negative subject couldn't take scope over the modal at LF, say after having been raised by QR. If that is available, then there shouldn't be any prohibition against having full verbs in the place of the modal. At this point, all I can say about this is that maybe the special licensing relation between the modal and the subject freezes the subject in its surface position so that it cannot raise at LF. Similar ideas have been pursued for the semantics effects of scrambling in German and Dutch (cf. Diesing 1990b, von Fintel 1990, Rullmann 1992).

Readers familiar with work on the semantics of modals may object to my account on the grounds that some of the examples of modal-existentials apparently involve so-called 'root' modals. The example in (38) seems to contain a dynamic modal *might* which talks about the physical capabilities of the knights. Only Arthur was physically capable of taking the sword Excalibur out.

(38)   Malory 42 [Jacobsson, p. 207]
       But there afore them alle **ther myghte none take it out but Arthur** /
       wherfor ther were many lordes wroth.

In response to this worry, it is important to realize that it is in fact not easy to decide whether we are talking about the physical capabilities of individuals or about the physical make-up of the world. To me the sentence could perhaps mean something like "It was physically impossible that anyone other than Arthur take the sword out". It may very well be that it is the later developments of English when subjects invariably had to raise to [Spec,IP] that predisposed theoreticians to think that modals are VP-operators and do not take sentential scope. However, the issues involved are much too intricate for this occasion and I will leave it at these programmatic remarks.

I will, however, point two oddities of Modern English grammar that may be related to the issues just sketched.[12] These (marginal?) phenomena suggest that at

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[11]It is interesting to speculate that there is a connection between the demise of modal-existentials and the loss of full V-to-I raising (as suggested to me by Cathy Ball, p.c.). The availability of the construction in modern dialects which do not have V-to-I, however, would seem to argue against such an account.

[12]Barbara Partee (pc) pointed these facts out to me.

least at LF modals still have scope over the whole sentence although the subject has raised over it at s-structure. First, there are peculiar tag-questions where a *there* shows up out of nowhere. Consider the contrast in (39).[13]

(39) a. Noone could solve this problem, could there?

b. *Everyone could solve this problem, couldn't there?

The marginal acceptability of the tag question with *there* in (39b) may be a subliminal after-effect of the existence of the patterns discussed here. Secondly, Muffy Siegel noted coordination structures as in bla(40) which suggest that the modal in the first clause has scope over the whole sentence.

(40) John can't go out every night and me stay home with the kids … it's unfair.

Note that the modal here is a deontic root modal with sentential scope. Sometimes both epistemic and root readings are available (Beatrice Santorini, p.c.):

(41) John must work every night and her stay home with the kids …
epistemic: …presumably that's how they're weathering the recession.
root: …otherwise they won't (be able to) weather the recession.

One last remark: there are other auxiliaries that very plausibly take sentential scope, especially aspectual auxiliaries. It turns out that some examples of our construction do in fact have aspectual verbs instead of modals. This is to be expected under my account. Some of the Mainland Scandinavian examples given by Christensen are of this sort, cf. (27) and (28). Some non-modal Early Modern English examples are given in (42).

(42) a. 1500-50 Boorde Introduction of Knowledge 219 [Jacobsson, p. 207]
…the chief towne of Iury is Ierusalem, which was a noble citie, but now it is destroyed, and **there doth neuer a Iue dwell in al Iury**.

b. 1614 Ralegh Selections 151 [Jacobsson, p. 208]
So that ere the morning, from three of the clocke the day before, **there had fifteene severall Armados assailed her**.

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[13]Beatrice Santorini (p.c.) points out that this also occurs without modals:

(i) a. Noone solved the problem, did there?
b. Noone ever solves that problem, does there?

The issue of which other operators (aspectuals, frequency, etc.) can appear in this structure will have to be addressed in future incarnations of this paper.

There are not many such examples, the ones that there are tend to be later ones and untypical in other respects too. (42b), for example, has a rare non-negative subject. These may be late analogy-driven usages.

6.4 "Negative Case"

We now have to face the most delicate question in the analysis of modal-existentials. How is the negative subject licensed in its VP-internal position? We know now how it shares its [+neg]-feature with the modal, but doesn't it need case, too? Can we say that it is receiving standard nominative case? Unfortunately not. We would be losing all hope of explaining the special properties of our construction. If nominative case were available in [Spec,VP], then we couldn't not explain why we only find negative subjects in modal-existentials. Again, a more parochial mechanism is called for.

My suggestion is that it is precisely the [+neg]-agreement relation between the modal and the subject that licenses the subject. I suggest that negative heads may be able to license their associated negative NP if the right configuration obtains. This could be called *negative case*.

At this point, the reader will have innumerable questions and worries that I cannot possibly address here. The mechanism of negative case proposed here obviously has the flavor of a construction-specific gadget. To save the modal-existential construction and with it the notion of negative case from being relegated to the periphery of UG, we would clearly have to investigate the parallels between the Early Modern English phenomena and the behavior of negative subjects in other languages. I hope to do this at a future occasion.

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