5. Diachrony of split NP/DP constructions

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I. The form-meaning mismatch

- Hyperbaton is a showcase example of a many-to-one relation between (surface) form and meaning.
- In hyperbata, a listener processing the utterance has to analyze two or more syntactic objects compositionally despite their discontinuity:

(1) ándra   moi   énnepe, moũsa, polýtropon
     man.ACC me.DAT tell.IMP muse   much.turned.M.ACC
     Lit. 'Tell me, o Muse, of the much-travelled man [...]'

- In early Indo-European (IE) languages, hyperbaton is more frequent than in later stages (cf. Lühr 2016).

> Question → What are the conditions triggering hyperbaton that were lost diachronically?

II. Motivation

- Given compositionality, a split between head and "dependent" in DP/NPs is unexpected.
- In IE languages, diachronic change is unidirectional: hyperbaton is massively restricted (a notable exception being Greek).
- This development raises several questions:
i.   The computational load in processing hyperbata is high. So, what are the benefits?
ii. Do we have to assume information- and discourse-structural factors ruling discontinuity?
iii. How do these factors change and how are they related to other syntactic changes?
iv. Why do languages with massively restricted hyperbata end up with the patterns currently attested?

III. Research questions

- Is hyperbaton really a case of extraction, or is the pattern base-generated?

- What are the consequences of hyperbaton for syntactic theory?

- How does information structure interact with syntax? How and why does this interaction change?

- Do other changes, e.g. shifts in the distribution of subject pro, interact with the development of hyperbata?

IV. Hypotheses and method

> Hypothesis→(i) hyperbata originate in structures in which the head and the dependent are to a certain degree syntactically and semantically independent from each other and do not give rise to form-meaning mismatches.
> (ii) Only their (later) reinterpretation as parts of one constituent leads to a violation of compositionality. The ultimate loss of hyperbata in most languages is an attempt to recreate a perfect match between form and meaning.

- Study on quantified expressions in one or more Indo-European languages, based on diachronic text corpora.
- Specific hypotheses to be tested:
i.   The development of Q(uantifier)-heads into modifiers leads to a loss of hyperbata;
ii. The weaker the head of a dependent NP/DP with respect to information structure and/or argument hierarchy, the more prone it is to hyperbaton;
iii. Hyperbata still attested at later stages have been grammaticalized.

Figure 1: Example of a hyperbaton in Ancient Greek (see ex. (1), Odyssey 1,1,
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odyssey)

V. Connections to other research projects

- Type of form-meaning mismatch: **4,6** (many:1 form-meaning mismatch)
- Empirical domain: **2,8,11** (Language change)
- Content: **2,8,9**
- Methods: **virtually all** (corpus study)

VI. Possible follow-up studies

1. Split-NP vs. floating quantifiers in diachronic perspective
2. Diachrony of right dislocation/heavy NP-shift
3. Pied piping vs. stranding in relative constructions