

## The left periphery of Old French: signs of a Germanic influence on Old French syntax

The present research is a comparative investigation between the Germanic-like structural phenomena found in the left periphery of Old French (OF) main and embedded clause to the structural phenomena found in the left-periphery of Old High German (OHG) clauses.

The question of a possible Old Germanic influence, especially of Frankish origin, on OF phonology, morphology and syntax is the subject of several studies (Pitz, 2003; Pfister, 1973). These studies share the idea that there was a strong Frankish influence on OF.

Others claim the contrary, namely that we cannot speak of a Germanic influence on OF syntax. They pursue the path of explaining the V2-phenomenon in OF as independent from any Germanic influence. These studies compare OF sentence structure to V2-structures found either in Middle High German (Elsig, 2009) or in New High German (Kaiser, 1998).

The main problem that I see with the previous ideas and papers is that they do compare OF with the wrong kind of German. They should compare OF to OHG and not to Middle High German or even New High German. I believe that a Germanic influence on French syntax exists and that the beginning of it can be retraced via a diachronic analysis of OHG and OF syntax on a synchronic basis.

### Research goal:

The purpose of the present research is to show that OF, despite of being a Romance language, is a true V2-language in the Germanic sense at the beginning of its existence. I will show that OHG is the Germanic variant which has had an enormous impact on OF syntax at the time of its formation. I will do so by looking at the verb placement in the left periphery of OHG and by comparing the findings to the results of four OF texts which were coded by me for the present research. I analyze XP-fronting, Stylistic Fronting (SF) and verb-initial clauses.

### Corpus:

The OF corpus consists of four texts from the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century which correspond to the late OF period: *Gormont et Isembart* (verse), *Le Voyage de Saint Brandan* (verse), *Le Roman de Tristan en prose* (prose) and *Les Miracles de Saint-Louis* (prose).

For OHG, I decided to build upon Axel's (2007) research. In the present paper, I will use the sentences and examples of the OHG prose and verse texts Axel used for her research.

### Examples:

The examples for OHG in (1) and for OF in (2) demonstrate that both languages share the same syntactic constructions in the left periphery which are considered typical for OHG.

Please note that in the upcoming examples the fronted XP-element is underlined and the finite verb is written in italic.

(1) OHG: V1, V2, V3 and SF

a. V1

*uuas* thar ouh sum uuitua in thero burgi

*was there also some widow in that city*

“There was a widow in that city”

(Tatian 415,2)

b. V2

Chiuuisso *chioffanodom* uuir nu hear dhazs

*certainly revealed we now here that*

“Certainly we have now revealed here that”

(Isidor 484)

