

The Story of ‘Woe’*

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Abstract

In contrast to the received consensus in the historical-comparative linguistic community, we argue that syntactic reconstruction is both a plausible and a feasible enterprise. We illustrate this with an investigation of the syntactic behavior of **wai* ‘woe’ across five subbranches of Indo-European, i.e. Indo-Iranian, Italic, Baltic, Slavic and Germanic. The adverbial interjection **wai* ‘woe’ is found instantiating three different constructions, which we label: 1) the Bare Exclamative Construction, 2) the Dative Exclamative Construction, and 3) the Predicative Construction. We suggest that the Predicative Construction is archaic in the Indo-European languages, and that the Dative Exclamative Construction has developed from a focalized variant of the Predicative Construction, used in exclamatory context, since ‘woe’ is the quintessential candidate for being focused in situations of adversity. On the basis of the comparative evidence, all three constructions must be reconstructed for Proto-Indo-European, as well as a subject–verb construction, which determines the default word order properties between the subject and the verb, and finally a focus construction where focalized material occurs in first position. We couch our analysis within the formalism of Sign-Based Construction Grammar, establishing beyond doubt that syntactic reconstruction is a viable endeavor within historical-comparative linguistics.

1. Introduction

The Comparative Method in historical-comparative linguistics has most successfully been applied within the fields of phonology, morphology and the lexicon, while syntactic reconstruction has been subject to considerable controversy, considered as uninteresting, being to no avail, or even abnegated (cf. Watkins 1964, Jeffers 1976,

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Lightfoot 1979, 2002, 2006, Harrison 2003, Pires & Thomason 2008, Mengden 2008, *inter alia*). There are several reasons for this controversy, but one of the main reason is that syntactic structures have been regarded as fundamentally different from morphological and lexical structures in that they are not a straightforward form–meaning pairing. It has been generally assumed that since syntactic structures are larger and more complex than words and morphemes, their meaning is compositional, i.e. a sum of the meaning of the parts, hence they are not simple form–meaning correspondences like words (cf. Klein 2010). As is well known, form–meaning correspondences are the basis for the input of correspondence sets, so if syntactic structures are not form–meaning correspondences, they do not function as input for correspondence sets across languages, and hence there can be no reconstruction.

Several other issues have been brought forward as arguments against syntactic reconstruction, such as lack of COGNATE STATUS, lack of ARBITRARINESS, lack of REGULARITY in syntactic development, and the problem of DISCONTINUOUS TRANSMISSION. Recent work within historical-comparative syntax challenges these views of syntactic reconstruction, arguing instead that syntactic reconstruction is not only possible but also quite feasible (Kikusawa 2003, Harris 2008, Bovern 2008, Eythórsson & Barðdal 2011, Barðdal & Eythórsson 2012a, Barðdal & Eythórsson 2012b, Barðdal 2013, Barðdal & Smitherman 2013). We have dealt thoroughly with these issues elsewhere, and refer the interested reader to these publications for details. What we want to accomplish in the present article is to show by means of a case study involving ‘woe’ how syntactic reconstruction may be carried out in a satisfactory manner. We propose to do this with the aid of the theoretical framework of Construction Grammar, in which the basic unit of language is the CONSTRUCTION, i.e. a form–function correspondence. As already mentioned above, it is precisely form–function correspondences that serve as units of comparanda in the Comparative Method. This is why we believe that Construction Grammar is the ideal theoretical framework for reconstructing syntax, as the leap from synchronic form–function correspondences to historical form–function correspondences is minimal.

As an exercise in syntactic reconstruction, with the aim of illustrating in detail how such reconstruction may be carried out, we compare the syntactic contexts found for an Indo-European interjection, traditionally reconstructed as PIE **wai* ‘woe’, which is found in most of the ancient and archaic Indo-European languages. The interjection ‘woe’ occurs in three different constructions in the early Indo-European languages: a bare exclamative, an exclamative together with a dative argument, and a predicative construction where ‘woe’ forms a predicate together with the verb ‘be’, subcategorizing for a dative subject-like argument. Examples of each of these are given in (1a–c) below from Latin:

- (1a) dixit ... nescia, **vae**, furiis accubuisse nous
 spoke.3SG not.knowing woe frenzies have.laid.down new
 ‘She spoke ... not knowing, woe, that she had lain down among fresh frenzies’
 (Prop. Elegies IV, 4, 65)
- (1b) **vae** victis
 woe conquered.ones.DAT
 ‘Woe to the conquered ones!’ (Livy, 5.48.9)

- (1c) immo **uae** tibi sit
 then woe you.DAT is.3SG.SBJ
 ‘Then, you shall have woe!’ (Plautus, *Cas.* 633)

We analyze these as three different constructions, with different syntactic properties. We propose that the dative exclamative has developed from the predicative construction, and that it exhibits specific discourse-pragmatic properties, which may distinguish it from the predicative construction. We will henceforth refer to these constructions as a) the Bare Exclamative, b) the Dative Exclamative and c) the Predicative Construction. We analyze the dative as a subject in the Predicative Construction (see Section 5 below), in accordance with our earlier work on the topic (see references above).

Our main goal in using the examples with ‘woe’ is twofold:

- a) to argue for the existence of argument structures where the first subject-like argument is not in the nominative case in Proto-Indo-European, but is non-canonically marked;
- b) to try it as a test case for showing how syntactic structures may be reconstructed for Proto-Indo-European, based on cognate lexical items and cognate argument structure constructions, i.e. inherited argument structure constructions consisting of the same syntactic form and the same meaning or function.

In the following, we start in Section 2 with an introduction of the form, the etymology and the discourse pragmatics of **wai* ‘woe’. Next, in Section 3, we present data from Indo-Iranian, Latin, Baltic, Slavic and Germanic, each in a subsection of its own, documenting the existence of these constructions, to a varying degree, in all of these Indo-European subbranches. We then propose a relative chronology for the three constructions, arguing that the Dative Exclamative has developed from the Predicative Construction. After that, in Section 4, we present argumentation that ‘woe’ is an adverb and not a noun in the predicative construction. In Section 5, we discuss the syntactic function of the dative argument. In Section 6 we analyze the word order differences found both across the Indo-European languages and within each language, before we, in Section 7, present an attempt at reconstructing all three ‘woe’ constructions for Proto-Indo-European. Section 8 contains a summary of the content of this article.

2. Form and Meaning

The lexical item **wai* is found in all the major branches of the Indo-European languages, as shown in Table 1 (Pokorny 1959). It may be of onomatopoeic origin, as suggested by de Vaan (2008), developing from an “Urschrei”, and its earliest function was presumably that of an extra-sentential interjection; as such it can be classified as an adverbial. A similar interjection is also found outside of Indo-European, notably in Semitic (Bomhard 2011), as well as in some languages that have been in close contact with these two language families. This suggests that the adverbial interjection ‘woe’ is very ancient. Whether ‘woe’ is borrowed from Semitic to prehistoric Indo-European or from prehistoric Indo-European to Semitic is hard to ascertain, and in any case, out of the scope of the present article.

The form **wai* can anyway be taken as a shared inheritance in the Indo-European languages and is therefore to be reconstructed for Proto-Indo-European. Despite its putative onomatopoeic origin, there is no reason to assume that it has arisen independently in the individual daughter languages (as suggested by de Vaan 2008: 650). As stated in Pokorny (1959: 1111), the noun *fāed* ‘scream’ in Middle Irish, the verb *vajāt* ‘ache’ in Latvian, the verb *wajamērijan* ‘slander’ in Gothic and the adjective *veill* (if from **vé-heill*) ‘weak’ in Old Norse-Icelandic are derivations of **wai*, to give only a few of the related forms cited there. Moreover, the Gothic negative complementizer *wai-nei* ‘if only’ is the result of a combination of *wai* and the negation *nei* (original meaning: ‘woe that not’; cf. Lehmann 1986: 387). Such derived forms show that the etymon **wai* is an integral part of the Indo-European vocabulary.

Table 1: The lexical item ‘woe’ in Indo-European

Germanic:	
Old English	<i>wā</i>
Old Saxon	<i>wē</i>
Old High German	<i>wē</i>
Old Norse-Icelandic	<i>vei</i>
Gothic	<i>wai</i>
Italic:	
Latin	<i>vae</i>
Old Slavic:	
Old Russian	<i>ouvy</i>
Old Church Slavic	<i>ouvy</i>
Baltic:	
Latvian	<i>vai</i>
Lithuanian	<i>vai</i>
Armenian	<i>vay</i>
Albanian	<i>vaj</i>
Celtic:	
Old Irish	<i>fē</i>
Welsh	<i>gwae</i>
Anatolian:	
Hittite	<i>wai</i>
Indo-Iranian:	
Gatha Avestan	<i>vaiiōi, auuōi</i>
Young Avestan	<i>āuuōiia</i>

In Table 1, Ancient Greek is conspicuous by its absence, since reflexes of PIE **wai* do not seem to occur there. Instead we find other interjections, the earliest being *ō* and *oi*, which are unlikely to be related to the Proto-Indo-European **wai*. These elements occur in the exclamations *ōmoi* and *oimoi*, apparently lexicalized together with a dative pronoun of the 1st singular, and these instantiate a construction functionally equivalent to the Dative Exclamative with ‘woe’ in other Indo-European languages. Another early Greek interjection is *oá* (interjection of pain), along with the later attested *ouá*, *ouã* (interjection of admiration), and *ouái* (interjection of pain). For a summary, see Frisk (1960–72: II 343) and Chantraine (1968–80: 835). The absence of *ouái* in Homeric and Classical Greek suggests that, despite its formal and functional correspondence to **wai*, this form is a borrowing, presumably from Hebrew, and perhaps remodeled on Latin *vae* (with *ou-* used to render *w-*). It is also unclear whether

the Slavic form *owyy* is inherited or borrowed; the same may be true of Serbian *vāj* and Armenian *vay* (however, Pokorny 1959: 1110–1111 argues that the latter is inherited).

While traces of **wai* appear absent in Indo-Aryan, Gatha Avestan, the earliest representative of Iranian, has two forms, *vaiiōi* and *auuōi*. The first one could be a reduplicated form **wai-wai* and the second a reduced variant of the first, with the initial **wai* being reduced to *a-*. The Young Avestan form is clearly derived from the Gatha Avestan by means of an element *-ā*, which could be the feminine *-ā* suffix used to form abstract nouns in Old Indo-Iranian, although this is uncertain (cf. Wackernagel & Debrunner 1954). All other forms in Table 1 must be considered as continuing Proto-Indo-European **wai*, and they are either identical to the proto-form or derivable from it by regular sound laws.

The discourse-pragmatic function of the interjection **wai* was that of adversity; it was generally used when something bad happened to people. It is exploited to convey anguish and consternation, basically functioning as “Ausdruck des Jammers” (Hofmann 1936: 13). It is used in 1st person when the speaker feels as if he or she is in trouble, is ruined or lost, or generally when something negative happens. When used with 2nd or 3rd person referents, it is most often a curse, an insult, or is used to heap abuse on somebody. Leumann, Hofmann & Szantyr (1972–79 II: 93) propose that the Latin phrase *vae tibi* is semantically equivalent to *male tibi sit*, meaning ‘bad to you’; in both cases the placement of the adverbial in first position is concomitant with the exclamative value of the expression. Observe that *male tibi sit* is also structurally similar to *vae tibi*, as both adverbs, *vae* ‘woe’ and *male* ‘bad’, form a predicate with the verb ‘be’, a compositional predicate selecting for a dative subject-like argument, as we will argue below.

We now proceed to a systematic overview of the three ‘woe’ constructions in five branches of Indo-European, Avestan, Latin, Baltic, Slavic and Germanic.

3. The Syntax of ‘Woe’ in a Subset of the Indo-European Languages

In this section we present data documenting the existence of all three constructions, the Bare Exclamative, the Dative Exclamative and the Predicative ‘woe’ construction, across different subsections of the five Indo-European branches under consideration. We start with Indo-Iranian.

3.1 Indo-Iranian

The earliest documented stage of Avestan is Gatha Avestan, in which only two examples of ‘woe’ are attested. The first example contains the form *auuōi*, and the second contains the form *vaiiōi*:

- (2a) *aēibiio* aṅhōus **auuōi** aṅhat apōmēm *Gatha Avestan*
 them.DAT life.GEN woe were.3SG.SBJ last
 ‘Woe shall be to them/they shall have woe at the end of (their) life’¹
 (Yasna 45.3)

¹ Cf. Humbach et al. (1991): ‘For them ‘woe’ will be the last (word) of (their) existence’.

approach accepts each manuscript on its own merits. The fact of the matter is that the text in Ambrosianus offers us this particular evidence, even though it is a hapax legomenon. On the basis of these considerations, we choose to take this example seriously instead of rejecting it as a possible scribal error. Rejecting an attestation on the basis that it could be a scribal error also requires independent corroboration, other than merely the paucity of the evidence.

To summarize, all three ‘woe’ constructions are found in Latin, although the Predicative Construction is clearly extremely rare, with only one attested example in the preserved material.

3.3 Baltic

In Baltic ‘woe’ is attested in both Lithuanian and Latvian, as *vaĩ* and *vai*, respectively. All three constructions, the Bare Exclamative, the Dative Exclamative and the Predicative Construction are found. The example in (10) exemplifies the first construction:

- (10) Sirgau visa žiema, **vaĩ** *Lithuanian dialect in Belarus*
 be.sick all winter, woe
 ‘I’ve been sick all winter, woe’

Both Latvian and Lithuanian have the Dative Exclamative Construction. The example in (10a) is from Latvian and the examples in (11b–c) are from Lithuanian:

- (11a) **wai** man nabbagam *Latvian*
 woe me.DAT poor.DAT
 ‘Woe to me, the poor’ (Stender 1789: 340)
- (11b) **Ai**man tos dienos! *Lithuanian*
 woe.me.DAT these days.NOM
 ‘Woe to me during these times!’ (Nesselmann 1851: 13)
- (11c) Šiomet už linus brangiau gausime – **ai**mán! *Lithuanian*
 this year for.linen expensive get woe.me.DAT
 ‘This year we will get more for the linen – Bejesus!’ (LKZ 1: 31)

Notice that the examples in (11b–c) show a variant of Lithuanian *vaĩ*, *ai* with the initial *v*- lost. The example in (11b) is from Standard Lithuanian, while (11c) is from the Anykščiai dialect spoken in the eastern part of the country (East-Highland dialect). In both Lithuanian examples the form **ai**man appears, which is clearly a lexicalized expression.

It may be mentioned that two examples are documented in older Lithuanian texts, more precisely in Daukša’s Postilla from 1599. In both examples *ai* occurs with a pronoun in the genitive case rather than the expected dative:

- (12a) Bylo apie tinginius, kokių yra, **ai**manęs, tarp mūsų *Lithuanian*
 talked about lazy.ACC.PL who.GEN.PL are woe.me.GEN among us
 ‘Talked about the lazy ones, how many they are, woe me, among us’
 (DP 381,37)

- (12b) kaip' tos paklîdušios Dwâfios: kurîų **áimanęs** *Lithuanian*
 like those lost souls.NOM.PL who.GEN.PL woe.me.GEN
 teip' nu iðęio dauĝ ant' pafaulo.
 how now go many on earth
 'like those lost souls, how many, woe me, they are that walk on earth'
 (DP 232,13)

We believe that this pattern is a variant of the Dative Exclamative, with the subject-like argument case marked in the genitive instead of the expected dative. Since the dative in older Lithuanian texts does not merge with the genitive, it is possible that the genitive here is a result of genitive attraction. In view of the fact that a genitive occurs earlier in the clause, it may have affected the case marking of the following pronoun with 'woe'.

Finally, in Modern and Early Modern Latvian, the Predicative Construction exists, shown in (13) below:

- (13a) **Vai** ka tev bus. *Latvian*
 woe how you.DAT be.FUT
 'Oh how it will be terrible for you!'
- (13b) *Meitai* esuot **vai** kâ. (Mühlenbach & Endzelīns 1925–27: 433) *Latvian*
 girl.DAT be.SBJ woe such
 'If the girl were pregnant, oh how terrible!'

Observe that the verb 'be' is in the future tense in (13a) and in the subjunctive in (13b). Example (13a) is elicited from a native speaker, showing that the Predicative Construction is still used in Modern Latvian.

In sum, all three constructions, the Bare Exclamative, the Dative Exclamative and the Predicative Construction, exist in Baltic.

3.4 Old Slavic

Slavic differs from the languages that we have discussed so far in that only the Bare Exclamative and the Dative Exclamative are found. The example in (14) illustrates the bare Exclamative in Russian, while the examples in (15) show the Dative Exclamative in Old Church Slavonic and Old Russian, respectively:²

- (14) Možet byt, nazovut jego xarakterom izbitym, *Modern Russian*
 could be call him.ACC character beaten
 stanut govorit, čto teper net uže Nozdreva. **Uvy**.
 begin say that now not longer Nozdreva woe
 'Perhaps, they will call him a beaten character, they will come to say that there is no longer a Nozdrev. Woe! (N.V. Gogol', *Mertvyje duši*, 1842)
- (15a) **ouvy** mьně **ouvy** mьně *Old Church Slavonic*
 woe me.DAT woe me.DAT
 'Woe to me, woe to me!' (Supraliensis 78:27)

² We here opt for the transliteration of the older Slavic form *ouvy* and not the accepted phonetic transcription, *ovy*, which corresponds to a transliteration of the Modern Russian form, *yobl*.

- (15b) **Ouvy** *tebe*, okaпъnyi gorode *Old Russian*
 woe thee.DAT unhappy.VOC town.VOC
 ‘Woe be to thee, o’ unhappy town’ (Povest vremennyx let, 107)

It is, moreover, clear that *ouvy* is a rendering of New Testament Greek *ouai* (cf. Sreznevsky 1912: 1123), which may be a calque of the Hebrew or the Latin form. Not only is the Predicative Construction undocumented in historical texts, native speakers confirm that it does not exist in Modern Russian. It may be noted, however, that a predicative construction, involving the verb ‘be’ and a subject-like dative, is found in Modern Russian, with the exclamative noun *gore* ‘woe’, showing that a construction of this type certainly exists in Modern Russian, although the lexical material is different. At present, we cannot know whether the Predicative Construction has fallen into disuse in Slavic, or whether the attested variant of the Dative Exclamative Construction has been borrowed from another language.

3.5 Germanic

All three ‘woe’ constructions, the Bare Exclamative, the Dative Exclamative, and the Predicative ‘woe’ construction, are found in the earliest Germanic texts. The Bare Exclamative is found in Gothic and West Germanic.³

- (16a) **wai**, þan waila izwis qiþand allai mans *Gothic*
 woe when well you.DAT speak all.NOM men.NOM
 ‘Woe, when all men will speak well of you’ (Lukas 6: 26)
- (16b) **Uuela**, that thu nu, Êua, haþas ... ubilo gimarakot *Old Saxon*
 woe that you.NOM now Eve have evil.ACC established
 unkaro selþaro sið
 our.GEN self.GEN journey
 ‘Woe that you, Eve, have now established evil for our own journey’
 (Genesis 556–557a)

Examples of the Dative Exclamative are found in all three branches of Germanic. The examples in (17) below exemplify the construction in the Gothic Bible, Old English and Old Norse-Icelandic.

- (17a) **wai** izwis þaim gabeigam *Gothic*
 woe you.DAT.PL the.DAT.PL rich.DAT.PL
 ‘woe to you, the rich’ (Luke 6,24)
- (17b) **Wa** eow þe gadriað hus to huse *Old English*
 woe you.DAT that gather house to house
 ‘Woe to you, who gather house from house’ (Pastoral Care xlix. 378)

³ The Bare Exclamative is found once in Old Norse-Icelandic (*vé* ‘woe’ in a religious text, presumably borrowed from Mid Low German; cf. de Vries 1977: 649). Otherwise in the older North Germanic languages, as well as in the modern North Germanic languages, it occurs as *vei* (Icelandic, Faroese, older Norwegian) and *ve* (Danish, Swedish).

- (17c) **vei** *oss*, **vei** *oss* at vér skyldim alnar verða *Old Norse-Icelandic*
 woe us.DAT woe us.DAT that we should born become
 ‘woe to us, woe to us that we were borne’ (Klm. 62³⁰)

Instances of the Predicative Construction are quite common in the early texts. The examples in (18) are from Old English, Old Saxon, Old High German, Middle Dutch and Old Norse-Icelandic.

- (18a) **Wa** bið þæm þe sceal ... *Old English*
 woe is them.DAT that shall
 ‘Woe have they that shall ...’ (Beowulf 183)

- (18b) **uuê** uuarð thi, Hierusalem *Old Saxon*
 woe became you.DAT, Jerusalem
 ‘You had woe, Jerusalem’ (Heliand 3691)

- (18c) Ube dir **we** ist, sô nist *Old High German*
 if you.DAT woe is.3SG so not.is.3SG
 dir aber nîeht **wola**.
 you.DAT however not well
 ‘If you have woe, that does not mean you don’t have it well.’
 (Notker, Sprichwort 6)

- (18d) V[er]coren lief, mi es soe **wee** *Middle Dutch*
 chosen love me.OBL is so woe
 ‘O chosen love, I have such woe’ (Beatrijs, (4), 111)

- (18e) nú er *oss* **vei**, er vér erum hjalplausar *Old Norse-Icelandic*
 now is us.DAT woe, as we are helpless
 ‘now we have woe, as we are helpless’ (Ridd 65³⁴)

The Predicative Construction has been maintained in both Modern Icelandic and Modern German, with a dative subject.

- (19a) **Vei** sé *furðufuglum* í sjálfskapaðri *Modern Icelandic*
 woe is.SBJ odd-birds.DAT in self-made
 Framsóknar þoku.
 Progressive.Party fog
 ‘Woe to the odd birds in the self-induced fog of the Progressive Party.’

- (19b) *Mir* ist **weh** um dich. *Modern German*
 me.DAT is woe about you
 ‘I worry about you.’

Here it can be added that ‘woe’ has developed nominal uses in many of the Germanic languages, and adjectival uses in English and German (cf. OED 1989, Kluge 2002). The example in (18b) above may be regarded as an instance of adjectival use in German, which appears to be very common in this language. The use of the Predicative Construction in the Icelandic example in (19a) is archaic. Observe that the

verb ‘be’ is in the subjunctive mood, exactly as in the Avestan, Latin, and Baltic examples above.

This investigation of the early Germanic languages shows that all three ‘woe’ constructions are attested from the earliest documented texts, and are still found in some of the Modern Germanic languages.

3.6 Relative Chronology of the Three ‘Woe’ Constructions

Previously in this section we have compared data from Old Indo-Iranian, early Italic, Old Slavic, Baltic, and Germanic. In four branches out of five, all three ‘woe’ constructions are attested, the Bare Exclamative, the Dative Exclamative and the Predicative Construction. In Slavic, however, the Predicative construction is not attested, only the Bare and the Dative Exclamative Constructions.

This state of affairs raises questions about the diachronic development and the relative chronology of the three ‘woe’ constructions. Assuming that the Bare Exclamative is the original construction, two scenarios are possible. The first one is that the Bare Exclamative gives rise to the Dative Exclamative, which subsequently develops a use with the verb ‘be’. At first sight, this appears as a logical possibility, entirely in the spirit of grammaticalization theory. One construction feeds into the other, with incremental additions at each step, first the addition of the dative, and second the addition of the verb ‘be’.

However, both steps are highly problematic, in our view. First, it is difficult to imagine where the dative comes from if it is not subcategorized for. If one wants to add a reference to a person when uttering an interjective exclamation, it seems that several options are found in the Indo-European languages with regard to case marking, such as nominative, vocative, and accusative, in addition to the dative:

Nominative:

- (20a) Ach **der** Peter! *Modern German*
 oh the.NOM Peter
 ‘Oh, good old Peter!’
- (20b) Ó ó, æ æ, aumingja **ég** ... *Modern Icelandic*
 oh oh ouch ouch poor I.NOM
 ‘Oh oh, ouch ouch, poor me ...’
- (20c) O **vir fortis**, atque **amicus**. *Latin*
 oh man.NOM brave.NOM and kind.NOM
 ‘Oh brave man, and kind!’ (Ter. *Phorm.* 2.2)
- (20d) Ô **tálas egó, tálas** *Ancient Greek*
 oh wretched.NOM I.NOM wretched.NOM
 ‘Oh I wretched, wretched!’ (Soph. *Aj.* 981)

Vocative:

- (21a) O **Romule, Romule die!** *Latin*
 oh Romul.voc Romul.voc divine.voc
 ‘Oh Romul, divine Romul!’ (Cic. *Rep.* 1, 64)

- (21b) **Ô Akhileû** Pēlêos **huiè** *Ancient Greek*
 Oh Achilles.voc Peleus.GEN son.voc
 ‘O Achilles, son of Peleus’ (Hom. *Il.* 19.216)

Accusative:

- (22a) **Æ mig auman! Greyið ég ...** *Modern Icelandic*
 oh me.ACC wretched.ACC poor.thing.NOM I.NOM
 var að koma frá tannlækni
 was to come from dentist
 ‘Oh miserable me! Poor I ... just came back from the dentist’
- (22b) **‘Me miserum!’** exclamat pater Inachus ... *Latin*
 me.ACC wretched.ACC shouts father Inachus
 ‘Poor me! shouts her father, Inachus ... (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.651)
- (22c) **naì mà tòn Díá** *Ancient Greek*
 yes PART the.ACC Zeus.ACC
 Yes, by Zeus!’ (Plat. *Rep.* 407b)

These examples show that the dative is not necessarily the default case with interjections, raising the more general question of where the case marking comes from with interjections. It is easy to explain the occurrence of the nominative, as it can be regarded as a default case. The same is true for the vocative; it is used in a direct address. The accusative and the dative, in contrast, are more difficult to explain. We believe that instances of accusative and dative with interjections must originate in predicative constructions of some sort, since the occurrence of oblique case must be motivated by a case assigner, in opposition to the nominative and the vocative. To give an example equivalent to ‘woe’, consider the following examples from German and Icelandic with *heil* and *heill* ‘hail’:

- (23a) *Heil dir,* im Siegerkranz ...
 hail thee.DAT in victor.crown
 ‘Hail to thee in victor crown ...’
- (23b) *Heill þér, fimmtugum!*
 hail you.DAT fifty.years.DAT
 ‘Hail to you, fifty years old!’

Observe that “Heil dir!/Heill þér!” stands in the same kind of relation to “Heil sei dir!/Heill sé þér!” with the verb ‘be’ as “Weh dir!/Vei þér!” and “Weh sei dir!/Vei sé þér!” do. In other words, the dative with *heil* and *heill* does not emerge out of the blue, but from a predicative construction with the verb ‘be’. We believe that the same is valid for accusatives with exclamations, and as support we offer the following example from Modern Icelandic:

- (24) **Ó sjá mig auman ...** *Modern Icelandic*
 oh see me.ACC wretched.ACC
 ‘Oh see poor me ...’

- (25b) nec tamen *illis* **bene** erit *Latin*
 not although they.DAT well is.3SG.FUT
 ‘although things will not be well with them’ (Sen. Vit. Beat. 11, 4)
- (25c) **wel** bið *þem* þe ... *Old English*
 well is him.DAT that
 ‘well be to him who ...’ (Beowulf 185)
- (25d) og varð *honum* **illt** við *Old Norse-Icelandic*
 and became him.DAT badly with
 ‘and he was startled’ (Færeyinga saga, Ch. 5)

These examples document that a predicate structure ‘be’ and an adverb is natural for the early Indo-European languages. The occurrence of the adverb ‘woe’ in such a predicate structure is therefore not an anomaly, given that predicates of this kind existed in the early layers of the Indo-European languages. There are therefore no structural reasons against the assumption that this construction is an inheritance from Proto-Indo-European.

Also, given the existence of this dative subject construction in the language system of Proto-Indo-European, and hence the existence of the Predicative ‘woe’ Construction, the first scenario appears as detached from the general language system of Proto-Indo-European. In other words, it is not enough for a diachronic scenario to appear as being locally anchored in the lexical items themselves, and in line with grammaticalization theory; in order to be convincing, an outline of a grammatical scenario must also take into account, and be framed within, the synchronic aspects of the language system at each time of development.

Therefore, a second diachronic scenario is much more plausible, according to which the Bare Exclamative Construction and the Predicative Construction already coexisted in Proto-Indo-European, and that the Dative Exclamative Construction developed from the Predicative Construction, as a lexicalized discourse-pragmatic variant (see Section 6 below). Arguments in favor of that analysis stem from both syntactic and discourse-pragmatic considerations, which we discuss in turn.

Starting with the syntactic properties of the Dative Exclamative Construction, the word order is fixed to *woe*-DAT, with the other word order, DAT-*woe*, being more or less non-existent. All the Avestan, Slavic, Baltic and Germanic examples of the Dative Exclamative exhibit this word order and this word order only. In Latin, only three instances are found with the reverse order, i.e. DAT-*woe*, but all three occur in the same poem by Ovid and appear to be triggered by metrical factors. This fixed word order is left unexplained on the first scenario discussed above, but falls naturally out of the second diachronic scenario, that we are arguing for here.

Turning to the discourse-pragmatic properties, the Dative Exclamative is used when something bad happens to people, to curse or heap abuse on somebody or when the speaker feels lost, ruined or in trouble. The Predicative Construction does not have to be used in this way. It can be exclamative but it must not. In the Bare Exclamative, which does not contain a dative referent, ‘woe’ is a discourse particle, the use of which does not directly imply the involvement of a particular person. We would like to argue that the Dative Exclamative Construction has developed out of a special variant of the Predicative Construction, involving fronting of ‘woe’ for focus reasons, hence the fixed word order. This means that the Predicative Construction, when used as an exclamation, gives rise to the Dative Exclamative Construction, with

subsequent obliteration of the verb ‘be’, since exclamations are typically more compressed than declaratives. We will continue with this part of our analysis in Section 6 on word order.

Obviously, the Bare Exclamative construction must have existed earliest of all three, and the lexical material from that construction, **wai* ‘woe’, was used as input for the Predicative Construction, which in turn fits in with an existing pattern of dative subject predicates in Proto-Indo-European. This second scenario has clear benefits over the first scenario, as there is neither any need to explain the source of the dative in the Dative Exclamative Construction, nor the alleged emergence of the verb ‘be’ in the Predicative Construction. Both of these phenomena fall out naturally from the second scenario that the Predicative Construction existed before the Dative Exclamative Construction.

Clearly, if one finds a lexical form in Avestan, archaic Latin, Baltic and Germanic, a form that has developed a specific function which is unlikely to be attributable to independent development, one must conclude that this is an Indo-European inheritance. We have shown here that the same is true for the Predicative Construction, as it is documented in the earliest layers of the four out of five branches of Indo-European that we have investigated, i.e. Gatha Avestan, archaic Latin, Latvian, and Germanic. The Predicative Construction is only documented once in Latin, and twice in Avestan, both Gatha and Young Avestan. In contrast to the huge number of instances of the Dative Exclamative Construction in Latin, the Predicative Construction is extremely rare, and as such appears as archaic. If the Predicative Construction were derived from the Dative Exclamative Construction, it would be an instance of a productive pattern, and hence it would be expected to be found in abundance in the texts, which it is not. Moreover, the fact that the earliest examples of the Predicative Construction all involve the verb ‘be’ in a non-indicative mood speaks further for the archaism of the construction. This specialized function is a striking characteristic of the construction, an irregularity which must be taken to be a relict in the relevant branches and must, therefore, be reconstructed for their common ancestor, Proto-Indo-European itself.

To summarize the claims in this section, we have argued that the Dative Exclamative Construction has developed out of the Predicative Construction. This must have taken place in prehistoric times, as four out of five Indo-European branches contain both constructions. The reason we argue that the Dative Exclamative Construction has developed out of the Predicative Construction is because of the fixed word order of the Dative Exclamative Construction, consistent with the word order found in constructions with fronted predicate focus. The fact that the oldest attested instances of the Predicative Construction, in Gatha/Young Avestan, and Latin, contain the verb ‘be’ in a non-indicative mood is a further argument for the initial status of the Predicative Construction. This is in accordance with what is known about categories undergoing morphological change, namely that less frequent and less productive forms often maintain an archaic variant, while more frequent forms are subject to productive and regular formations (cf. Poplack 2001 on the French subjunctive, as opposed to the indicative).

Before we show how the syntactic reconstruction of the three ‘woe’ constructions may be carried out in Section 7, we first discuss the lexical category of ‘woe’, compare its syntactic properties with adverbial vs. nominal syntax (Section 4), discuss the syntactic role of the subject-like dative (Section 5), and the word order variation found across the Dative Exclamative and the Predicative Constructions (Section 6).

4. Adverbial vs. Nominal Syntax

As already stated above, it is generally assumed that **wai* is an interjection in the ancient and archaic Indo-European languages, and hence an adverbial element. However, we know that it has developed nominal uses in many Germanic languages, and adjectival uses in English and German (cf. OED 1989, Kluge 2002). According to Grimm & Grimm (1845–1971), the oldest German example of nominal use of *weh* is from the 13th century, although we have been able to document even earlier examples. Old English has an etymologically related form, *wea* ‘affliction’, which is clearly a noun, and this form merges with the adverbial form *wā* in Anglo-Norman, leading to nominal uses of the adverbial form. Old Norse-Icelandic also has an etymologically related form *vá* ‘danger’, which is clearly a noun, although it is not homophonous with the adverbial interjection *vei* ‘alas’.

In order to decide on the morphological category of **wai*, i.e. whether it is a noun or an adverb, let us first consider the morphological shape of the form before we discuss the syntax. First, the element **wai* and its reflexes in the daughter languages does not alternate between a singular and a plural form. An Indo-European nominative form ending in *-ai* would, moreover, be highly unlikely, if not impossible; Latvian, for instance, cannot have a nominative ending in *-ai*, Old Norse-Icelandic cannot have a nominative ending in *-ei*, and, finally, if *vae* in Latin were a noun, it would have to be PLURALE TANTUM of the first declension, which in turn means that it should select the form *sint* and not *sit* when it occurs with the subjunctive of ‘be’. This, however, is not the case, as evident from the Latin example in (7) above, where the singular form *sit* occurs and not the plural *sint*. In other words, the form of ‘woe’ in the Indo-European languages discussed here is not consistent with the category of a morphological noun.

Let us now consider the syntax of ‘woe’: The examples in (26) are taken from a language where ‘woe’ behaves as a noun, namely Modern English:

(26a)	woes of a man with 30 kids	<i>Head of a noun phrase</i>
(26b)	Are pregnancy woes and contraceptive anxieties boggling you down?	<i>Compound noun</i>
(26c)	The Seven Woes of False Religion	<i>Modified by a numeral</i>
(26d)	The Woe of the Travelers	<i>Definite article</i>
(26e)	Sure, there’s all this woe ...	<i>Demonstrative</i>
(26f)	Is misery a woe’s relief?	<i>Genitive</i>
(26g)	Just felt like sharing some woe .	<i>Object of a trans. verb</i>
(26h)	oft in danger, oft in woe	<i>Object of a prep.</i>
(26i)	There is a woe that is madness	<i>Relativization</i>
(26j)	a woe which streams forth from his heart	<i>Relativization</i>

Adverbs, in contrast, typically modify other elements, like nouns, adjectives and verbs. Interjections are also classified as adverbs, partly of course illustrating that the category of adverbs is not homogeneous; rather, it consists of various elements with different discourse functions and different syntactic behaviors. Interjections are also typically deprived of any inflectional properties (see above) and their use is highly constrained by conventionalization (Ameka 1992: 11). In addition, as pointed out by James (1972), Ameka (1992), Murphy (1993) and several others, interjections do not have any syntax:

- (27a) The scope of interjections is not syntactically defined;
- (27b) Interjections are not necessarily interchangeable within a sentence;
- (27c) Interjections do not have any specific syntactic role in a sentence, since they are not subcategorized for;
- (27d) Hence, interjections do not have any specific position within a sentence;
- (27e) And finally, interjections do not behave as syntactic constituents.

(Murphy 1993: 166)

The exposition above shows that there is no overlap between nominal and adverbial syntax, and hence that one is not easily mixed up with the other. The Bare Exclamative clearly behaves as an interjection. It typically occurs outside of the clause proper and does not convey any syntax.

Leaving the second type aside for the moment, in the third type the Predicative Construction with the dative and the verb ‘be’, ‘woe’ exhibits neither nominal nor adverbial syntax. If ‘woe’ were a noun, we would expect it to occur in the plural form, to be modified by determiners, numerals, and demonstratives, to occur in the genitive form, to be the head of a compound noun, and finally to be relativizable. No such examples are documented in the preserved early material. Also, if ‘woe’ were a typical adverb, we would expect it to modify nouns, verbs or adjectives. Again, no such examples are documented in the preserved material.

Consider now the fact that the adverb ‘woe’ can occur in compositional predicates of the type found with noncanonical subjects in the Indo-European languages. Four examples of such predicate-forming adverbs from Vedic, Latin, Old English and Old Norse-Icelandic, have already been given in (25) above. This, however, is obviously not an instance of adverbial syntax, but rather a special type of predicate formation, which may for example involve adjectives and nouns, as well as adverbs. Adverbial syntax, in contrast, involves modification of nouns, adjectives and verbs, as already mentioned above. Moreover, predicate formation of this type, consisting of an adverb and the verb ‘be’, are not the typical kind of compositional predicates crosslinguistically. As such they represent an archaic structure in the Indo-European languages.

Turning to the second type, the Dative Exclamative Construction, on our analysis it certainly has syntactic properties; it consists of two elements, the focalized ‘woe’ and the subject-like dative subcategorized for by the compositional predicate of the Predicative Construction. Since the Dative Exclamative is a lexicalized variant of the Predicative Construction, it inherits its syntax. Whether one analyzes the Dative Exclamative Construction as containing an unexpressed verb ‘be’ or not, is a theoretical issue, which we will return to in Section 7 below.

Table 2: Syntactic Distribution of ‘woe’

	Adverbial Syntax		Pred Form	Nominal Syntax					
	Bare Ex.	Dat-Ex.	Pred.	Head	Com	Mod	Gen	Obj	Rel
Latin	4	69	1						
Gothic	1	6							
Old English	25	191	33			6		1	
Old Saxon	2		2				1		
OHG	1	51	8			3		3	
Old N-Ic		2	16						

Before we conclude this section on the syntactic distribution of ‘woe’, let us consider some statistics for the languages where such statistics is meaningful, given in Table 2. Only five examples are found in Avestan, two in Gatha Avestan and three in younger Avestan. Only two examples are documented Old Lithuanian, while more examples occur in Latin and the Germanic languages.

Table 2 shows that only the late West-Germanic languages provide evidence of nominal syntax, whereas the other languages only exhibit adverbial or predicative syntax, i.e. ‘woe’ is either a discourse particle with or without the dative, or it participates in a compositional predicate ‘be woe’. This suggests that the nominal behavior of ‘woe’ in Modern English and Modern German was in its starting phase in Old English and Old High German. Neither Old Norse-Icelandic nor Modern Icelandic show any indications of nominal syntax with ‘woe’.

A development from interjection to noun is well documented in several languages, and different languages may, to different degrees, convert elements belonging to one lexical class to another. English, German and Ancient Greek are notorious cases where such conversions are particularly common. The German interjection *ach* ‘oh’ from example (20a) above can also be used as a noun:

- (28) Dieses **Ach!** des Körpers ...
 this.NOM oh! the.GEN body.GEN
 ‘The oh! of the body ...’

The form *Ach* (here including the exclamation mark) shows clear evidence of nominal syntax in (28) above. It is modified by a determiner and selects a genitive attribute. The conversion of interjections to nouns, however, is not relevant for the diachronic development that we have outlined above, as such conversion is only found in later stages than the one that we aim to describe here.

To summarize, neither the morphological form nor the syntax of ‘woe’ speak for an analysis of it being a nominal element, except for in later stages of West Germanic. Rather, ‘woe’ is consistent in showing up with adverbial syntax or participating in predicate formation in the early and archaic Indo-European languages.

5. The syntactic role of the dative

In traditional Latin-based grammars the standard view is that the subject is nominative and that only nominatives can be subjects (cf. the discussion in Barðdal 2000). A more modern view, initially proposed within generative grammar, is that subjects can also be non-canonically case marked. In 1976 Andrews was the first to argue for a subject analysis of subject-like non-nominative arguments in Icelandic, based on their syntactic behavior rather than on case marking. In the same year, Masica (1976) proposed a comparable analysis for certain South-Asian languages. Since then, several languages, both Indo-European and non-Indo-European, have been shown to exhibit structures where the syntactic subject is not in the nominative case but is non-canonically case marked (cf. Aikhenvald, Dixon & Onishi 2001, Bhaskararao & Subbarao 2004), for instance Russian (Moore & Perlmutter 2000), South Asian languages (Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Dardic, Tibeto-Burman and Munda, cf. Verma & Mohanan 1990, Steever 1998, Bickel 2001) and native American languages (Hermon 1985). The insight that there are non-canonically case-marked

arguments which behave syntactically in the same way as nominative subjects is now an established fact, which all theoretical frameworks, formal and functional ones alike, must take into account.

Establishing the syntactic behavior of non-nominative subject-like arguments is considerably easier for a living language than for a dead one. Such research has, however, begun and at this point it has been shown beyond doubt that Old Norse-Icelandic had non-canonically case marked subjects (Rögnvaldsson 1991, 1995, 1996, Barðdal 2000, Barðdal & Eythórsson 2003, Ingason, Sigurðsson & Wallenberg 2011), that Old English had non-canonically case-marked subjects (Allen 1995), and that non-canonically case-marked subject-like arguments in early Germanic in general, including Gothic, also behaved syntactically as subjects (Eythórsson & Barðdal 2005, Barðdal & Eythórsson 2012b), exactly as in Modern Icelandic and Modern Faroese. The syntactic behavior of non-nominative subject-like arguments in the other early and ancient Indo-European languages, which had only been treated sporadically in the past (cf. Hock 1990), is currently being investigated in a systematic fashion (Fedriani 2009 and Dahl in prep. on Latin, Grillborzer 2010 on Old Russian and Danesi in prep. on Sanskrit). In particular, the studies by Fedriani and Grillborzer suggest that non-canonically case-marked subject-like arguments are syntactic subjects in Latin and Old Russian. However, since this research has not been carried out in the necessary detail for most of the ancient Indo-European languages, it is premature to make any firm assertions about the syntactic status of these subject-like arguments at the earliest stage, on the basis of their syntactic behavior. However, our working hypothesis is that these were syntactic subjects already in Proto-Indo-European, as they are in the modern Indo-European languages.

Eythórsson & Barðdal (2005) observe that the syntactic behavior of subjects, i.e. the subject tests, always involve the first or the leftmost argument of the argument structure of a predicate. That is, when one tries to generalize across the subject tests, those generalizations will always target the leftmost argument and not the second or third argument of an argument structure construction. This suggests that it is the leftmost argument that makes up the empirical core of subjecthood. It is a well-known fact from several languages with non-canonically case-marked subjects that they do not fulfill all the subject criteria of a particular language. This may be so because they are marked subjects, and as such they show a deviation from the unmarked situation where the subject is in the nominative case (cf. Barðdal 2006). What is even more important, however, is that non-canonically case-marked subjects do not pattern with unambiguous objects with respect to their syntactic behavior, which in turn shows that they are not objects.

There is no doubt, moreover, that non-canonically case-marked subject-like arguments are the first argument of their argument structures, i.e. the S argument in Dixon's (1994) typology, where A is the subject of a transitive clause, O (or P) the object of a transitive clause, and S the subject of an intransitive clause. Onishi (2001) and Andrews (2001), for instance, refer to oblique subjects in Icelandic and Bengali as the S argument, and Donohue (2008), Malchukov (2008), Mithun (2008) and Nichols (2008) also refer systematically to oblique subjects of transimpersonal predicates, i.e. two-place predicates with oblique subjects, as S. Therefore, what we mean here by the term "oblique" or "dative subject" for the early and ancient Indo-European languages is the S argument of such predicates.

To summarize, there are basically three views or definitions of subject in the field. The first is the traditional view that the subject is the nominative, the second is the typological view that the subject is the A argument of transitives and S argument

of intransitives, and the third is the syntactic view that the subject is the argument that passes several subject tests, derivable from a specific structure in the tree or a specific argument of the argument structure. In the absence of the possibility of adopting the third view, as historical research has not come far enough at present, we adopt the second view, namely that the subject is the A argument of transitives and S argument of intransitives. A further implication of this view is that the subject is the first argument of the argument structure, not necessarily the first argument of the clause, since material can be topicalized or fronted for different reasons, as we will discuss in Section 6 below.

It is important here to establish the syntactic role of the dative of the Predicative Construction, since this dative is an integral part of the construction, and since a reconstruction of the syntax of the three ‘woe’ constructions, including a reconstruction of the syntactic behavior of the parts, must be based on an analysis of the role and behavior of the parts.

As to the Predicative Construction, it is clear that the dative subject-like argument is the S argument. As it is the only argument of this predicate, it is clearly the highest or the leftmost argument of this argument structure. In contrast, ‘woe’ cannot be the subject as it is not an argument, but an adverb, in the earliest layers of the Indo-European languages, as discussed above. Moreover, this syntactic pattern is not an aberration in the syntax of early Indo-European, because, as we have already shown in relation to examples (25) above, the Predicative Construction is a part of a considerably larger family of Dative Subject Constructions in the Indo-European languages.

6. Word Order

As evident from the examples in the discussion above, there are two clear word order patterns found for the Predicative Construction, namely *DAT-is-woe* and *woe-is-DAT*. At this point, we need to establish which of the two word orders is the default word order and which one deviates from the default.

Generally, in the ancient and archaic Indo-European languages, the neutral or unmarked word order of the subject and the verb is *SV*, i.e. the subject precedes the verb, although objects and various other elements may intervene between the subject and the verb, yielding *SVO* and *SOV* orders. Verb-initial (*VS*) orders are also found in most of the languages, conditioned by certain syntactic and pragmatic factors (see e.g. Delbrück 1900: 81, Krisch 2002). Notable exceptions to this general rule are Old Irish and other Insular Celtic languages (e.g. Watkins 1963, Fife 2002, Eska 2004) and Lycian (Garrett 1994, Melchert 2004), where the unmarked word order is *VS*. Leaving the position of the object aside, this means that *SV* word order is a common Indo-European characteristic which in all likelihood is inherited from the proto-language, whereas the generalized *VS* pattern in Insular Celtic and Lycian is an innovation.

Since ‘woe’ is an adverb and not a nominal element, it cannot be a subject. The dative, in contrast, is a nominal element, an argument of the Predicative Construction, and the subject on our analysis. This means that the string *DAT-is-woe* represents the neutral or unmarked word order pattern. The dative subject can be said to carry the thematic role of a *MALEFICIARY*, as the pragmatic function of this predicate is to signal danger, adversity or any kind of difficult situation.

The relationship between the two strings, *DAT-is-woe* and *woe-is-DAT*, of the Predicative Construction can be captured within a derivational account by means of preposing, or “fronting”, of the adverbial. However, in terms of a monostratal Construction Grammar framework (see the next section), one would say that there is a systematic alternation between the two word order constructions, which exhibit different information structural properties. This is corroborated by the variation in word order in the attested examples discussed in Section 3 above, summarized in Table 3. While these examples are few in number, they still confirm that, when used predicatively, this variation is found. Also, this word order alternation correlates with a structure containing the verb ‘be’. In contrast, when there is no ‘be’ present, the ‘woe’-first word order is absolutely dominant. This suggests that we are in fact dealing with two constructions, the Predicative Construction containing the verb ‘be’, and a lexicalized ‘woe’-first variant of it, without ‘be’, namely the Dative Exclamative Construction (see below).

Table 3: Word order variation in the Predicative Construction

	<i>woe-is-DAT</i>	<i>DAT-is-woe</i>
Avestan		2 ⁴
Latin	1	
Baltic	1	1
Germanic	2	3

Given the assumption that the neutral word order is *DAT-is-woe*, the question arises as to why the reversed word order, with ‘woe’ in first position, appears so frequent. The reason is that an overwhelming majority of ‘woe’-first orders do not represent the Predicative Construction at all, but the Dative Exclamative Construction, where the ‘woe’-first word order is fixed. The reason why exactly this word order, and not the other word order, has become fixed in the Dative Exclamative Construction is, we believe, because ‘woe’ itself is an exclamation of misfortune; it is typically used when something bad happens to people, and in that context it expresses the speaker’s dismay. As such, ‘woe’ is the quintessential candidate for being focused in situations where adversity arises. To illustrate this, consider the following passage from Latin:

- (29) **SOSTRATA:** *Obsecro, mi Pamphile, non tute incommodam rem, ut quaeque est, in animum induces pati? Si cetera ita sunt ut vis itaque uti esse ego illa[m] existumo, mi gnate, da veniam hanc mihi redduc illam.*

‘Pray, my Pamphilus, can you not, seeing how each woman is, prevail upon yourself to put up with one matter of inconvenience? If every thing else is according to your wish, and such as I take it to be my son, do grant me this indulgence, and take her back.’

PAMPHILUS: *Vae misero mihi!*
 woe wretched.DAT me.DAT
 ‘Woe to miserable me! (Terence, *Hec.* 602–606)

In this example, Sostrata, the mother of Pamphilus, is trying to convince her son to give up on a woman and send her back to where she came from. In this context both

⁴ The word order in one of the Avestan examples, (1c), may be due to Wackernagel’s Law.

that woman and Pamphilus himself are topical. Therefore, in Pamphilus' response, the dative subject in first position would have picked up on Pamphilus as a topic. 'Woe', however, is not a topic, but new information occurring in first position, which is clearly a focus position here. As evident from Pamphilus' response, he finds the idea of giving up the woman disastrous, hence the use of the Dative Exclamative here.

Consider now the following Old English example containing the Predicative Construction:

- (30) Swylc wæs þeaw hyra, hæþenra hyht; helle gemundon in modsefan, metod hie ne cuþon, dæda demend, ne wiston hie drihten god, ne hie huru heofena helm herian ne cuþon, wuldres waldend. **Wa** bið *þæm* þe sceal þurh sliðne nið sawle bescufan in fyres fæþm, frofre ne wenan, wihte gewendan; **wel** bið *þæm* þe mot æfter deaðdæge drihten secean ond to fæder fæþmum freoðo wilnian.

'Such was their custom, heathens' hope, in hell they pondered in the depths of their hearts, they knew not God, the judge of deeds, they were not aware of the Lord God, Indeed they did not know how to praise Heaven's Protector, Ruler of Glory. **Woe** be to him who through severe affliction thrust his soul into the fire's embrace, hope not for relief, or to change at all; **Well** be to him who after his death may seek the Lord and long for peace in the Father's arms' (Beowulf 178–188)

In the text in example (30), the narrator is telling of heathen people who live in godlessness, who do not pray and lead a non-spiritual existence. It is the godless people who are the topic of the narrative. Then, at the end of this description, the narrator pauses and makes a statement about the fate of such people, who do not know God. This is therefore a turning point in the narrative, and the fate of these godless people qualifies as new information, in this case 'woe'. If the narrator had used the dative subject, that would have been a natural continuation of an established topic. However, by having 'woe' in first position, the new information is focalized. This means that the occurrence of 'woe' in first position triggers an exclamative reading of Predicative Construction.

Observe also that immediately following the sentence beginning with 'woe', there is a sentence beginning with *wel* 'well'. The structure of the first part of the two utterances is exactly parallel, i.e., *woe-is-DAT* and *wel-is-DAT*, where the fate of these godless people is contrasted with the fate of the religious one. This is a clear example of PAIRED FOCI, corroborating our analysis of the position of the 'woe' in *woe-is-DAT* as a focus position.

Regarding the nature of focus fronting, the ideas of Lambrecht (1994, 2000, 2001) and Dahlström (2003) are relevant here. They distinguish between three types of foci: SENTENCE FOCUS, ARGUMENT FOCUS and PREDICATE FOCUS. Sentence focus is typically found with default word order, while argument focus and predicate focus may involve fronting, depending on the language. In our case, it is clearly not argument focus that we are dealing with in (30), as 'woe' is not an argument but an adverb. In other words, when 'woe' occurs in first position, which is a marked word order, it is the content part of the predicate that is focalized.

In Icelandic and the older Germanic languages, for instance, this kind of focus fronting is quite common. This is an old feature of these languages, found already in the early Runic inscriptions. Consider, for instance, an example from the Sjølland 2

inscription, which starts with the following string (Eythórsson 2001: 21, with references):

- (31) **Hariuha** haiti -ka farawisa
 Hariuha am.called-I danger.knowing
 ‘I am called Hariuha, the one who knows danger’

In this runic inscription, the complement *Hariuha* of the verb *haiti* ‘be called’ occurs in first position, while the subject is represented as a clitic attached to the verb. Obviously, the person, *Hariuha*, has not been mentioned earlier in the context, as this is the opening string of the inscription. Therefore, this name clearly represents new information in the discourse, and is thus the most focal constituent in this sentence.

A comparable example to the Old English example in (30) above is found in Old High German, where both predicates, DAT-*is-woe* and DAT-*is-wel*, also co-occur. Here, however, we find the dative-first word order, and not the ‘woe’-first word order.

- (32) Ube *dir* **we** ist, sô nist *Old High German*
 if you.DAT woe is.3SG so not.is.3SG
dir aber nîeht **wola**.
 you.DAT however not well
 ‘If you have woe, that does not mean you don’t have it well.’
 (*Notker, Sprichwort* 6)

This text is from Notker’s proverbs, which offer general advice to a generic addressee, represented as second person singular in the text. This second person dative is therefore clearly the topical argument in these utterances, an instance of Lambrecht’s SENTENCE FOCUS, where the word order is neutral. Of course, the author of the proverb could have used a different word order, placing *woe* in first position, but in that case the flow of information in this sentence would have been different. In other words, the dative first word order of the Predicative Construction does not have an exclamative reading, but a neutral reading.

Thus, the Germanic examples in (30), from Old English, and (32) from Old High German, show that different word orders correlate with differences in information structure. Given that the word order with focalized ‘woe’ represents new information in situations of adversity, and since ‘woe’ is the archetypical interjection of dismay, it is natural that it is this word order that pragmatizes into an exclamation. More precisely, the fact that the word order of the Dative Exclamative Construction is fixed to *woe*-DAT is expected on the analysis that the Dative Exclamative Construction has emerged from the Predicate Focus Construction, *woe-is*-DAT, and not from the Sentence Focus Construction, DAT-*is-woe*.

In the next section we will show how these constructions may be reconstructed for Proto-Indo-European, with the aid of Sign-Based Construction Grammar.

7. Reconstructing the Syntax of ‘Woe’

In this section we present five cases of reconstruction for Proto-Indo-European using Sign-Based Construction Grammar formalism (Sag 2012 Michaelis 2010, 2012). First, however, a few words on the linguistic framework of Construction Grammar are

appropriate (Fillmore, Kay & O'Connor 1988, Jackendoff 1997, Kay & Fillmore 1999, Goldberg 1995, 2006, Croft 2001, inter alia).

Construction Grammar is appealing in several ways. First, Construction Grammar assigns prominent status to the concept of constructions as form–meaning pairings in the grammar, as opposed to generative grammar, where constructions have been regarded as an epiphenomenon, emerging from the application of rules, like the passive from the active, the dative from the ditransitive, and so on. In Construction Grammar form–meaning pairings are the basic building blocks of language, and the grammar consists of constructions and a network between them (see below).

Second, what is conceived of in terms of rules in traditional and generative frameworks is viewed as systematic relations between constructions in Construction Grammar. This is a consequence of the assumption that the conception of language in Construction Grammar is that of a monostratal grammar. In other words, there is only one level of formalization, the surface level, but no “deep structure” from which the surface level is derived. One can of course still discern underlying relations between the elements within a construction, but this is done on the basis of existing constructions and the relation between the elements and their behavior across and between constructions.

Third, there is no division between the core and the periphery in Construction Grammar. This means that form–meaning pairings where the meaning is not derived from the meaning of the parts, but is noncompositionally derived, are not relegated to the periphery of the grammar, but are regarded as a legitimate part of the grammar that needs to be accounted for. One can therefore say that Construction Grammar is the framework that has brought “noncore” data into linguistic description, where it has, and should have, a rightful place.

Construction Grammar originated in the study of idioms, where meaning is typically derived noncompositionally, and the syntax may also be irregular (cf. Croft & Cruse 2004). Data of that type demand an approach where meaning, in particular noncompositional meaning, can be accounted for, and it was in that context that the concept of construction as a form–meaning pairing arose. Of course, when the machinery to account for semantically or syntactically irregular expressions has been invented, it may also be used to account for semantically and syntactically regular data, like the ordinary transitive construction, the intransitive construction, etc.

Given that the machinery of Construction Grammar may be used to account for more data than only that irregularly formed, on a constructional account the important distinctions between linguistic objects do not lie in category labels like *verb*, *determiner*, *phrase*, *complement*, *idiom*, but rather in notions such as COMPLEXITY and SCHEMATICITY and the scales implied by these concepts. Complexity, for instance, entails a scale from simple to complex, and schematicity entails a scale from substantive to schematic. It is also on these two scales that constructions are found. The passive construction, for instance, is complex as it consists of many different parts, while a word like *the* is simple as it consists of only one part. The passive construction is mostly schematic although it is lexically filled with the verb *be* which forms a phrase with the past participle, while the word *the* is substantive throughout, i.e. it is inherently lexically filled. However, both the passive construction and *the* are constructions, i.e. they are form–meaning pairings; they only differ with regard to complexity and schematicity.

Since the basic linguistic concept in Construction Grammar is the construction, i.e. a form–meaning pairing, and since this form–meaning pairing may

be larger than a word, and even as large as a sentence, syntactic objects also count as constructions in Construction Grammar. This is the reason that Construction Grammar is an optimal framework for reconstructing syntax; the Comparative Method is based on form–meaning correspondences and since Construction Grammar views larger and complex syntactic objects as form–meaning correspondences, syntax also becomes reconstructable on a constructional account (Eythórsson & Barðdal 2011, Barðdal & Eythórsson 2012a–b, Barðdal & Smitherman 2013). In other words, the leap from synchronic form–meaning correspondences to historical form–meaning correspondences is minimal within this linguistic framework.

Turning to the reconstruction, we propose that all three constructions, the Bare Exclamative, the Dative Exclamative and the Predicative Construction, must be reconstructed for Proto-Indo-European. We suggested in Section 3.6 above that the Dative Exclamative Construction is derived from a specific word order variant of the Predicative Construction, with ‘woe’ fronted for reasons of focus. We do not assume that the Predicative Construction is derived from the Bare Exclamative Construction, but rather that lexical material from the Bare Exclamative is employed in the Predicative Construction, exactly like other kinds of lexical material which figures in the dative subject construction in general (such as adverbs, nouns, adjectives).

We also propose that the emergence of the Dative Exclamative Construction from the focused variant of the Predicative Construction took place in prehistoric times. The reason is, as we state in Section 3.6 above, that the Predicative Construction shows several signs of being archaic. First, all early instances of the construction are found with ‘be’ in the subjunctive mood, which together with the extremely low token frequency of the construction in Latin does not imply a productive pattern, but rather the preservation of an archaic feature. For these reasons, all three constructions must be reconstructed for Proto-Indo-European, with the addition of both general and specific word order constructions.

We start with a reconstruction of the Bare Exclamative Construction in Figure 1. The formalism consists of two levels, a FORM field and a PRAG field. The FORM field specifies the reconstructed phonological and morphological form **wai*. The PRAG field (following Fried & Östman 2005 and Fried 2009) expresses the pragmatic properties of the construction in language use, namely a high degree of speaker involvement, here labeled INVOLVEMENT. As this construction is generally used when something bad happens to people, the INVOLVEMENT feature is realized here as ‘speaker’s dismay’.

Figure 1: A reconstruction of the Bare Exclamative Construction for Proto-Indo-European

*	<i>Bare Exclamative cxt</i>	
	FORM	<i><wai></i>
	PRAG	INVOLVEMENT ‘speaker’s dismay’

Next, we reconstruct the Predicative Construction. Table 4 gives the correspondence set for the construction. There are three alternatives in the correspondence set: ACC-*is-woe*, DAT-*is-woe* and GEN-*is-woe*. This means that the daughter languages show a certain degree of variation here, although the variant with the accusative is found only

in Latin and the variant with the genitive is found only in Old Lithuanian. The data from the four Indo-European subbranches, Indo-Iranian, Italic, Baltic and Germanic, are sufficient for a reconstruction for Proto-Indo-European, in accordance with the basic tenets of the Comparative Method.

Table 4: Correspondence set for the DAT-*is-woe* Predicative Construction

	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3
Old Germanic		DAT- <i>is-woe</i>	
Latin	ACC- <i>is-woe</i>	DAT- <i>is-woe</i>	
Baltic		DAT- <i>is-woe</i>	GEN- <i>is-woe</i>
Avestan		DAT- <i>is-woe</i>	

Since the ACC-*is-woe* and GEN-*is-woe* patterns are only found in one Indo-European subbranch each, alongside the DAT-*is-woe* pattern, we assume that these are branch-specific innovations and thus they do not figure in our reconstruction. In contrast, the DAT-*is-woe* construction is found in four out of five of the Indo-European subbranches under investigation. We therefore opt for that variant of the correspondence set in our reconstruction for Proto-Indo-European.

In contrast to the Bare Exclamative Construction, a reconstruction of the Predicative Construction involves not only morphophonologic form and discourse pragmatic properties, but also fields for argument structure and lexical semantics of the predicate (Figure 2). The FORM field includes the morphophonological form of the whole predicate, i.e. the verb ‘be’, here given with its reconstructed root $*/[h_1]es$ (Greek *esti*, Lat. *est*, Skt. *asti*, etc.), and the adverb ‘woe’, with its standard etymological form $*wai$. In the ARG-ST field, the argument structure of the predicate is given; in this case there is only one argument and it is in the dative case. The third level SEM specifies the semantics, which is here given in terms of frame semantics (Fillmore 1982, 1985, Petrucci 1996). The relevant frame for the DAT-*is-woe* construction is the MALEFICIARY frame with only one participant, the maleficiary, here coindexed with the dative argument.

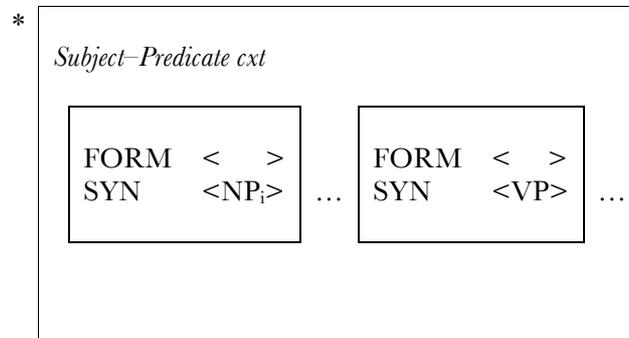
Figure 2: A reconstruction of the DAT-*is-woe* Predicative Construction for Proto-Indo-European

* <i>Predicative cxt</i>			
FORM	<[h ₁]es- wai>		
ARG-ST	<NP _i [Dat]>		
SEM	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>FRAMES</td> <td>malefactive-fr MALEFICIARY_i</td> </tr> </table>	FRAMES	malefactive-fr MALEFICIARY _i
FRAMES	malefactive-fr MALEFICIARY _i		
PRAG	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>INVOLVEMENT</td> <td>‘speaker’s dismay’</td> </tr> </table>	INVOLVEMENT	‘speaker’s dismay’
INVOLVEMENT	‘speaker’s dismay’		

We assume that the word order differences discussed above also existed in Proto-Indo-European. The reconstruction in Figure 2 provides us with all aspects of the Predicative Construction that are relevant for our reconstruction, except for the word order variation. In order to capture that, we suggest a reconstruction of a general

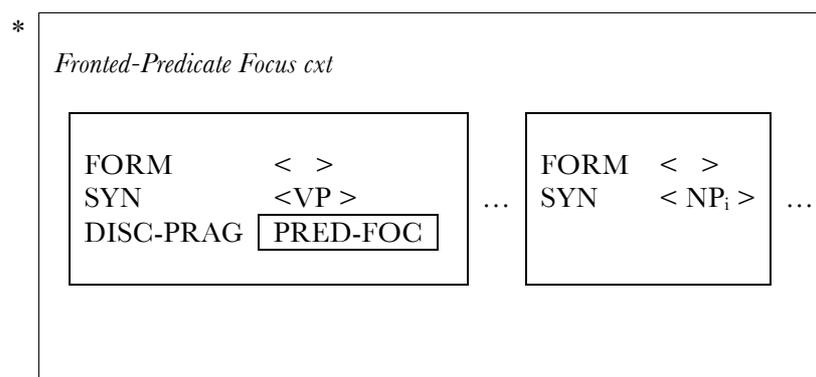
word order construction for Proto-Indo-European, where the subject precedes the verb, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: A reconstruction of the Subject–Predicate Construction for Proto-Indo-European



The FORM field in Figure 3 is left empty since this is not a reconstruction of the word order of any particular construct, but rather a reconstruction of the general word order properties of subjects and their predicates (cf. Kay & Fillmore 1999, Kuningas & Leino 2006). The SYN field specifies that the first part of the Subject-Predicate Construction is a noun phrase, which is coindexed with the first argument of the argument structure in Figure 1, i.e. NP_i. In the second field of the Subject-Predicate Construction the SYN field is specified as a VP. The ellipsis between the two constituents, the subject and the predicate, indicates that other material may intervene between the two, and the ellipsis following the predicate indicates that other material may also follow it. This means that the word order within the VP is not specified in Figure 3.

Figure 4: A reconstruction of the Fronted Predicate Focus Construction for Proto-Indo-European



The reconstruction of these two constructions, the Predicative Construction and the Subject–Verb Construction, is sufficient to model the production of the DAT-*is-woe* word order variant in the grammar of a Proto-Indo-European speaker. It does not give us the reverse word order, with ‘woe’ in first position. In order to capture this exclamative variant of the Predicative Construction, we need a special focus construction in which the focused element has been fronted to initial position. In such a Predicate Focus Construction, the word order between the subject and the predicate

will be reversed, as shown in Figure 4, where a discourse pragmatic level, DISC-PRAG has been added, with the value PRED-FOC for predicate focus. Again, the ellipsis between the two constituents indicates that other material may intervene, and the ellipsis after the subject indicates that other material may follow the subject in the clause.

As we have argued, the Dative Exclamative Construction has emerged from the *woe-is*-DAT variant of the Predicative Construction, and therefore this construction shares features with both the Predicative Construction and the Fronted Focus Construction, shown in Figure 5. Furthermore, it shares the argument structure with the Predicative Construction, i.e. the dative subject, and the word order from the Fronted Focus Construction, i.e. *woe*-DAT.

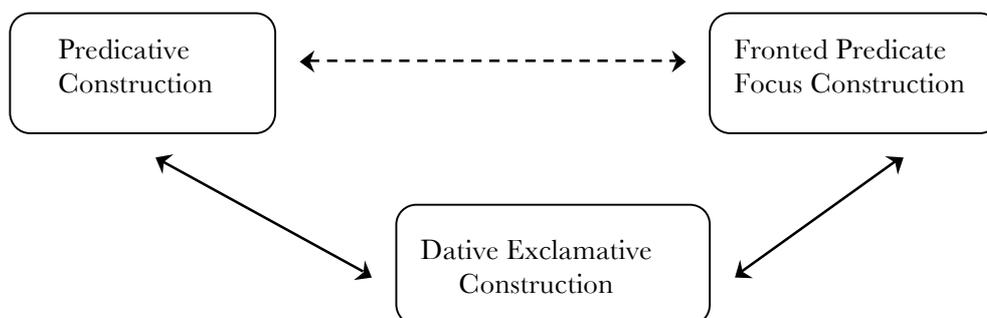
Since the relative order of ‘woe’ and the dative subject is fixed, the DAT may be directly placed in the FORM field, immediately following ‘woe’. This makes it unnecessary to spell out information in the Dative Exclamative Construction about the argument structure shared with the Predicative Construction. Apart from that, the Dative Exclamative Construction contains information about the pragmatic property INVOLVEMENT, realized as ‘speaker’s dismay’. This pragmatic property is common to all three constructions, the Bare Exclamative, the Dative Exclamative, and the Predicative Construction. Finally, at the discourse pragmatic level, DISC-PRAG, the value PRED-FOC for predicate focus, is shared with the schematic Predicate Focus Construction. It is this pragmatic feature that gives the construction its exclamatory value.

Figure 5: A reconstruction of the Dative Exclamative Construction for Proto-Indo-European

* <i>Dative Exclamative cxt</i>	
FORM	< <i>wai</i> [DAT]>
PRAG	INVOLVEMENT ‘speaker’s dismay’
DISC-PRAG	PRED-FOC

The constructional network for the three constructions is given in Figure 6.

Figure 6: The inheritance relations of the Dative Exclamative Construction



Returning to the issue of whether there is an underlying ‘be’ in instances of the Dative Exclamative Construction, on the present constructional account, expressions without ‘be’ count as instances of the Dative Exclamative Construction, while expressions with ‘be’ would count as instances of the Focused variant of the Predicative Construction. There is thus no “underlying” ‘be’ in the Dative Exclamative Construction on our approach, although the relation between the two constructions, the source construction and its extension, may create the conception that there is an elliptic ‘be’ present in instances of the Dative Exclamative.

To conclude, the formalism of Sign-Based Construction Grammar may be adequately used to reconstruct the properties of the three ‘woe’ constructions under discussion in the present article. First we have reconstructed the Bare Exclamative Construction, which has no syntactic properties, only an exclamatory value. We then reconstructed the Predicative Construction for Proto-Indo-European, including its argument structure, its semantic and discourse-pragmatic properties. We then reconstructed a general word order construction which specifies that the subject precedes the verb, and a fronted focus construction which specifies that the order of the subject and the verb is inverted when the predicate is fronted in predicate focus constructions. Finally, we reconstructed the Dative Exclamative Construction which is an extension of the focused variant of the Predicative Construction, with its fixed word order and pragmatic features.

We have argued that these constructions are all inherited from Proto-Indo-European, and as such, our five cases of reconstruction are sufficient to model the syntax and information structure of all of them. The reconstruction is based on evidence from the five subbranches that we have investigated here, Indo-Iranian, Italic, Baltic, Slavic and Germanic.

8. Summary

This article has dealt with the syntactic behavior of the ancient Proto-Indo-European interjection, traditionally reconstructed as **wai* in the literature, and the three constructions it may instantiate, the Bare Exclamative, the Dative Exclamative and the Predicative Construction. We have here investigated in detail the occurrences of these three constructions in a subset of the daughter languages, i.e. Indo-Iranian, Italic, Baltic, Slavic and Germanic.

The interjection **wai* may be of onomatopoeic origin, but it is still reconstructable for Proto-Indo-European. The reflexes in the daughter languages are either identical to the proto-form or derivable from it by established sound laws. Not only is **wai* found in the earliest documented texts of several Indo-European branches, it also shows parallel behavior in its syntax, in discourse-pragmatic function, and in its information structure.

With regard to the relative chronology of the data, we have argued that the Bare Exclamative and the Predicative Construction existed independently of each other in Proto-Indo-European, although the Predicative Construction clearly shared lexical material with the Bare Exclamative. The Predicative Construction consisted of the predicate ‘be woe’ and a dative subject. Given this analysis and general word order patterns hypothesized for Proto-Indo-European, the default word order must have been DAT-*is-woe*, although instances of *woe-is-DAT* would also have been prominent. An examination of the ‘woe’ first word order clearly shows that in such instances ‘woe’ represents new information, not mentioned earlier in the discourse. As

such, ‘woe’ in first position functions as fronted focused material. Given that ‘woe’ is generally used when something bad happens to people, it is the prototypical candidate for predicate focus in situations of adversity. We have further argued that the Dative Exclamative Construction is an extension of this focused variant of the Predicative Construction, partly because the word order is fixed in the same way as in the Fronted Focus variant of the Predicative Construction, and partly because of its discourse-pragmatic value as an exclamative in both constructions.

On the basis of the present comparison we have reconstructed five constructions for Proto-Indo-European, the Bare Exclamative, the Dative Exclamative and the Predicative Construction, in addition to a more schematic Subject–Verb Construction and Fronted Predicate Focus Construction. With these reconstructions, all the properties of the three constructions are captured: their syntactic properties, discourse-pragmatic properties and information structure.

In contrast to the consensus in the field that historical-comparative syntactic reconstruction is a futile and unavailing enterprise, we have shown in the present article how syntactic reconstruction may be fruitfully carried out with the aid of Construction Grammar, here specifically using the formalism of Sign-Based-Construction Grammar. It is significant that the reconstructed constructions express the fundamental human sentiment of adversity, albeit with a particular Indo-European touch.

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