

Probing the Syntax of a Problematic Particle:

Old French ‘SI’ Revisited

This article presents the findings of a corpus analysis of seven Old French texts to better understand the syntax of the particle *SI*. It is argued that the texts display clear evidence of synchronic and diachronic variation, much of which has not been noted in the literature. A diachronic grammaticalisation pathway is proposed for *SI* from a temporal deictic adverb to a Topic continuity marker and then to a FinP expletive which undergoes upwards reanalysis as a ForceP expletive.

1. Background, Aims and Methods

1.1. Aims of the Paper

From the 1980s onwards, the syntax of the Medieval Romance languages saw a surge of data-rich, theoretically-informed research which highlighted major structural differences between the medieval languages and their modern counterparts.¹ Nevertheless, a number of puzzles remained, particularly concerning morphosyntactic variation between the textual records available for the early Romance vernaculars and the extent to which it was possible to plot the diachronic progress of change within the medieval period.

Against the backdrop of a resurgent interest in Medieval Romance, this article sets out to revisit one small but significant area of Old French syntax: the syntax of the particle *SI*. In particular, I aim to describe the distribution of *SI* in a selection of texts ranging from the earliest lengthy attestations in the 11th century through to the early 13th century, when it is generally acknowledged that Old French syntax undergoes a range of significant changes.² I also set out to profit from a number of very recent insights into Old French syntax, to better understand the formal characterisation of *SI* and its interaction with other areas of

¹ Although research during the Government and Binding era (Chomsky 1981 et seq) brought this intuition to the fore in novel ways, it was of course not new (Tobler 1875; Mussafia 1888:145-146; Meyer-Lübke 1889:760-840; Delbrück 1900:375-395; Schoch 1912; Foulet 1928:§389-406; Sorrento 1950).

² On these, see the discussion that follows, alongside Dupuis (1988:43f), Adams (1987a:3-20, 1988), Roberts (1993:133-139), Vance (1997), Rouveret (2004:188-207), Labelle & Hirschbühler (2005:65-70, forthcoming), Labelle (2007:291-304) and Wolfe (2016b).

clausal syntax. Finally, I sketch SI's diachronic progression, showing that its syntax alters fundamentally during the period conventionally referred to as 'Old French'.

1.2. Structure of the Paper

Section 1 introduces the empirical and theoretical background on Old French syntax, before I review and critique previous approaches to the syntax of SI in Section 2. Section 3 focusses on the corpus data, highlighting points of continuity and variation between texts. Section 4 presents a new formal analysis of SI's form and function in the Old French left periphery.

1.3. Empirical Background on Old French

1.3.1. *Verb Movement and the Left Periphery*

Since seminal work by Pollock (1989:§3.4.1) and Belletti (1990) it has been acknowledged that one way of accounting for systematic differences between French and English concerning the distribution of finite verbs and adverbs (1), is to postulate finite verb movement out of the (*v*)-VP and into the clause's inflectional layer (Kayne 1991:648-657; Chomsky 1995; Roberts 2001:121-123, 2010b:258-271; Rowlett 2007:106-107). Assuming that adverbs follow a fixed order in the unmarked case (Cinque 1999 et seq.), the distinction between (1a) and (1b) follows trivially as French and not English, features finite verb movement past the adverb which occurs in Cinque's Lower Adverb Space (2).

(1) a. John always **kisses** Mary [Modern English]

b. Jean **embrasse** toujours Marie [Modern French]

(2) a. [_{TP} John [_{LAS} always [_{v-VP} **kisses** Mary]]]

b. [_{TP} Jean **embrasse** [_{LAS} toujours [_{v-VP} **embrasse** Marie]]]

Recent research on the syntax of finite verb placement in French and other Romance varieties has revealed a far richer picture of variation (Ledgeway & Lombardi 2005:86-89; Fedele 2010:§2-4; Nicolae 2014; Cruschina & Ledgeway 2016:560-562; Ledgeway in press c). Schifano (2015a:Ch.4-8) concludes that finite verb movement in Modern Romance can

target a wide variety of head positions within a richly articulated Tense-Aspect-Mood field (cf. also Schifano 2015b on Italo-Romance).

The significance of this development is clear if we consider the central claim that Old French had a form of Verb Second (V2) syntax (Thurneysen 1892; Wartburg 1958:103; Price 1971:§11.5; Moignet 1973:287; Skårup 1975:290; Harris 1978:18-22, 1984:189-198; Adams 1987a:2-3, 1987b:4-7, 1987c, 1988:§1-2; Vance 1987, 1988:87, 1993:281-286, 1997; Fleishman 1991:267-270; Roberts 1993:Ch.2; De Bakker 1997:Ch.1; Rouveret 2004; Labelle & Hirschbühler 2005, forthcoming; Mathieu 2006:§2, 2009:344, 2012:340; Labelle 2007:290; Vance, Donaldson & Steiner 2009:302-307; Salvesen 2011:§1, 2013:135-138; Hansch 2014:81-118; Steiner 2014:10-23; Wolfe 2016a:§2, 2016b:§1.2). This V2 syntax is not understood in the vast majority of recent research as a form of linear ordering constraint, but a systematic requirement that the finite verb targets the vacant C(omplementiser) position, with an additional operation which fronts an XP into the left periphery of the clause. Assuming that these operations target, respectively, Head and Specifier positions within the C-layer, also accounts for the matrix/embedded asymmetries observed for V2 effects, with SVO orders far more frequent in embedded clauses than in matrix clauses (Adams 1987b:5; Vanelli, Renzi & Benincà 1986:§4.2; Roberts 1993:142, 2007:61-63; Jensen 1994:359; Vance 1995:174, 1997:133; Platzack 1995:205; Muller 2009:241; Salvesen 2013:140).

If 'V-to-T movement' is a cover term for a range of verb movement operations targeting different positions within the inflectional domain, the correct characterisation of Old French 'V-to-C' movement becomes non-trivial.³ In a cartographic approach to the left periphery (Rizzi 1997, 2004, 2006, 2010, 2013; Benincà & Poletto 2004 i.a.), there are *a priori* a number of potential landing sites for the moved finite verb:⁴

- (3) [_{Frame} *HT*, *Adv*_{Scene-Setting} [_{Force} *Complementiser*₁, [_{Topic} *CILD*, *Aboutness* *Topic* [_{Focus} *Focus*_{Contrastive}, *Quantifier*_{Indefinite}, *Focus*_{Information} [_{Fin} *Complementiser*₂ [_{TP}...]]]]]]

³ I do not discuss here I/T-V2 accounts of the type argued for by Lemieux & Dupuis (1995), on the grounds that this approach fails to make the correct predictions for a wide range of syntactic properties across the Old French period, not least V-S 'inversion' (see §1.2.2) and main/embedded asymmetries (see §1.3.1).

⁴ This cartographic map of the left periphery has been adapted and somewhat simplified, based on Ledgeway (2010:51).

Capitalising on the intuition that V2 effects may have different loci cross-linguistically, accounts of Old French V2 which assume Fin (Salvesen 2011, 2013:134), Focus (Benincà 2004:285-292, 2006:70; Labelle 2007:301-305; Donaldson 2012:1029) and Force (Wolfe 2016a) to be the locus of V2 have all been proposed. Therefore, an O-V-S V2 (4), could minimally be derived in three ways (5):⁵

(4) messe e matines **ad** li reis escultet

mass and matins have.3SG the king hear.PTCP

‘The King has attended mass and matins’ (*Roland* 11, 139)

(5) a. Fin-V2: [Frame [Force [Topic [Focus [Fin messe e matines [Fin° **ad**] [SubjP... li reis escultet]]]]]]]

b. Focus-V2: [Frame [Force [Topic [Focus messe e matines [Force° **ad**] [Fin [SubjP...li reis escultet]]]]]]]

c. Force-V2: [Frame [Force messe e matines [Force° **ad**] [Topic [Focus [Fin ~~messe e matines~~ [Fin° **ad**] [SubjP... li reis escultet]]]]]]]

In the analysis below, I consider these options to be non-exclusive. Building on an important insight in Rouveret (2004), I suggest that many of the changes that affect the clausal syntax of early French varieties in approximately 1200 can be attributed to a change from an earlier Fin-V2 to an innovative Force-V2 grammar, with significant ramifications for the syntax of ‘SI’.

1.3.2. Subject Positions

Another significant difference between Old and Modern French concerns subject positions and so-called ‘inversion’ structures. Constructions involving apparent inversion of the finite verb and subject are attested in Modern French under various guises (Kayne 1983; Rizzi & Roberts 1989; Jones 1996:474-478; Sportiche 1999; Hulk & Pollock 2001; Rowlett 2007:199-225; Kayne & Pollock 2012) and elsewhere in Romance.⁶ Crucially non-pronominal postverbal subjects in such constructions in Modern French occur to the right

⁵ In these and examples that follow, I only indicate non-pronounced lower copies of moved constituents when relevant for the discussion.

⁶ See in particular Belletti (2001, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2008), Sheehan (2006, 2010) and the contributions in Hulk & Pollock (2001)

of past participles (Rizzi & Roberts 1989; Hulk & Pollock 2001:5; Sheehan 2006:99, 2010:§3.4):

(6) J'exige que **soit** éliminée cette solution

I=require.1SG that be.3SG.SBJV eliminated.PTCP this solution

'I want this solution to be eliminated' (Hulk & Pollock 2001:5)

On the other hand, examples of so-called 'Germanic'-inversion abound across Old French texts (Adams 1987b:4; Roberts 1993:§2.2; Vance 1997:78-79; Salvesen & Bech 2014:223).⁷

Here, postverbal subjects occur between the finite auxiliary and past participles or infinitives. As these non-finite verbal forms demarcate the left edge of the *v*-VP complex (Cinque 2001, 2006:12; Cardinaletti & Shlonsky 2004:525; Ledgeway in press c), they unambiguously convey that earlier French varieties licensed V-to-C movement:⁸⁹

(7) a. Par tantes terres **ad** sun cors traveillet

over so.many lands have.3SG his body suffer.PTCP

'His body has suffered across so many lands' (*Roland*, 540)

b. Et quant il furent ajosté ensemble, si **furent** li noir vaincuz

and when they were joust.PTCP together si be.3PL the blacks defeat.PTCP

'And when they met in the jousting, the blacks were defeated' (*Graal* 182, 40)

c. Et enqui **ot** Guillelme de Chanlite brisié le braz d'une pierre

and there have.3SG Guillelme de Chanlite break.PTCP the arm of=a stone

'and there a stone broke Guillelme de Chanlite's arm' (*Villehardouin* 1 167)

Old French also licenses postverbal subjects lower in the functional structure, akin to those found in Modern French:

(8) a. A cele foiz ne **furent** mie venu tuit li baron

at that time NEG be.3PL NEG come.PTCP all the barons

⁷ For more descriptive discussion of this construction in Old French, see Einhorn (1974:115), Jensen (1990:336) and Muller (2009:246) among others.

⁸ V-to-C accounts have also been widely adopted for Modern French Subject Clitic-Inversion (Kayne 1984; Rizzi & Roberts 1989; Roberts 1993), which is a more restricted phenomenon where the subject must be a pronoun (Rowlett 2007:200-210).

⁹ Additional evidence that these subjects in G-inversion structures are in the inflectional layer comes from their distribution higher than VP adverbs (see Labelle 2007:291, 2016:220).

‘At that point, not all the lords had arrived’ (*Villehardouin* 179)

b. Si est avenue la semblance de l’évangile...

SI be.3SG happen.PTCP the likeness of the Gospel

‘What is said in the Gospel has happened...’ (*Graal* 166, 17)

The natural conclusion is that earlier stages of French featured multiple postverbal subject positions (Benincà 1983-4:190, 1995:326, 2004:278; Adams 1987b:9; Roberts 1993:56; Hulk & van Kemenade 1995:235; Vance 1995:177; De Bakker 1997:56; Ingham 2014:30, 34). Furthermore a body of research has converged on the view that the higher subject position in the inflectional layer specialised in hosting definite, discourse-active, thematic subject expressions (Vance 1997:77; Salvesen & Beck 2014:222; Wolfe 2015c:90),¹⁰ whilst the lower *vP*-internal position hosted subjects which were either discourse-OLD or NEW (De Bakker 1997:57; Vance 1997:79; Myking 2012; Salvesen & Beck 2014:222; Wolfe 2015:91).¹¹

1.3.3. Null Arguments

A further major morphosyntactic difference between Modern French and Old French concerns its null argument properties. Whilst Standard Modern Metropolitan French¹² is generally considered to be a non-Null Subject Language (Rizzi 1986:400; Roberts 2010a: 307, 2010b:§3.5, 2014b:§2-4) this analysis is not correct for Old French, which licenses null arguments in contexts which would not be licit in modern varieties. Simplifying the facts somewhat, until approximately 1200 depending on text type and region, null subjects are licensed in matrix clauses, yielding verb-initial orders (9a) (Labelle & Hirschbühler 2005:62; Labelle 2007:300; Simonenko & Hirschbühler 2012:30; Salvi 2012:§3.1; Zimmerman

¹⁰ These findings for Old French are of course in line with other analyses of Spec-TP (or Spec-SubjP in certain cartographic accounts) cross-linguistically as being associated with subjects which are high in referentiality (Cardinaletti 2004:121, 136; Rizzi 2005:209, 2006:§7; Gallego 2007:224, 2010:208). The analysis also finds further support from Medieval Italo-Romance varieties (Lombardi & Middleton 2004:574; Poletto 2014; Wolfe 2015b:12-17) and Old Spanish (Wolfe 2015d:137-139) which appear to show a similar mapping between the syntax of subject positions and their discourse-pragmatics.

¹¹ No stand is taken here on the issue of whether postverbal pronominal subjects in any stage of Old French were syntactic clitics on C° (Dupuis 1989:119f; Roberts 1993:117-119; Vance 1997:51), as their clitic-categorial status has no bearing on the analysis that follows.

¹² See Roberts (2010a:326-327) for discussion of Zribi-Hertz’s (1994) data on *français très évolué* which may constitute a form of Null Subject Language.

2014:36; Kaiser & Zimmerman 2015; Wolfe 2016a:470-471) and in a wide range of embedded clauses (Adams 1987a; Dupuis 1988; Vance 1988; Roberts 1993:136-147) (9b):

- (9) a. **Getet** le a terre...
 throw.3SG.PST=it to ground
 ‘He throws it to the ground...’ (*Roland* 464)
- b. Se **veïssum** Rollant einz qu’il fust mort
 If see.1PL.IMP.SBJV Roland before that=he be.3SG.PST dead
 ‘If we saw Roland before he was dead...’ (*Roland* 1804)

Between 1180 and the first decade of the 13th century the null argument system changes, with heavy restrictions appearing on null subjects in embedded clauses (Adams 1987b:3, 1987c:Ch.1; Roberts 1993:139; Vance 1997:Ch.5; Poletto 2013:160) and (near)-total absence of V1 clauses such as (9a) (Skårup 1975:291; Marchello-Nizia 1980:331; Vance 1997:32; Rouveret 2004:193-195; Labelle & Hirschbühler 2005:66, 2012:11).

1.3.5. Left-Peripheral Constituents and Particles

A final property in which Old French patterns separately from Standard Modern French concerns the preverbal field. As acknowledged in traditional descriptive works (Foulet 1928:306-332; Wartburg 1958:103; Moignet 1973:357; Skårup 1975:9-69) and theoretical analyses (Vanelli, Renzi & Benincà 1986:§4.1; Adams 1987b:4-5, 1988; Roberts 1993:85-87; Hulk & Van Kemenade 1995:235-236; Vance 1997:43-47; Donaldson 2012:1025; Mathieu 2012:327; Salvesen 2013:135-136; Steiner 2014:xviii), the preverbal field in Old French is not a privileged subject position. Rather, consistent with other V2 languages (Vikner 1995:41; Frey 2004:3; Holmberg 2015:1), a range of constituents occur before the finite verb (10), with the presence of a direct object triggering Verb-Subject ‘inversion’ (4, 8b, 10b):¹³

- (10)a. Li reis Marsilie **esteit** en Sarraguçe
 the king Marsile be.3SG.PST in Zaragoza
 ‘King Marsile was in Zaragoza’ (*Roland* 10)

¹³ The scare quotes are necessary here as it is not clear that any movement, and hence ‘inversion’ of the subject occurs in all these clauses. If, as suggested above, a subclass of subjects remain in their base-generated position within the *vP* in Old French, some clauses showing an *XP*_{Non-Subject}—V-S order may not feature any subject-related movement operations.

b. Ce **oïrent** el palés maint

that hear.3PL.PST in-the palace many

‘Many in the palace heard this’ (*Charrette*, 80)

c. et a chascun **rendra** ce qu’il avra deservi

and to each give.3SG.FUT that which-he have.3SG.FUT deserve.PTCP

‘and he’ll give each what he has earned’ (*Graal* 163, 32-33)

A range of particles also occur in the preverbal field that have proven problematic to analyse. These include AINZ ‘but’, OR ‘now’, APRES ‘afterwards’, PUIS ‘then’, ET ‘and, thus’ and SI (Foulet 1928:§300; Gardener & Green 1958:130; Ménard 1968:81; Moignet 1973:287-288; Skårup 1975:238-239; Marchello-Nizia 1985:2; Jensen 1990:472-473; Van Reenen & Schøsler 1992, 1993, 2000; Schøsler & Van Reenen 1996; Vance 1997:61, 235; Buridant 2000:508-510; Bonnard & Régner 2008:209-210). They are challenging to translate accurately, difficult to describe in terms of their distribution and thus far allude a satisfying formal analysis. For the remainder of this article, I focus exclusively on one of these elements, namely SI.

1.4. The Database

In the remainder of this article, I draw on a hand-annotated corpus of texts taken from the *Base de Français Médiéval*,¹⁴ which illustrate both poetry and prose and are diachronically spread across the 12th and early 13th centuries:

Table 1. Textual Database

Text	Composition	Poetry / Prose
<i>Chanson de Roland</i>	c. 1100	Poetry
<i>Roman de Thèbes</i>	c. 1150	Poetry
<i>Eneas</i>	c. 1155	Poetry
<i>Chevalier de la Charrette ou Lancelot</i>	c.1177-1181	Poetry
<i>Conquête de Constantinople</i> (Villehardouin)	c. 1199-1213	Prose
<i>Conquête de Constantinople</i> (Clari)	After 1205	Prose
<i>Queste del Saint Graal</i>	c. 1225-1230	Prose

¹⁴ See <http://bfm.ens-lyon.fr> and the details given in the bibliography.

In the *Roland*, *Thèbes*, *Eneas* and *Villehardouin* all SI-clauses were extracted, whilst approximately 300 were extracted from the longer texts of *Charrette*, *Clari* and *Queste*. These were annotated for a dozen syntactic and discourse-pragmatic variables which included recording the finite verb position, verb class, subject type, subject position and discourse-pragmatic status of other clausal constituents..

2. Previous Approaches to SI

2.1 SI as an Adverb

Numerous accounts of Old French grammar have classed SI with adverbs which occur clause-initially and serve to structure the discourse (Foulet 1928:301-303; Anglade 1930:§248; Ménard 1968:81; Moignet 1973:287; Skårup 1975:238-239; Jensen 1990:472-473; Bonnard & Régnier 2008:209-210). At first glance, there is much to be said for this classification. Firstly, this analysis finds diachronic corroboration as SI derives from a Latin temporal deictic adverb, *SIC*, generally translated as ‘thus’ (Salvi 2004:15 n.66; Rosén 2005:228-230; Pinsker 2006:65, 107-108; Ledgeway in press a, in press b):

- (11) et sic **plecaremus** nos ad montem Dei
 and thus arrive.1PL.PST.SBJV we at mountain.ACC God.GEN
 ‘and we thus approached the mountain of God’ (*Peregrinatio* 2, 4)

Secondly SI patterns with other Old French adverbs (12), triggering subject-verb ‘inversion’ when clause initial (Foulet 1928:301-303; Jensen 1990:472)(13):

- (12)a. Après **pristrent** li baron un parlement a Soisons
 after hold.3PL.PST the lords a meeting at Soisons
 ‘Afterwards the lords held a meeting in Soissons’ (*Villehardouin*2, 11)
 b. Ja vos **avoit** il si longuement servi
 already you.CL=have.3SG.PST he so long serve.PTCP
 ‘He has already served you such a long time’ (*Graal* 331, 5)

(13) Si **luisoient** ja les estoiles

SI shine.3PL.PST already the stars

‘The stars were already shining’ (*Charrette* 31a, 1015)

However this analysis leaves many questions unanswered. Firstly, an analysis of SI as a simple adverbial ignores its sheer abundance across textual records, with Foulet (1928:300) noting that in early French ‘there is hardly a page where it doesn’t appear several times’ (Marchello-Nizia 1985:2; Fleischman 1991:261; Buridant 2000:§408).¹⁵ Our analysis supports this conclusion, with SI occurring every 20 lines in the *Roland* and every 24 lines in *Charrette*. Secondly a simple adverbial analysis is a weak fit for sentences with an initial clause occurring before SI (Foulet 1928:301; Moignet 1973:288; Einhorn 1974:103; Jensen 1990:473; Fleischman 1991:262; Benincà 1995:333; Vance 1997:64-65; Buridant 2000:509; Steiner 2014:26; Salvesen 2014:143). As the data below show, these increase significantly in frequency in the 13th century and it would be puzzling, for example, why adverbial SI meaning ‘thus, so’ occurred after an initial clause 177 times in *La Queste*, where this pattern of resumption is near-systematic (cf. §4):

(14)a. Et quant cil oïrent, si s’**escrierent** tuit a une voiz

and when they hear.3PL.PST SI REFL.CL=cry.3PL.PST all at one voice

‘And when they heard, they all cried together...’ (*Villehardouin* 66, 1)

b. Quant il vint en la valee, si **comença** a penser mout durement

when he come.3SG.PST in the valley SI begin.3SG.PST to think.INF very hard

‘When he came to the valley, he began to think very hard’ (*Graal*, 194d, 8)

As highlighted by Fleischman (1991:263), even more surprising under an adverbial account are orders where other adverbs encoding temporal continuity or succession co-occur with SI (cf. Schøsler & Van Reenen 1996:640-641 and Van Reenen & Schøsler 2000:79-80). Consider the examples in (15), where *donc* ‘thus, so’, *puis* ‘then, so’ and *puis après* ‘then afterwards’ encode precisely the temporal-aspectual values we expect SI alone to encode under this account :

¹⁵ See also Van Reenen & Schøsler (1992:115, 2000:97) who show that the overall frequency shows regional variation, with SI more frequent in northern texts.

- (15) a. quant a sa proie devoree, donc si **s'endort** gole bae
 when has.3SG its prey devour.PTCP thus SI REFL.CL=sleep.3SG mouth open
 “When it has devoured its prey, it then goes to sleep with its mouth wide-
 open” (*Eneas1*, 489-490)
- b. En la cité puis si l'en **meinent**
 in the city then SI him.LOC.CL=lead.3PL
 ‘They then lead him into the city’ (*Thèbes1*, 384)
- c. Et puis après si **assist** on Acre et si le **prist** on
 and then afterwards SI besiege.3SG.PST one Acre and SI it=take.3SG.PST one
 ‘And then after Acre was besieged and taken’ (*Clari* 38, 10)

2.2. SI as a Topic Marker

A number of scholars highlight SI's role in encoding Topic continuity (Diez 1882:2060; Skårup 1975:238-239; Blumenthal 1980:121; Van Reenen & Schøsler 1992:102, 1993:617, 2000:84; Benincà 1995:333; Vance 1995:184, 195, 1997:53; Schøsler & Van Reenen 1996:644; Ferraresi & Goldbach 2000:17; Buridant 2000:508; Bonnard & Régnier 2008:209), with Fleischman (1991) presenting the most detailed such analysis. This accounts for a wide range of the data, with cases such as (16) lending support to this analysis (for similar cases see Fleischman 1991:267, 271, Van Reenen & Schøsler 1992:106 and Buridant 2000:508):

- (16) Li vaslés **entendi** bien que li empereres li donnoit boin
 the vassal understand.3SG.PST well that the emperor him.CL=give.3SG.PST good
 conseil ; si **s'atorna** au plus belement qu'il peut, si
 counsel SI REFL.CL=prepare.3SG.PST at most best that=he can.3SG SI
 s'en **vint** avec les messages
 REFL.CL=LOC.CL=come.3SG.PST with the messengers
 ‘The servant understood clearly that the emperor had given him good advice. He
 prepared the best he could and came with the messengers...’ (*Clari* 30, 31)

Here SI serves a disambiguating function. Whilst the nominal subject *Li vaslés* ‘the vassal/servant’ is the intended Topic of all three matrix clauses, constituting an Aboutness-Shift Topic in the terms of Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl (2007:89), the presence of SI serves to

disambiguate this configuration from an interpretation where *li empereres* ‘the emperor’ serves as the Topic in the two subsequent SI-clauses.

Additional evidence for this analysis comes from one context where SI is absent. There are no reported cases where SI occurs in absolute initial position of a portion of text which shares the same Aboutness-Shift Topic (“thematic paragraphs” in the terms of Fleischman 1991:256, following Givón 1983:7-8). Thus in the data we find no cases where a chapter or paragraph on a new Topic begins with SI, confirming the findings of a number of others (Marchello-Nizia 1985:25; Ménard 1988:328; Lemieux & Dupuis 1995:96; Vance 1997:54; Van Reenen & Schøsler 2000:86; Buridant 2000:508; Bonnard & Régnier 2008:209). Significantly this sets SI apart from other Old French CP-elements such as OR and CI which can begin thematic paragraphs (Perret 1988; Fleischman 1991:270; Buridant 2000:508; Schøsler & Van Reenen 1996:645; Van Reenen & Schøsler 2000:87).

However this account is not unproblematic. First, consider the clauses in (14), where SI occurs after an initial wh-clause alongside those in (17) below where SI follows a Subject Determiner Phrase (cf. Foulet 1928:301; Marchello-Nizia 1985:7; Fleischman 1991:265-266,271; Ferraresi & Goldbach 2002:12; Salvesen 2013:156; Buridant 2000:509):

- (17) a. Souffrance si **est** semblable a esmeraude qui toz jorz est vert
 suffering SI be.3SG similar to emerald which all days be.3SG green
 ‘Suffering is similar to emerald, which is always green’ (*Graal* 189c, 18)
- b. et ceste ville si **est** mult riche et mult bien garnie de toz biens
 and this town SI be.3SG very rich and very well stock.PTCP of all goods
 ‘and this town is very rich and well stocked with provisions’ (*Villehardouin* 1 86, 4)

It is not clear under a Topic continuity analysis why SI occurs in these environments, where the thematic nominal expressions *souffrance* ‘suffering’ and *ceste ville* are readily identifiable as the Topic of the SI-clauses, with no intervening constituents that could qualify as competing Aboutness-Shift Topics.¹⁶

Second, consider the postverbal subjects in (18). These bring a referent into the discourse which is neither ‘active’ (Prince 1981:243; Chafe 1987; Lambrecht 1994:165) nor

¹⁶ See recent work by Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl (2007:103-113 along with Frascarelli (2007:703-716, 2008:263-274) for an analysis of Topic switching in Modern German and Italian.

‘accessible’ (Ariel 1988: 66) so highly unlikely to function as a continuing discourse Topic, yet are readily compatible with SI:

(18) a. E si i **furent** e Gerin e Gerers

and SI LOC.CL=be.3PL.PST and Gerin and Gerers

‘And Gerin and Gerer were there’ (*Roland* 107)

b. Si **commenchierent** le plus rike navie que onques fust veue

SI begin.3PL.PST the most rich navy that ever be.3SG.PST see.PTCP

‘And thus the richest navy one had ever seen set out’ (*Clari* 8, 7)

c. Quant je me fui endormiz si m'**avint** une avision

when I REFL.CL=be.1SG.PST asleep SI REFL.CL=come.3SG.PST a vision

merveilleuse

marvellous

‘When I was asleep a marvellous vision came to me’ (*Graal* 197a 23-24)

2.3. SI as a Focus or Fin Expletive

A number of analyses of SI in Old French and early Romance varieties view it as an expletive-like element which serves as a last resort mechanism to satisfy the V2 constraint. These analyses fall into two groups: those where SI is viewed as a phrasal category, satisfying the part of the constraint requiring XP merger in the C-domain (Lemieux & Dupuis 1995:95; Benincà 1995:333, 2006:64; Vance 1995:184-185; Rouveret 2004:193-195; Poletto 2005:218-224; Salvesen 2013:143; Wolfe 2016b:469-470, 473) or those where merger of a Head SI is an alternative (Ledgeway 2008:452-465) or complementary (Ferraresi & Goldbach 2002:18-23) strategy to V-to-C movement.

Starting with the Head proposal, it faces major problems with the French data. Although Ledgeway’s (2008:444-445) arguments that SI displays many of the properties of a highly grammaticalised element hold, data from verb-subject inversion in Old French show that it cannot be a Head. As Salvesen (2013:143; in press) highlights, the fact that SI consistently triggers inversion of the subject would receive no uniform explanation under a Head account. Ledgeway’s (2008) account could be maintained if it could be demonstrated that *all* postverbal subjects in SI clauses were in a *v*P-internal position with the finite verb/

auxiliary in T°. However, this is contrary to fact with unambiguous Germanic-inversion cases found with Old French *si* (cf. also 7b):¹⁷

- (19) a. Quant eles furent faites, si **fu** la chose teüe que on
 when they be.3PL.PST do.PTCP *si* be.3SG.PST the thing keep-quiet.PTCP that one
 iroit en Babilloine
 go.3SG.IMPV to Babylon

‘When they [the covenants] were completed, it was kept secret that we would go to Babylon’ (*Villehardouin*1, 30, 3)

- b. et quant il furent ensemble, si lor **fu** ceste parole mostree
 and when they be.3PL.PST together *si* them=be.3SG.PST this message show.PTCP
 ‘And when they gathered together, this message was shown to them’ (*Villehardouin*1
 94, 1)

- c. Cil dedenz nel porent sousfrir / / si leur **estut** le champ
 those inside NEG.it can.3PL.PST stand.INF *si* them=be-obliged.3SG.PST the field
 guerpir
 abandon.INF

‘Those inside can withstand no more; they have to abandon the field’ (*Thèbes*1,
 4933-4935)

- d. se il i est morz ne conquis / / si **somes** tuit an fin vaincu
 if he LOC.CL be.3SG dead or defeated *si* be.1PL all at end lose.PTCP
 ‘If he is dead or defeated, we have all lost’ (*Eneas*2 9414-9415)

- e. Si l'**ont** anbedui saluee
si her.CL=have.3PL both greet.PTCP
 ‘... [a young lady]... they both greet her’ (*Charrette* 29c, 607-608)

However, an analysis of a phrasal last-resort element is more appealing. First, an expletive analysis accounts for the numerous observations in the Old French literature that *si* is semantically vacuous (Foulet 1928:§300; Ménard 1968:81; Moignet 1973:287-288; Skårup

¹⁷ As Ledgeway (2008:439, n.3) highlights, Ferraresi & Goldbach’s (2002) claim that *si* is merged in Fin in addition to the finite verb makes the incorrect prediction that the finite verb will precede *si*, following left adjunction to the particle in Fin. As such I do not pursue this account here.

1975:238-239; Jensen 1990:472-473; Roberts 1993:330; Vance 1995:185; 1997:53).¹⁸ Second, an analysis of SI as a last-resort element which serves to satisfy the V2 constraint can account for SI's near-total absence in embedded contexts (Marchello-Nizia 1985:15; Lemieux & Dupuis 1995:96; Ferraresi & Goldbach 2002:11, 2003:113) where V2 is generally not operative (Adams 1987a, 1987b et seq.). Third, a diachronic argument links SI to V2. It is generally reported that the V2 constraint no longer holds in French texts by the end of the 15th century (Roberts 1993:220-227; Vance 1995, 1997:350-351; Steiner 2014:260). Crucially, this is precisely when Marchello-Nizia (1985:200) observes the most marked decrease in the attestation of SI (cf. also Fleischman 1991:278). Whilst we must be cautious not to misinterpret historical correlation for causation, this dating is nevertheless suggestive of a strong link between the V2 property and the presence of SI.

However, this account of SI still begs many questions. The exact conditions under which this 'last-resort' mechanism is required have never been defined in any degree of detail. One can also question whether a last-resort account can be reconciled with the discourse-pragmatic effects SI clearly has within early French texts. Finally, a question facing this, and all accounts, is how to formally capture the significant cross-textual and diachronic variation observable for SI in the Old French period.

3. OLD FRENCH SI - CONTINUITY AND VARIATION

3.1. SI-INITIAL AND CLAUSE + SI CONFIGURATIONS

All the texts examined feature V2 clauses where SI is the only overt preverbal constituent (Marchello-Nizia 1985:Ch.1 and Van Reenen & Schøsler 1992:117-122, 2000:104-105). Although SI is often described in the paradigm case as an alternative to an overt or null subject in Old French (Marchello-Nizia 1985:164-166; Fleischman 1991:258; Van Reenen & Schøsler 1992:121; Buridant 2000:§411), all the texts show SI-initial clauses with overt postverbal subjects (on which see also Fleischman 1991:271-274; Van Reenen & Schøsler 1992:121; Vance 1997:204) (18a, 18b, 19e, 21), which can be either discourse-OLD or NEW:

¹⁸ Poletto (2005:218-227) also puts forward an analysis of Old Italian SI as an expletive element, a claim Benincà (1995:333, 2004:266-267, 2006:64-65, 2013:72) also makes for Medieval Romance in general.

(20) Si **tenoit** chascuns une hache

SI hold.3SG.PST each an axe

‘Each held an axe’ (*Charrette* 31b, 1091)

(21) Et si y **fu** li abbes de Los en Flandres, qui estoit de maisons

and SI LOC.CL=be.3SG.PST the abbot of Los in Flanders who be.3SG.PST from houses

de l’ordre de Chistiax

of the-order of Chistiax

‘And the abbot of Los in Flanders, who is from the house of the order of Chistiax was there’ (*Clari* 1, 27)

All texts also feature configurations where SI occurs after a clause (Moignet 1973:288; Ménard 1973:186; Marchello-Nizia 1985:152-153; Fleischman 1991:271; Van Reenen & Schøsler 1992:106-107, 2000:86; Vance 1997:65; Vance, Donaldson & Steiner 2012:308-312; Salvesen 2013:147-148). Consider the Circumstantial Clause (22), If Clause (23), Wh-Clause (24) and Reason Clause (25) that follow:

(22) Dolent estoient et pensif // si **descendirent** souz un if

pained be.PST and thoughtful SI go-down.3PL.PST under a yew

‘Feeling sorrowful and deep in thought, they went [and sat] under a yew tree’ (*Thèbes* 2 6789-6790)

(23) et se Diex lor donoit que il i peüssent venir,

and if God them=give.3SG.PST that they LOC.CL=can.3PL.PST.SBJV come.INF

si **seroient** a saveté

SI be.3PL.FUT at safety

‘And if God allows them to come here, they will be safe’ (*Villehardouin* 2 218, 406)

(24) Quant il vinrent la, si **parlerent** au marchis...

when they come.3PL.PST there, SI speak.3PL.PST to-the marquis

‘When they arrived there, they spoke to the marquis...’ (*Clari* 5, 4)

(25) ...car ce qu’il fet de bien si **vient** de la grace et del conseil

since that what-he do.3SG of good SI come.3SG from the grace and of-the advice

dou saint esperit

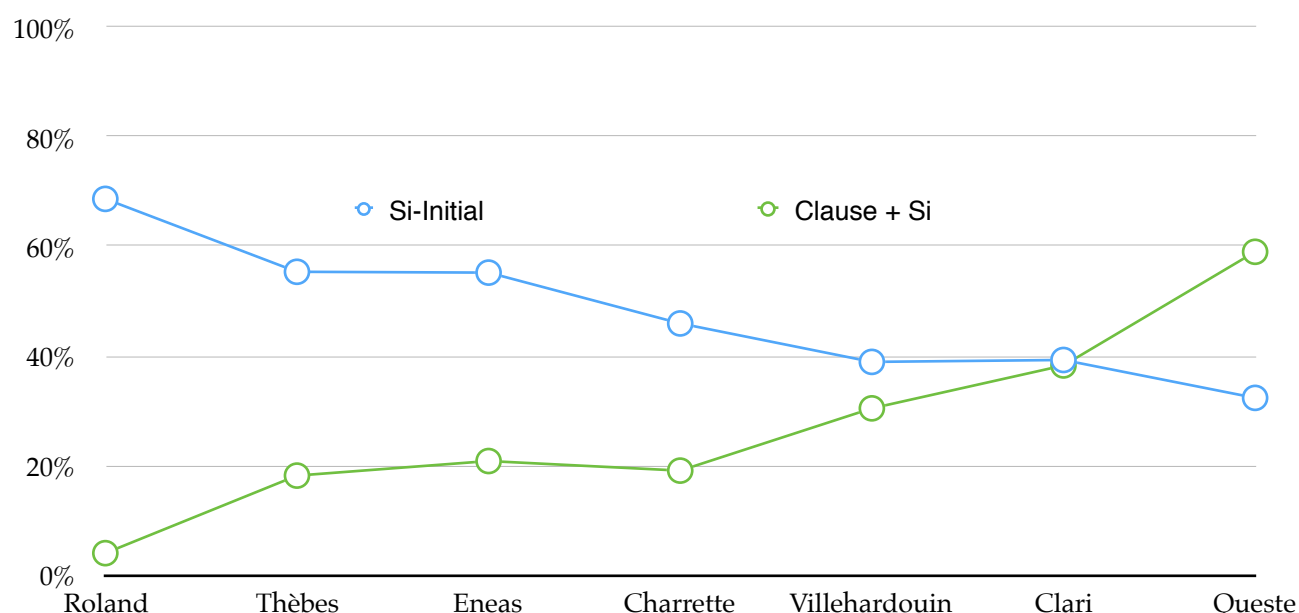
of-the holy spirit

‘...since the good that he does comes from the grace and counsel of the holy spirit’ (*Graal* 199c, 11-12)

One of the most striking findings emerging from the corpus is the decline in SI-initial clauses and the concomitant rise of the relative attestation of [CLAUSE + SI] configurations. Consider Table 1 and Figure 1 in this regard which show a clear diachronic decline for SI-initial clauses within 12th and early 13th centuries, whilst clause-initial configurations show a striking increase in the proportion of si-clauses they represent.

An account of this pattern warrants discussion. Indeed, if, as has been suggested by many scholars (Marchello-Nizia 1985:164-166; Fleischman 1991:258; Buridant 2000:§411), the use of SI is a competing strategy to the use of a Null Subject, we should expect exactly the opposite pattern to obtain, as Null Subjects in clause-initial position become near-entirely absent at the start of the 13th century (cf. Simonenko & Hirschbühler 2012:30 and references above). Likewise, the rise of clause-initial configurations cannot go ignored, yet does not follow without stipulation from any of the existing accounts of SI outlined above.

Figure 1. SI-Initial vs. Clause + SI Configurations

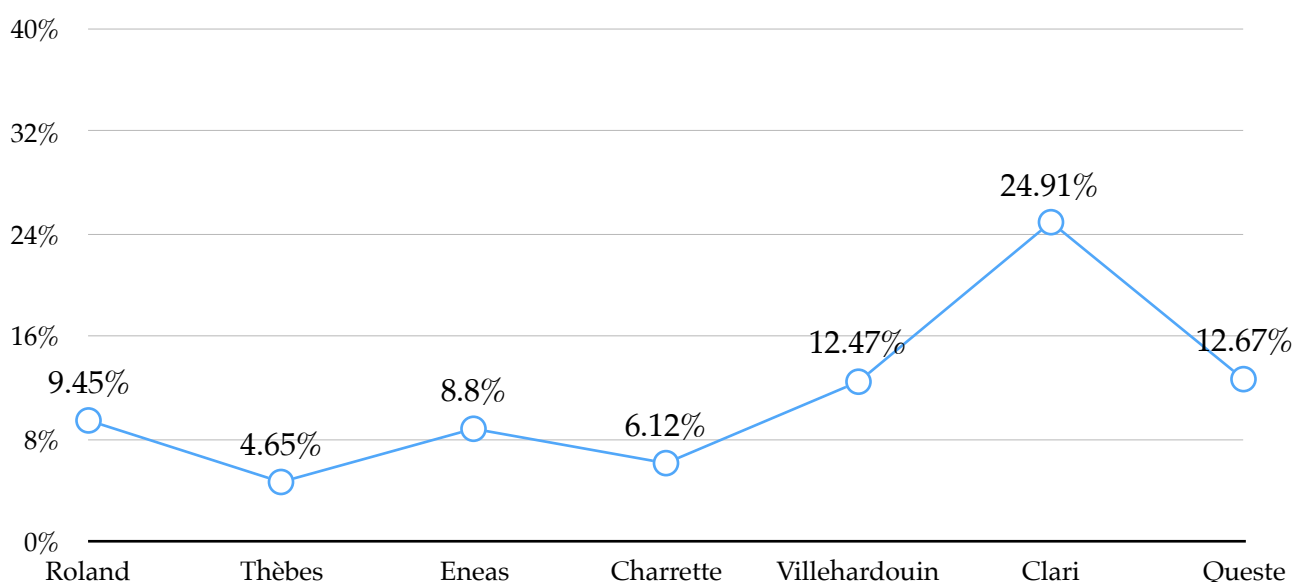


INSERT TABLE 1/FIGURE 1 HERE

3.2. VARIATION IN POSTVERBAL SUBJECTS

It was shown above that all texts feature overt postverbal subjects which are either discourse OLD or NEW.¹⁹ Aside from this point of continuity, there is quantitative and qualitative variation between the texts. Firstly, as noted previously by Fleischman (1991:265) and Marchello-Nizia (1985:169-178) there is a gradual increase in the proportion of SI-clauses which feature an overt postverbal subject (Figure 2):²⁰

Figure 2. Overt Postverbal Subjects



Secondly, as Table 3 shows, there are additional differences identifiable regarding the type of postverbal subject licensed. Whilst *Roland*, *Thèbes* and *Charrette* in particular show a strong tendency for postverbal subjects to be informationally NEW, by the 13th century *Clari* and *Queste* feature postverbal discourse-OLD subjects which are more numerous, although the data do not show an entirely neat diachronic progression (Table 3):

¹⁹ As a somewhat broad-brush, but nevertheless falsifiable diagnostic, examples were coded as discourse-OLD according to whether they appear in the previous ten lines of text.

²⁰ The relatively low numbers in Figure 2 should be approached with a degree of caution until a larger sample size can be assembled and subjected to a significance test.

Table 3. Discourse Value of Postverbal Subjects

	Transitive		Athematic		Reflexive				Total	
	Old	New	Old	New	Old	New	Old	New	% Old	% New
<i>Roland</i> , 1100	3	4	2	9	1	0	6	13	31.58%	68.42%
<i>Thèbes</i> 1150	2	3	1	2	0	2	3	7	30.00%	70.00%
<i>Eneas</i> , 1155	3	0	2	3	0	3	5	6	45.45%	54.55%
<i>Charrette</i> , 1177-1181	2	2	2	11	0	1	4	14	22.22%	77.78%
<i>Villehardouin</i> 1199 - 1213	2	7	2	28	1	10	5	45	10.00%	90.00%
<i>Clari</i> 1205	27	5	18	18	1	2	46	25	64.79%	35.21%
<i>Queste</i> 1225 - 1230	9	5	8	9	3	4	20	18	52.63%	47.37%

3.3. SUBJECT + SI CONFIGURATIONS

Whilst postverbal subjects show the most substantial variation, preverbal subjects as in (26-28) are not uniformly attested across the texts.

(26) Io si nen ai filz ne fille ne heir

I SI NEG have.1SG son NEG daughter NEG heir

‘I have neither a son, nor daughter, nor an heir [to succeed me]’ (*Roland* 2744)

(27) Pharamont si a dit au roi

Pharamond SI have.3SG say.PTCP to-the king

‘Pharamond said to the king’ (*Thèbes* 2 30, 7091)

(28) Et cil qui empereres seroit par l'eslecion de cels, si **aroit** lo

and he who emperor be.3SG.FUT by the-election of them SI have.3SG.FUT the

quart de tote la conquete

quarter of all the conquest

‘And he who was elected emperor by them, would have a quarter of [what was gained from] the whole conquest’ (*Villehardouin* 2 34, 234)

Whilst *Roland*, *Eneas*, *Clari* and *Queste* all show [SUBJECT + SI] clauses accounting for between 1 and 1.6% of all attestations, this figure raises to 4.19% in *Thèbes*, 4.76% in *Charrette* and a high of 7.98% in *Villehardouin* (Table 1). It does not appear coincidental that these are also the three texts which Table 3 shows have the high proportion of NEW information postverbal subjects.

If the high proportion of overt preverbal subjects and the tendency towards postverbal subjects encoding NEW information is linked, we might predict that preverbal subjects in these texts are overwhelmingly discourse-OLD. In fact, as noted by previous scholars of Old French, this is indeed the striking tendency across the corpus. Looking at these texts in particular, only 1 of 9 preverbal subjects in *Thèbes* was tagged as discourse-new, only 1 of 14 in *Charrette* and none of the 32 preverbal subjects in *Villehardouin*. As such these texts show a very clear mapping between subject syntax and pragmatico-semantics, with the preverbal field reserved for discourse-OLD subjects and the postverbal position specialised for discourse-new subjects in SI-clauses..

3.4. PP + SI CONFIGURATIONS

All the texts show PP-initial SI clauses. When the PP has an adverbial or locative adverbial value as in (29, 30), it is uniformly attested across the texts, although no examples of the general adverbial function are found in *Eneas* or *Charrette* and no examples of the locative function are found in *Clari*.

- (29) De cele estoire si **fu** chevetaines Johans de Neele
of that fleet SI be.3SG.PST chief Johan de Neele
‘Johan de Neele was head of this fleet’ (*Villehardouin* 1 3, 48)

- (30) Sur l'erbe verte si **est** caeit envers
on the-grass green si be.3SG fall.PTCP on-back
‘He has fallen down on his back on the green grass’ (*Roland* 2269)

- (31) Au roi, si li **comance** a dire
to-the king SI him.CL=start.3SG to say.INF
‘He starts to say to the king...’ (*Charrette* 27d, 85)

The numbers are small enough that diachronic claims should be tentative, but it is perhaps revealing that Indirect Object PP-initial clauses (31) are only found in *Roland*, *Eneas* and *Charrette*, three of the 12th-century texts considered in the study, as shown in Table 4:

Table 4. PPs

	PPAdverbial	PPLocative	PPIndirectObject	Total SI Clauses	% PPs
<i>Roland</i> , 1100	2	8	1	201	5.47%
<i>Thèbes</i> 1150	1	2	0	215	1.40%
<i>Eneas</i> , 1155	0	3	1	125	3.20%
<i>Charrette</i> , 1177-1181	0	2	1	294	1.02%
<i>Villehardouin</i> 1199 - 1213	8	8	0	401	3.99%
<i>Clari</i> 1205	1	0	0	285	0.35%
<i>Queste</i> 1225 - 1230	2	2	0	300	1.33%

3.5. Adverbial + SI Configurations

Adverbials are found before SI in all texts except *La Queste*. Whilst it might be tempting to view their absence in the latest text as evidence for the diachronic decline of this pattern, this conclusion would be premature given their relative high attestation in *Clari* at the turn of the 13th century²¹:

- (32)a. puis si se **departirent**
 then SI REFL.CL=leave.3PL.PST
 ‘Then they departed’ (*Clari* 4, 2)
- b. Après si s'en **alerent** en Venice
 after SI REFL.CL=LOC.CL=go.3PL.PST to Venice
 ‘Afterwards they went to Venice’ (*Clari* 7, 5)

However, there are qualitative differences between *Roland* and the other texts (cf. Marchello-Nizia 1985:157-160). In *Clari*, *Villehardouin*, *Charrette*, *Eneas* and *Thèbes* all adverbials serve a scene-setting function (Poletto 2000: 100; Benincà & Poletto 2004: 66; Öhl

²¹ See also Marchello-Nizia (1986:159-160) and Salvesen (forthcoming:§4.5) for examples of [Adv + si] constructions in 13th-century prose.

2010: 62),²² anchoring the clause in terms of locative or temporal coordinates. However, in the *Roland*, not all examples are amenable to this analysis. Consider (33) which patterns with the other texts in featuring the adverb *puis*, alongside the examples in (34) which differ in that the adverbials are operative at the VP-level (cf. Cinque 1999:47; Schifano 2015b; Ledgeway in press c):

- (33) Rollant reguardet, / / puis si li **est** curut
 Roland look.3SG then SI him=be.3SG run.PTCP
 ‘He looks at Roland and then runs towards him’ (*Roland* 2086)

- (34) a. Durement en halt si **reclimet** sa culpe
 strongly on high SI profess.3SG his sin
 ‘He loudly professes his sins’ (*Roland* 2014)
 b. Cunqueirantment si finereit li bers.
 conquering.ADV SI end.3SG.COND the nobleman
 ‘The lord would end his life as a conquering hero’ (*Roland* 2867)

Finally, consider direct objects, which do not co-occur with SI in *Charrette*, *Clari* or *La Queste*. Sporadic instances are however found in the other texts (Table 1), with the rarity in our corpus not unexpected given Marchello-Nizia’s (1985:158) finding that the co-occurrence of direct-objects with SI is extremely rare across the Old French period:

- (35) a. Reis Vivien si **succuras** en Imphe
 King Vivien SI help.2SG.FUT in Imphe
 ‘help King Vivien there in Imphe’ (*Roland* 3995-3996)
 b. Les forterescas, les citez, si les **aiez** et departez
 the fortresses the cities SI them=have.2PL.SBJV and leave.2PL.SBJV
 ‘Sack the fortresses and cities and leave’ (*Thèbes1* 3807-3808)
 c. et tote la terre si **tenoit** Toldres li Ascre
 and all the land SI hold.3SG.PST Toldre l’Ascre
 ‘And Toldre l’Ascre held all the land’ (*Villehardouin2* 196, 387)

²² Consider for example the following simple adverbs occurring before SI in *Clari*: *adont/adonc* ‘then’ (n=11), *après* ‘afterwards’ (n=7), *puis* ‘then’ (n=3), *dont* ‘then, therefore’ (n=2), *illueques* ‘there’ (n=2).

Turning to the discourse status of these objects, the definite determiner in (35b) and the presence of a resumptive clitic *les* both suggest that the constituent before SI is thematic in nature.²³ Likewise in (35c), witness both the definite determiner and the fact that the constituent *la terre* has appeared twice in the preceding three lines and is thus discourse-active (Lambrecht 1994:165 and references above). (35a) does not fit this categorisation, as this is the sole occurrence of *Reis Vivien* in the whole of the *Roland* and the direct object is thus informationally NEW, suggesting this may be the only instance of a preverbal informationally-focalised object (Benincà & Poletto 2004:58; Cruschina 2006:368-373, 2008:21-22, 2011:102-107; 2012:Ch2), before SI in the whole of the corpus.

3.6 SI-THIRD CLAUSES

The final point of variation concerns SI-third clauses such as (36). These are important to discuss as clauses where the finite verb is in third, fourth or more position in the clause have been extensively debated with reference to Old French and Medieval Romance in general:²⁴

(36) a. E puis les cors des barons si **unt** pris

and then the bodies of-the barons SI have.3PL take.PTCP

‘Then they take the bodies of those barons’ (*Roland* 2967)

b. Quant la dame ot piece ploré, // son duel et son complaint

when the woman have.3SG a-little cry.PTCP her grief and her complaint

mené, // si **apela** un escuier

show.PTCP SI call.3SG.PST a squire

‘When the lady had cried a little and shown her grief and sorrow, she called upon a squire’ (*Eneas1* 3385-3388)

c. Quant il eut faites toutes ches desloiautés, après si **demanda** a

²³ Whilst the debate as to whether Clitic Left Dislocation is derived via movement (Cecchetto 1999:56-59; Haegeman 2006:38-45; López 2009:§6.2) or base-generation (Cinque 1999; Benincà & Poletto 2004:71; De Cat 2009:118-134; Ledgeway 2010:290) is still very much alive in the literature, there is absolute consensus that clitic resumption is never associated with an initial Focus in Romance (Cruschina & Ledgeway 2016:§31.3.4).

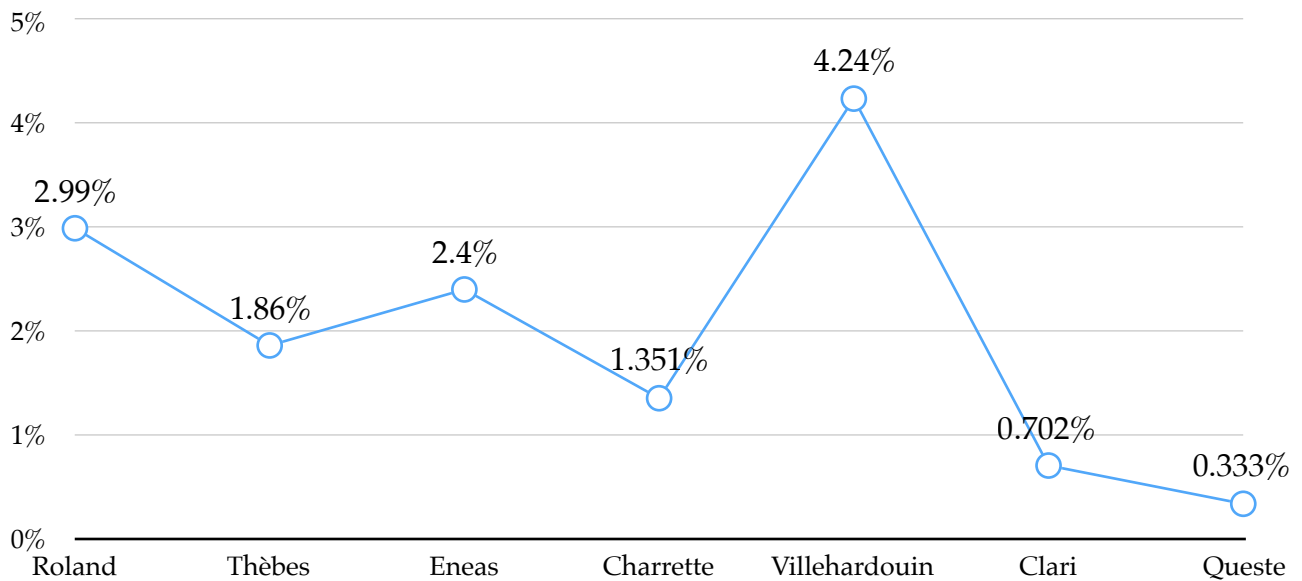
²⁴ The literature is truly vast here, but see for French Skårup (1975:435-459), Vance (1997:61-62), Labelle (2007:303), Donaldson (2012:1038), Mathieu (2012:339-341) and Salvesen (2013). For Medieval Romance in general see Benincà (2004:273-282, 2013:73-77) and Wolfe (2015c, 2016a).

when he have.3SG.PST do.PTCP all these disloyalties after SI ask.3SG.PST to
 'After he had done these disloyal things, he asked...' (*Clari* 21, 21)

There is one main observation to be drawn from the data. There is a relatively small trend which shows a decline for this pattern throughout the texts. However, *Villehardouin* is an outlier relative to the other texts in this regard, showing the highest proportion of V3 found in the corpus (Figure 3):

Thus in *Roland*, *Thèbes*, *Eneas*, *Charrette* and *Villehardouin* V3, whilst never being extensive, is slightly more frequent than in *Clari* and *La Queste*. This pattern, as Figure 3 suggests, appears to decline in the 13th century. In *Clari* there are only two examples (37a) and in *La Queste* only one (37b):

Figure 3. SI-Third Clauses



(37)a. Chil de le vile de Jadres, quant il virrent ches nes et ches grans
 those of the town of Jadre when they see.3PL.PST these ships and these great
 estoires venir, si eurent molt grant peur
 fleets come.INF SI have.3PL.PST very great fear

'Those from the town of Jadre were very afraid when they saw these ships and
 these great fleets arrive' (*Clari* 14, 14)

b. Mes au cuer de l'ome, li cuers de l'ome si est l'aviron de la nef
 but at-the heart of the-man the heart of the-man SI be.3SG the-oar of the boat

que le vent meine...
 that the wind carry.3SG
 ‘But at the heart of man...the heart of man is an oar for the boat which the wind
 carries...’ (*Graal* 199c)

4. SI IN THE OLD FRENCH LEFT PERIPHERY

4.1. THE DATA

In this section I put forward an analysis of SI which shows that its syntax is far from the homogenous entity argued for in many traditional (Foulet 1928; Moignet 1973; Skårup 1975; Jensen 1990) and more recent treatments (Fleischman 1991; Vance 1995, 1997; Buridant 2000; Ferraresi & Goldbach 2002).²⁵

Note that our and indeed any analysis of SI must account for at least the following descriptive generalisations which emerge from the discussion and analysis in §2-3 above:

- i) SI is frequently attested in contexts of Topic continuity, yet this does not account for numerous contexts where SI systematically occurs following an initial clause or those where SI co-occurs alongside an informationally focused constituent in preverbal position.
- ii) Arguments for SI as a V2-related XP particle, which may act as a form of ‘last-resort’ mechanism are convincing, but do not account for its occurrence in Topic continuity contexts and leave the concept of ‘last-resort’ poorly defined.
- iii) SI-initial clauses are attested across all texts considered, yet show a marked diachronic decline whilst CLAUSE + SI configurations increase.
- iv) Whilst certain 12th-century texts show a strong tendency for overt postverbal subjects occurring with SI to be informationally NEW, in the 13th-century texts they are predominantly informationally OLD.

²⁵ For treatments which do stress the differences between texts see in particular Van Reenen & Schøsler (1992, 1993, 1996, 2000) and Salvesen (in press).

- v) *Thèbes*, *Charrette* and *Villehardouin* show higher proportions of preverbal overt subjects co-occurring with SI. These are also the texts that show the strongest tendency towards overt postverbal subjects being informationally NEW.
- vi) Initial informationally focussed direct objects alongside fronted VP-adverbs are only found before SI in the *Roland* and Indirect Object PPs are only found co-occurring with SI in the earliest 12th-century texts.
- vii) XP-XP-SI SI orders decline diachronically, with the exception of *Villehardouin* which is a clear outlier. These orders are rare in the two 13th century texts considered.²⁶

4.2. SI IN *LA CHANSON DE ROLAND*

4.2.1. *The Data*

It is arguably in the *Roland* that we see the strongest evidence for SI's function as a marker of Topic continuity, of the type envisaged by Fleischman (1991), alongside Skårup (1975), Blumenthal (1980), Van Reenen & Schøsler (1992, 1993, 2000), Buridant (2000) and others.

Firstly, the vast majority of its attestations where it is the sole preverbal constituent are not unexpected under this account. There is an extensive literature on early French of all stages (Adams 1987b:7; Vance 1997:7; Buridant 2000:§631; Rouveret 2004:185-186; Labelle & Hirschbühler 2005:70, 2012:§5.1; Steiner 2014:187-245) and indeed V2 languages in general (Vikner 1995:41; Westergaard 2009:36; Jouitteau 2010:203; Holmberg 2015:376; Biberauer, Wolfe & Woods forthcoming) which shows that the preverbal field hosts a phrasal constituent which acts as a 'default Topic' in the unmarked case, most standardly a nominal or pronominal subject. As such SI is simply showing a parallel distribution to other types of thematic constituents.

Secondly, the low proportion of overt preverbal and postverbal subjects is also accounted for. If, as is central to Fleischman's (1991) and others' account, SI encodes continuity of Topic, we do not predict that an overt subject will be pragmatically necessary

²⁶ This is not an unexpected finding, as the possibility of multiple XPs co-occurring in the left periphery declines markedly during the Old French period (cf. Labelle 2007; Wolfe 2016b).

in the vast majority of cases. This prediction is born out in the *Roland*, with only 9.45% of clauses showing an overt postverbal subject and a vanishingly small 1% of clauses showing a preverbal subject.

However, even in this earliest text, the Topic continuity analysis cannot be the whole story. Although accounting for a small proportion of the data, the CLAUSE + SI configuration is already attested in the *Roland* (38):

- (38) Quant l'ot Rollant, si **cumençat** a rire
 when it.CL=hear.3SG Roland SI begin.3G.PST to laugh.INF
 ‘When Roland heard this, he began to laugh’ (*Roland* 303)

As we noted above, there can be no ‘rescuing’ of a Topic continuity analysis here. Almost all accounts of topical or thematic accessibility (Prince 1981; Lambrecht 1994; Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl 2007; Frascarelli 2007) would view the the Topic, *Rollant*, as readily identifiable from the preceding wh-clause.

Finally our account must offer an explanation for the the rare but revealing occurrence of an informationally NEW Direct Object (35), Indirect Object and the occurrence of VP-Adverbials (34), which can precede SI in the *Roland* (see also Marchello-Nizia 1986:158).

4.2.2. Analysis

The proposal to understanding the distribution of SI in the *Roland* is that it is at this stage not yet fully grammaticalised into an expletive from its status in Latin texts as a temporal deictic adverb.

Taking late Latin as our starting point, we can follow Ledgeway’s (in press a, in press b) analysis that SIC ‘thus’, along with other temporal deictic adverbials, can surface either pre- (11, 39) or post-verbally in the *Peregrinatio*,

- (39)a. Et sic **ponitur** cathedra episcopo in Golgotha post Crucem
 and thus is.placed chair.NOM bishop.DAT in Golgotha.ABL after cross.ACC
 ‘Then a chair is placed for the bishop in Golgotha behind the Cross’ (*Peregrinatio* 37.1)
 b. Ubi cum peruentum fuerit, statim sic in Anastase **ingreditur**

when come.PERF.PASS be.3SG.PST then thus in Anastase.ABL enter.PASS.3SG
 episcopus et omnes cum eo
 bishop.NOM and all.NOM with him.ABL

‘And when they arrive there, the bishop and everyone with him then immediately enter the Anastasis’ (*Peregrinatio* 25.7)

A natural account of this distributional pattern pursued by Ledgeway (in press a, b) and in keeping with much previous work on late Latin syntax (Wanner 1987:382; Pinkster 1991:791; Bauer 1995:102; Salvi 2004:102-111; Clackson & Horrocks 2007:291; Ledgeway 2012:152-153; Wolfe 2015a:314-319) is to assume that SIC can either remain in its clause-internal base-generated position²⁷ or optionally undergo movement into the left periphery.

Viewed from this perspective, a plausible analysis of the data from the *Roland* is that a small-scale change has taken place, in that SI no longer encodes temporal succession, but has undergone semantic generalisation to encode continuing topicality. Given the V2 nature of Old French (Roberts 1993; Vance 1997; Rouveret 2004 and references above) and the fact that adverbials, seemingly across V2 languages, can act as the first constituent of a V2 clause, the simple SI-initial clauses across the *Roland* follow without stipulation. SI is still an adverbial, which undergoes V2-related movement into the left periphery.

Following our critique of the adverbial approach above, a question emerges as to how to account for the small but nevertheless existent cases in the *Roland* where SI occurs with an initial clause. The proposal is that a subclass of initial clauses in early Old French texts (Donaldson 2012) and seemingly other V2 languages (cf. Axel 2004; Wolfe 2016a, 2016b; Haegeman & Greco forthcoming) are base-generated in the uppermost Frame field of the articulated left periphery and as such cannot ‘count’ for the purposes of the V2

²⁷ To my knowledge there is no detailed formal account of how precisely temporal deictic adverbs fit within the rich hierarchy of adverbial positions proposed in Cinque (1999) and much subsequent work. Following Ledgeway (in press c) it seems natural however to assume that they occupy a very high position within the Higher Adverb Space. Note that the claim that temporal deictic adverbs occupy a position at the interface between the T and C-domain of the clause finds support in their pragmatico-semantic characteristics of conveying temporal and aspectual information from the subjective view of the speaker/hearer (Langacker 1997:10). Indeed, this overlap in information encoded by different domains in the clause leads to frequent diachronic reanalysis of temporal deictics as discourse markers (Anderson & Keenan 1985:298; Schiffrin 1987:229; Traugott & Dasher 2001:154; Bazzanella & Miecznikowski 2009:109). In the terms of Roberts & Roussou (2002) this would presumably involve reanalysis ‘up the clausal spine’ of an adverbial high in the T-domain to a position within the CP.

requirement. As such, the structurally closest constituent from inside the clause will be attracted into the left periphery to satisfy the V2 constraint (the closest Goal which can satisfy a C-head's EF, in the terms of Probe-Goal Agree as in Chomsky 2000 et seq.). Given our hypothesis that temporal deictic adverbs occupy the very highest reaches of Cinque's (1999) Higher Adverb Space, SI will be the closest available constituent in all cases:

(40) [Frame [Force [Topic [Focus [Fin *si* [Fin° **V**] [T_{Deixis} *si* [SubjP... [vP... [VP...]]]]]]]]]

Given the richly articulated left periphery assumed by a number of scholars for Early (9th-12th century) Old French (Benincà 2004; Rouveret 2004; Labelle 2007; Donaldson 2012; Wolfe 2016a) the question then emerges as to which position within the left periphery SI undergoes movement to. Whilst it could be tempting on pragmatico-semantic grounds to assume that SI underwent movement to a projection within the thematic layer, the subject-initial clause already noted, which is repeated below for convenience shows this cannot be the correct analysis. If SI occupied Spec-TopP, it figures that this position would not be free to host a thematic subject pronoun:

(41) Io si nen **ai** filz ne fille ne heir

I SI NEG have.1SG son NEG daughter NEG heir

'I have neither a son, nor daughter, nor an heir [to succeed me]' (*Roland* 2744)

Additional data supporting an analysis that SI is low within the articulated CP structure comes from V3 clauses, which as Table 1 and Figure 3 show, account for 2.99% of clauses in the *Roland*. Whilst some such as (37a) above appear to feature an initial Frame-Setter with a thematic constituent, others such as (43) appear to show a Topic and Focus co-occurring (on which see Benincà 2004 amongst others), thus showing that SI must be lower than the Focus layer:

(42) E vers Franceis humeles e dulcement/ / Si lur **ad** dit un mot
 and towards French humbly and calmly SI them have.3SG say.PTCP a word
 curteisement
 courteously

‘He looks towards the French calmly and with humility, saying to them
courteously...’ (*Roland* 1163-1164)

Further evidence that SI is in fact very low within the left periphery comes from (35a) and (36) above. The direct object preceding SI in (35a) *Reis Vivien* ‘King Vivien’ and the adverbial phrases *Durement en halt* ‘loudly’ and *Cunquerrantment* ‘heroically’ contribute information which is discourse-NEW and as such would standardly be analysed as occurring in a dedicated position for Information Foci, directly above Fin (see the schema in (3) above alongside Benincà & Poletto (2004:71) and Cruschina (2006:377-378; 2012:219). This leads us to the inevitable conclusion that SI in the *Roland* moves to the very lowest of the functional specifier positions within the left periphery, SpecFinP. This fits with a number of recent accounts of the V2 property of Early Old French, which suggest that Fin attracts the finite verb and Spec-FinP hosts the constituent satisfying Fin’s Edge Feature (Salvesen 2011, 2013:134; Wolfe 2016a:478-479).

4.3. SI IN 12TH-CENTURY FRENCH - DIVERGENT PATHS

Looking beyond the *Roland*, the 12th century texts show a considerable degree of variation which is testament to a high degree of variation in SI’s syntax during this period.

A possible change concerns the rise in CLAUSE + SI configurations, which, as noted above, jump from a mere 3.98% in the *Roland*, to ~20% in *Thèbes*, *Eneas* and *Charrette*. This context is particularly significant as it is perhaps the clearest case where SI performs an expletive-like function, satisfying the formal Edge Feature on Fin which forms one half of the V2 property. If this line of reasoning is correct and SI is increasingly not an unambiguous marker of Topic continuity but rather an increasingly grammaticalised element, the inevitable question arises as to what ‘last-resort’ in this context means. Based on the increased frequency of clause-initial configurations and our proposal above that these Frame-Setting clauses are base-generated in the left periphery, we could formulate the following hypothesis:

- viii) **Hypothesis for 12th-century SI:** SI is first-merged in Spec-FinP when no other constituent can satisfy V2 via internal merge.

The first point to establish from the outset is that this hypothesis can clearly not be maintained in absolute terms. Whilst we only find examples of focused Direct Objects and VP-adverbs in *Roland*, we do find a single instance of a focused Indirect Object PP in both *Charrette* (32) and *Eneas*. The observation that this pattern is sporadic even in the earliest texts (cf. also Marchello-Nizia 1985:158), suggests that Focus + SI configurations represent an archaic option in 12th-century French texts.

More generally, evidence that the hypothesis in (viii) accounts for an increasing body of the data comes from the distribution of subjects. Consider the SUBJECT + SI clauses which increase in frequency in all three texts, though most notably in *Thèbes* and *Charrette*. Given that all these subjects were tagged as discourse-OLD and the standard assumption that constituents appearing in the thematic layer of the left-periphery are first-merged there (Benincà & Poletto 2004:71; Ledgeway 2010:39-40), we can assume that SI is merged in Spec-FinP in these contexts *not* to encode Topic continuity but rather to satisfy Fin's EF in the absence of an alternative internally-merged constituent.

Pulling together these insights with the discussion of Old French subject positions above in §1.3.2, we note that this leads to an interesting syntax-pragmatics mapping in SI-clauses, with OLD-information topical subjects occurring preverbally in Spec-TopP and NEW-information subjects in Focus occurring post-verbally, due to the growing incompatibility of Foci with SI:

- ix) [Frame [Force [Topic Subject_{OLD} [Focus [Fin *si* [Fin° V] [SubjP... [vP Subject_{NEW}... [VP...]]]]]]]]]

Note that this schema has wider implications. Whilst left peripheral Information Focus is licensed in 9th-12th century French (Labelle 2007: 302–305; Labelle & Hirschbühler 2012: 15, 19–21; Mathieu 2012: 341; Wolfe 2016a:480), evidence of its existence is lacking in the majority of 13th-century prose (see Marchello-Nizia 1995: 99f.; Vance 1997: 57; Zimmerman 2014: 14). Given that SI is extensively attested across texts of this period and, as we have observed, appears eventually incompatible with Focus movement of subjects, objects and VP-adverbs, we could feasibly speculate that SI's syntax greatly contributes to the instability and later demise of CP-Information Focus in French.

A final piece of evidence in favour of the hypothesis that in 12th-century French, SI is first-merged in the absence of a suitable constituent to satisfy V2 comes from ADVERBIAL + SI clauses. As noted above, these form a homogenous class in that they anchor the clause in terms of its locative or temporal coordinates (33) or act as speaker-oriented adverbs (43), which again modify the entire clause and are assumed in recent cartographic work to lexicalise a very high position within the left periphery and to be first-merged in that position (Cinque 1999:§1.2; Ernst 2009:§3; Woods 2014:§4-5; Cruschina & Ledgeway 2016:31.2.2.1; Ledgeway in press c:§1.3):

(43) a. et nequedant si s'an **gardot**...

and however SI loc.CL look.3SG.PST

‘however, he looks at it...’ (*Eneas* 9255)

b. et nepourquant si li **est** tart

and nevertheless SI him.CL=be.3sg late

‘and nevertheless it is late in coming to him...’ (*Thèbes2* 8084)

To conclude, our analysis of our three 12th century texts reveals the potential progressive attestation of a grammar where SI loses its role in unambiguously encoding Topic continuity and increasingly acts as a last-resort mechanism to satisfy V2 when no other constituent can be attracted to SpecFinP via internal Merge (movement). SI comes to be first-merged in this position, which is in keeping with much recent literature on grammaticalisation where constituents undergoing movement to a higher functional projection, come to be first-merged in the original landing site for movement (Roberts & Roussou 2003:195-202; Van Gelderen 2004:28, 2009:290, 2011:Ch.1; Roberts 2012b:353).

4.4. SI IN 13TH-CENTURY FRENCH

4.4.1. Introduction

Turning to the 13th century texts, we observe major differences between *Villehardouin* and the other texts and small-scale differences between *Clari* and *La Queste*.

4.4.2. Villehardouin

In certain ways *Villehardouin* fits with the expected diachronic progressions we observe throughout the 12th and 13th centuries: it shows the decline in SI-initial clauses found elsewhere, no evidence of VP-adverb or Indirect Object focalisation, the increase in CLAUSE + SI configurations observed elsewhere, and an increase in overt postverbal subjects.

However, there are two areas in which *Villehardouin* stands out. Firstly, it has the highest proportion of SUBJECT + SI clauses in the whole corpus at 7.98% (n=32). Whilst quantitatively this makes the text an outlier, qualitatively all the subjects concerned were tagged as discourse-OLD and therefore likely Topical. As such they are not unexpected under an analysis where SI satisfies the V2 constraint in the presence of a constituent in the Topic layer. In fact, as noted in §4.3 above, this observation correlates with the strongest tendency of all the texts for postverbal subjects to encode NEW information (cf. Table 3). As such the schema outlined above for the syntax-pragmatics mapping regarding subject constituents still holds in *Villehardouin*. A second difference concerns the availability of SI-third structures, where two constituents precede SI, of the type exemplified in (44):

- (44)a. et l'endemain, quant fu hore de tierce, si firent une assaillie cil
 and the-next-day when be.3SG.PST hour of third si do.3PL.PST an attack those
de la tor de Galathas
 of the tower of Galata

‘and the next day at 9 o’clock, those at the Galata Tower formed an attack’ (*Villehardouin1* 23, 160)

- b. En icel termine, li marchis Bonifaces de Monferrat remut de
 on that time the Marquess Boniface of Montferrat move.3SG.PST from
 Salenique, si s'en ala a la Serre
 Salenica SI REFL.CL=LOC.CL=go.3SG.PST to the saw

‘Then at that time, Marquess Boniface of Montferrat who had come from Salenica, moved into the saw formation’ (*Villehardouin2* 270, 456)

Accounting for 4.24% (n=17) of SI-clauses, this is the highest proportion in the whole corpus. Since these appear to show an initial Frame-Setter co-occurring with a (thematic) constituent lower in the functional structure, these clearly point towards a low position for SI within the left periphery:

(45) [Frame En icel termine [Force [Topic li marchis Bonifaces de Monferrat remut de Salenique [Focus
[Fin si [Fin° s'en ala...]]]]]]

To summarise, whilst the data in *Villehardouin* instantiate a number of expected trends, the text shows certain characteristics which are either associated with earlier texts or are not found elsewhere.

4.4.3. *Clari* and *La Queste*

Both *Clari* and *La Queste* reveal major changes in the syntax of SI. The most striking evidence that SI is no longer an unambiguous marker of Topic continuity, comes from the data on postverbal subjects presented in Table 3. Here we note that the majority of overt postverbal subjects in fact encode NEW information (cf. 18b and 18c above). This is entirely unexpected if SI is purely a Topic continuity marker and the data suggest that Fleischman's (1991:275) suggestion that '[o]ccasionally *si* even occurs in clauses whose subject is a *new* referent' is incorrect. In fact clauses where the subject is NEW outnumber those where the referent is OLD in both *Clari* and *La Queste*. As such, whilst the last-resort function, rather than the Topic continuity function, of SI is already apparent in the 12th-century texts, it is entirely unambiguous within the 13th century.

A question emerges as to whether the syntax of this last-resort element is the same as within the 12th century. Important here are observations by Rouveret (2004:220) and Wolfe (2016a:478-484) that French innovates a stricter Force-V2 grammar at the turn of the 13th century where the V2-related verb movement trigger and Edge Feature are associated with Force not Fin. If this hypothesis is correct, we would expect to find evidence that SI as a last-resort mechanism to satisfy V2 is also merged in Spec-ForceP:

x) [Frame [Force *si* [Force° V]] [Topic [Focus [Fin ...]]]]]

Whilst data from both texts are suggestive of such a change, they are particularly convincing in *La Queste*.

Firstly, the observable decrease in SI-third clauses in both texts finds a natural explanation if less left-peripheral structure is available to the left of SI and the finite verb. Indeed, the observation that verb-fourth or greater clauses are extremely scarce in 13th-century prose, in contrast to the French of previous centuries, has often been made in the

literature (Foulet 1928: 311; Skårup 1975: 435–459; Jensen 1990: 539–540; Roberts 1993: 144; Vance 1995: 183, 1997: 61–62; Wolfe 2016b:293-298).

Secondly, the rise in the proportion of clause-initial SI configurations in *Clari* (38.25%) and the marked rise in *La Queste* (59%) are expected if SI is merged in Spec-ForceP. Indeed, as adverbial, wh- and circumstantial clauses are often noted in the typological and functional literature as prototypical Frame-Setters (Haiman 1978:585; Chafe 1984; Jacobs 2001:655-658; Sarda, Carter-Thomas, Fagard & Charolles 2014:279; Borreguero Zuloaga 2014:353f) they would be predicted to be among the very small class of constituents that can now precede SI.

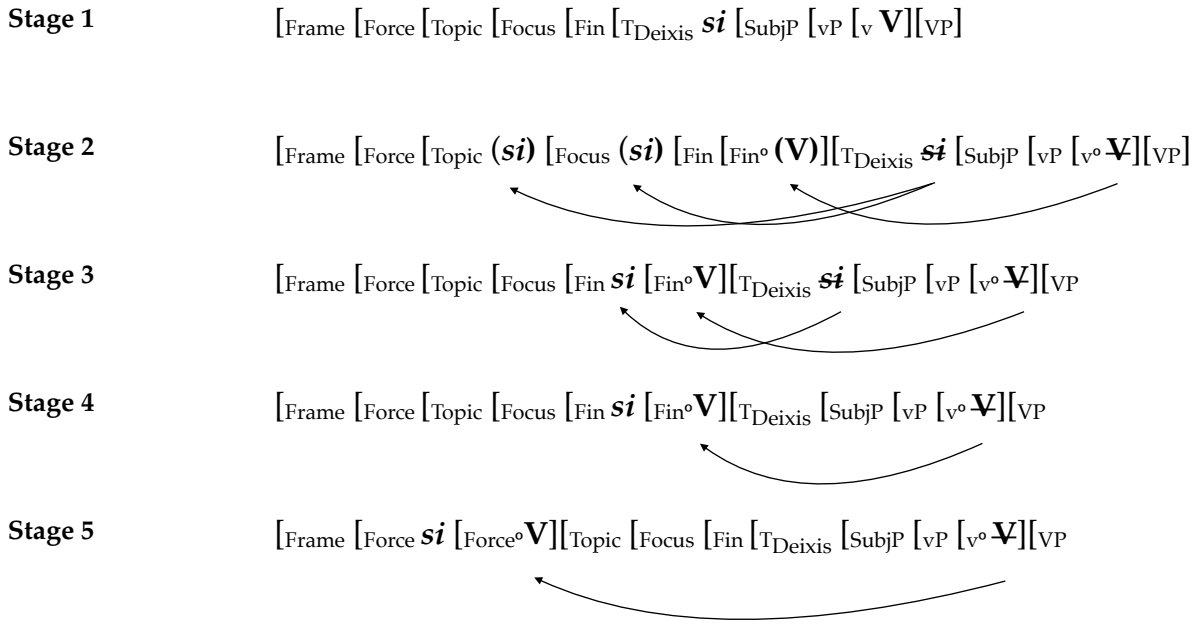
Third and finally, note that the total absence of DIRECT OBJECT + SI clauses is also predicted under this account. As fronted Direct Objects standardly target projections within the Topic-Focus layer (Rizzi 1997:286f; Benincà 2001:§1; Benincà & Poletto 2004:§3-§4) rather than the Frame layer of the CP, we expect them not to co-occur with SI; a prediction confirmed by the data.

To summarise, our data suggest that SI in *Clari* and *La Queste* is no longer first-merged in a low position in the left periphery but a structurally high one, SpecForceP.

4.5. SI AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE LEFT PERIPHERY

The diachronic proposals put forward so far in this section can be summarised as follows, although note here that these should be corroborated on a larger textual base. In conservative Latin varieties SIC is a temporal deictic adverb first-merged high in the Higher Adverb Space (**Stage 1**), which in more innovative Classical and late Latin texts frequently undergoes focalisation or topicalisation into the left periphery or remains in-situ (**Stage 2**). In the very earliest French verse, such as the *Roland*, this temporal deictic adverb has lost its original semantics encoding temporal succession and instead indicates continuity of Topic. Due to its structurally very high position in the clause, this adverbial encoding Topic continuity obligatorily raises to SpecFinP to satisfy the V2 constraint as the closest available Goal for movement (**Stage 3**). As the 12th century progresses, SI is first-merged in this position and progressively loses its semantic value encoding Topic continuity (**Stage 4**). Within certain 13th century texts, SI has undergone a further upwards reanalysis as a ForceP expletive, acting as a last-resort mechanism to satisfy V2 (**Stage 5**).

Figure 4. The Diachronic Progression of SI



5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

On first impressions, the particle *si* may seem a somewhat obscure topic amongst the gamut of formally-oriented work concerned with syntactic change in the history of French. However, our study aims to have shown that the vast literature this particle has accrued over the previous century is by no means unjustified. Indeed, the data presented above show clearly that the syntax of *si* is not only conditioned by ongoing changes in the morphosyntax of French, but may in fact act as a trigger to syntactic change itself.

In simple empirical terms, the study has shown that whilst there are certain points of continuity across the textual records concerning *si*, there is considerably more variation both synchronically and diachronically that has previously been noted. Against the backdrop of a long descriptive philological tradition noting extensive regional/dialectal and diachronic variation concerning phonology and morphology in the history of French (Price 1971:7-12; Einhorn 1974:Ch.13 and the contributions in Holtus et al. 1995), the study of *si* reveals that syntax too in early French varieties was subject to extensive microvariation. The methodological consequences of this are relatively clear, namely that terms such as ‘Old French’ or ‘12th century French’ are illusory if used without qualification, as they mask significant intertextual variation concerning multiple points of the grammar.

In formal terms, the study of SI has much to offer theoretical, comparative and diachronic syntax. Firstly, it strengthens the established literature on ‘upwards’ grammaticalisation pathways, in providing a clear case-study of a constituent undergoing optional, then obligatory movement to a higher functional projection, before eventually being first-merged there (cf. Roberts & Roussou 2002; Van Gelderen 2008, 2009, 2011; Ledgeway 2011; Roberts 2012). What may be particularly intriguing in the case of SI is the further upwards reanalysis of the site where the grammaticalised constituent is first-merged. Secondly the analysis of SI presented here fits within a number of recent reappraisals of the class of particles in showing they are far from heterogeneous (Biberauer & Sheehan 2011; Biberauer, Haegeman & Van Kemenade 2014), in this case within approximately 120 years of a single language’s history. Thirdly, in an effort to revisit many early Generative approaches to syntactic change which sought to stress the relatedness of certain sets of changes (in particular Lightfoot 1979, 1989, 1991), we observe a revealing case-study where SI’s syntax is both altered by a semi-independent change in the locus of V2 effects (from Fin to Force cf. §4.4.3) but may also act as an extremely significant trigger in the destabilising of left-peripheral Focus movement in the history of French. The ramifications of this change have still not been explored in detail, but may well hold the keys to understanding major morphosyntactic isoglosses that separate French and possibly other Northern (Gallo)-Romance varieties from other Romance languages concerning the CP and *v*P peripheries (on which see in particular Belletti 2008; De Cat 2009; Rowlett 2007:172-188 Haegeman 2012:Ch.2-3; Cruschina & Ledgeway 2016:§31.2)

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