The left-periphery in Old French

1. Introduction
The cartographic enterprise initiated by Rizzi’s (1997) seminal paper has led to a better understanding of the syntactic mapping of focus and topics at the left periphery of the clause in natural languages (Cinque 2002, Belletti 2004, Rizzi 2004, Cinque 2006). The overall aim of the present paper is to show that this type of synchronic research can contribute directly to the study of Old French discourse phenomena. In particular, by focusing on the older stage of the French language, my paper grounds itself in the tradition of Benincá and Poletto’s work (e.g. Benincá 2006, Benincá and Poletto 2002) which, following the cartographic approach, has contributed greatly to the understanding of the architecture of the left periphery of the clause for older stages of Romance languages, including Old Italian and Old Spanish.

My paper has two specific aims. First, I aim to give a general account of the distribution of the elements appearing at the left periphery in Old French. In particular, I show that the Old French CP appears to consist of a rich array of functional projections, most notably a series of topic phrases that surface in the pre-verbal area. Four topic positions are identified. In addition to the traditional topic position associated with V2 (Adams 1987, Vance 1997, among many others), I argue that the Old French CP contained a special topic position that hosted Stylistically fronted elements and two other topic positions: one for Left Dislocated phrases and the other for Hanging Topics. I will show that the topic positions for the latter two existed (at least for a while) alongside the V2 and the Stylistic topic position and that the emergence of left-dislocated and Hanging Topics arises much earlier than previously thought. The breaking down of the C domain into several projections also helps to understand why Old French permitted V3 and V4 order, which were very common in the early stages of the language.

Second, in reaction to Labelle’s (2007) recent claim according to which embedded V2 examples in Early Old French (12th century and before) did not result from Stylistic Fronting in contrast to Late Old French (13th century), I give arguments in favour of the view that inversion in Old French embedded clauses was always a case of Stylistic Fronting (i.e. in both the early and the late period). Occupying a special topic position, Stylistically fronted elements were ubiquitous, but never obligatory, a property which sets this construction apart from V2.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 discusses the V2 status of Old French and introduces examples of Stylistic Fronting. Section 3 argues against Labelle’s (2007) claim that embedded clauses in Early Old French did not involve Stylistic Fronting. In this section, I make a case instead for the idea that Stylistic Fronting was productive in Early Old French and that because it was never obligatory, inversion in embedded clauses in that period was not generalized V2. Section 4 reviews the advantages that the postulation of a Stylistic topic position has. In particular, we predict and explain V3 and V4 orders in Old French. Section 5 introduces examples of Left Dislocated and Hanging Topics in Old French. These, it seems, appeared much earlier than traditionally thought. I conclude that there are at least four topic positions in the pre-verbal area and that the left periphery of the clause in Old French is more complex than previously envisaged.
2. V2 and embedded clauses

There is now a long linguistic tradition that views Old French as a V2 language (Foulet 1928, Adams 1987, Dupuis 1989, Roberts 1993, Vance 1997), and more specifically as an asymmetric V2 language: V2 is possible in main clauses (1a), but not in embedded clauses (1b) (% indicates “not possible”).

(1) a. Einsi demora Perceval tout le jor en la roche thus remain.PAST.3SG Perceval all the day on the rock
    ‘Thus Perceval stayed all day on the rock.’
    (La Queste de Saint Graal, year ~1220, p. 111)

b. % Je cuit que einsi demora Perceval tout le jor en la roche
    Literally: ‘I think that thus stayed Perceval all the day on the rock.’

I follow the traditional generative analysis of V2 languages according to which the verb appears in C while an XP sits in Spec-CP. The XP in Spec-TP is either a topic or a focus and the XP movement operation is compulsory, although, of course, the element in Spec-CP varies: it can be an argumental NP or an adjunct, depending on what receives topic or focus status in the sentence. In embedded clauses, V2 is not possible because a complementizer occupies the C position. There are, however, languages that have been argued to be symmetric V2 languages because V2 applies in all kinds of clauses (main and embedded).

A case in point is Old French. There appear to be cases where inversion is possible in embedded contexts, which has led some researchers (e.g. Lemieux and Dupuis 1995, Sitaridou 2004) to argue that Old French was a symmetric V2 language after all. In particular, Adams (1987a,b) shows that V2 is possible in the complements of bridge verbs. Since there is a connection between V2 and null subjects (Hirschbühler 1989), it is predicted that null subjects will be possible in such environments, and it is exactly what we find (see also Arteaga 2009). (2a) and (2b) are given as illustration. The null subject is represented by a gap __.

(2) a. Or voie ge bien, plains __ es de mau talant now see.1SG I well full be.2SG of bad-intentions
    ‘And now I see clearly that you are full of bad intentions.’

b. Je cuit plus sot de ti n’__ i a
    I think.1SG more stupid than you not-there have.3SG
    ‘I think that there is no one more stupid than you.’
    (Le Jeu de la Feuillée, year 1276, 341, in Adams 1987b:17)

However, it has been noticed that the class of bridge verbs in question is comparable to the class which, in V2 Germanic languages, typically allows complements with matrix properties. A case in point is German, as shown in (3).
Er glaubt diesen Film haben die Kinder gesehen.

‘He thinks that the children have seen this movie.’ (Vikner 1995:66-67)

As argued by Cardinaletti and Roberts (1991/2000) and Roberts and Roussou (2002), since the complementizer *que* is not present in the kind of examples illustrated in (2), these must be cases of German-style embedded V2. I thus assume that embedded sentences in examples like (2) are in fact root clauses, the complements of bridge verbs being able to have root properties independently of V2. The examples in (2) are thus taken care of.

There are nevertheless a residual few examples with bridge verbs taking embedded clauses beginning with a conjunction where V2 has occurred. In (4a) the adverb *bien* ‘well’ has been inverted with the verb *soient* ‘be’. In (4b) the PP *de legier* ‘of light’ has been inverted with the verb *antre* ‘enter’ (*n’i* ‘not there’ is a clitic complex, which does not enter in the V2 calculus). Following Vance (1997), I take these clauses to have the structure of main clauses, with CP recursion [*CP ... [CP ...]*]. In these cases, we have an overt subject (which appears in bold).

(4) a. et dit que bien soient il venu
   and say.3SG that well be-SUBJ they come
   ‘and he/she says that they are welcome.’ (Vance 1997:144, ex. 18)

   b. … que de legier n’i antre an pas
      … because of light not-there enter one FORC
   ‘because one does not enter it easily,’
   (*Le Chevalier à la Charrette*, year ~1180, 654)

Importantly, these examples are very rare (embedded clauses are almost always SVO in the unmarked case (I am abstracting away from the OV parameter in German). (4a-b) are thus exceptional and are the only type of embedded clauses where postverbal pronominal subjects are found.

Remaining cases of V2 in embedded clauses appear, at least at first, to be more problematic because they are not rare, but very common. In addition, this type of example is not found in Modern German. In (5a) the PP *an mes dras* ‘in my sheet’ has been fronted before the verb *regart* ‘see’. In (5b) the adjective *nues* ‘bare’ has been fronted before the verb *tienent* ‘hold’. In both cases we have a null subject. This is how (5a-b) differ from (4a-b). While it is rare to have inversion in embedded clauses when a full subject is present, it is very common for inversion to be trigged when the subject is null. The gap indicates the position of the subject (i.e. Spec-TP).

(5) a. Ce sanc que an mes dras __ regart
   that blood that in my sheet __ see.1SG
   ‘That blood that I see in my sheets.’
   (*Le Chevalier à la Charrette*, year ~1180, 4800)

   b. As espees que nues __ tienent
      their swords that bare __ hold.3PL
   ‘Their swords that they hold bare in their hands.’
   (*Le Chevalier à la Charrette*, year ~1180, 5025)
After observing that this type of inversion is possible only if the subject is not present/pronounced and following earlier suggestions made by Dupuis (1989), Cardinaletti and Roberts (1991/2002) and Roberts (1993), Mathieu (2006) argues that this type of inversion looks very much like Stylistic Fronting, an operation where an XP or a head can be shifted into a position that precedes the finite verb, provided that Spec-TP (the canonical subject position) is not occupied by an overt subject DP. In Mathieu (2006), I conclude that Old French had Stylistic Fronting as part of its grammar and thus that Old French cases of inversion in embedded clauses are not V2 cases, but are rather examples of Stylistic Fronting.

In order to illustrate further what Stylistic Fronting is, I will provide a few additional examples. Beginning with relative subject clauses (the ideal context for Stylistic Fronting since it always involves a subject gap), (6a) shows Stylistic Fronting of an intensifier (mout ‘very’), (6b) an adverb autrement ‘otherwise’ and (6c) an adjective (perilleuse ‘perilous’). The trace indicates movement while the gap indicates the subject position (which I assume to be Spec-TP). In contrast with V2 contexts the verb remains in T (it does not move to C).

(6)  
a. Cardonnereuls et pinçons  
goldfinches and chaffinches  
Qui mouti cantent ti joliement  
that very sing.3PL beautifully  
‘Goldfinches and chaffinches that sing very beautifully.’  
(Li Gieus de Robin et de Marion, year 1275, 30)
b. Car cil qui autrementi assamblient ti,  
for those who otherwise gather.3PL  
de Nostre Signor se dessambrent  
of Our Lord self distance.3PL  
‘For he who gathers differently, distances himself from God.’  
(Le Roman de Mahomet, year 1258, 908)
c. Bien ot les cos de la bataille,  
well have.PAST.3SG the causes of the battle  
Qui perilleusei est ti et vilainne,  
that perilous be.3SG and ugly  
‘Going into battle was justified, a battle which was perilous and ugly.’  
(Yvain, le chevalier au lion, year 1179, 5608-5609)

In (7) extraction of PPs is illustrated. De tiules ‘of tiles’ has raised in (7a) while avec le reine ‘with the Queen’ has raised in (7b). Stylistic Fronting of PPs is very common, and only a few examples are given as illustration (dozens of these were found).

(7)  
a. S’ont trovee la sale overte  
self-have.3PL found the room open  
Qui [de tiules]i estoit coverte ti  
that of tiles be.PAST.3SG covered  
‘They found the room open whose roof was covered with tiles.’  
(Le Chevalier à la Charrette, year ~1180, 991-992)
b. Quant les dames et les damoiselles when the ladies and the young-girls qui [avec le reine]i __ estoient assises t_i who with the queen be.PAST.3PL sat ‘When the ladies and the young girls who sat with the queen.’

(La Queste del Saint Graal, year ~1220, 17, p. 18)

The following two examples illustrate Stylistic Fronting in object relatives. In (8a) a PP an mes dras ‘in my sheets’ has been Stylistically Fronted while in (8b) it is a past participle nues ‘bare’ that undergoes the Stylistic Fronting operation.

(8) a. Ce sanc que [an mes dras]i __ regart t_i that blood that in my sheets see.1SG ‘That blood that I see in my sheets.’

(Le Chevalier à la Charrette, year ~1180, 4800)

b. As espees que nuesi __ tienent t_i their swords that bare hold.3PL ‘Their swords that they hold bare in their hands.’

(Le Chevalier à la Charrette, year ~1180, 5025)

Mathieu (2006) notes that two elements can undergo Stylistic Fronting in Old French. In (9a) both a PP avoec lui ‘with him’ and an infinitival verb aler ‘to go’ raise to the left periphery. In (9b), both a DP l’anel ‘the ring’ and a past participle doné ‘given’ undergo the Stylistic Fronting operation.

(9) a. Se lieve sus, et cil le voient self get-up.3SG quickly and those him see.3PL Qui [avoec lui]j alerj __ devoient t_j; who with him go.INF must.PAST.3PL ‘He gets up quickly and they, who should have gone with him, see him.’

(Le Chevalier à la Charrette, year ~1180, 2203-2205)

b. Cele dame une fee estoit that lady a fairy be.PAST.3SG Qui [l’anel]j donéj __ li avoit t_j, who the-ring given to-him have.PAST.3SG ‘That woman was a fairy who had given him the ring.’

(Le Chevalier à la Charrette, year ~1180, 2357-2358)

Mathieu (2006) argues that Old French Stylistically Fronted elements raise to a dedicated position at the left periphery of the clause. That position is a topic phrase with one specifier and a head. I dubbed this category Top+ to differentiate it from the Topic position associated with the kind of topicalization found in German (i.e. Germanic Topicalization). The structure in (10) is the representation for embedded clauses. Complementizers sit in Force^0, Stylistically Fronted
XPs surface in Spec-Topic+ (10a) while Stylistically Fronted heads appear in Top+ (10b). The main (inflected) verb remains in T (and never raises to Force, since that position is occupied by a complementizer). The subject position Spec-TP must be empty for XPs to raise to Spec-Top+. The account predicts that both an XP and a head can raise to the special topic position. This is when double Stylistic Fronting occurs (cf. 10c).

(10) \[ \text{[ForceP Spec Force}^0 \text{[Top+P Spec Top}^0 \\text{[TP Spec T}^0 \text{]]]} \]

a. que an mes dras regart (cf. 8a)
b. que nues tienent (cf. 8b)
c. qui avoeq lui aler devoient (cf. 9a)

In contrast with Holmberg’s (2000) original proposal for Stylistic Fronting in Icelandic, I assume that Stylistically Fronted elements do not move to the specifier of TP, but only through that position. The idea that Stylistically Fronted elements move to the specifier of TP is problematic for heads. Holmberg (2000) allows raising of heads to that position while this is not normally an operation that is permissible in Universal Grammar. In my account, only Stylistically Fronted XPs need to raise to Spec-TP; Stylistically Fronted heads can move directly to Top+.

In main clauses, the verb raises to Fin0 while a topicalized or focalized XP raises to Spec-Top (cf. Labelle and Hirschbühler 2005). Consider the representation in (11).

(11) \[ \text{[TopP Spec Top}^0 \\text{[FinP Spec Fin}^0 \\text{[TP Spec T}^0 \text{]]]} \]

Or ge \text{voi bien} (cf. 2a)

As we will see in Section 4, nothing stops the Stylistic Fronting category to be projected in main clauses as well. This will explain the possibility of V3 and V4 orders in Old French which are otherwise problematic on the traditional view that the Old French left periphery consists merely of a CP category with only one specifier and only one head position. Note that following Labelle and Hirschbühler’s (2005) idea according to which the Old French CP is split between TopP and FinP, it is possible a priori to explain V3 and perhaps even V4 orders, since the Fin projection makes an additional specifier available. However, I want to argue that topics raise to special topic positions. The specifier of FinP is not a topic position and the default hypothesis is that no topic raises to that position. Fin has to do with modality (e.g. choice of complementizer) and looks inward to the clause rather than outward as topic and focus do (see Rizzi 1997). In fact, under minimalist assumptions we can simply claim that, since it is not needed, the specifier of FinP is not projected.

To conclude Section 2, there is no reason to consider Old French a generalized or symmetric V2 language. Inversion in Old French embedded clauses is generally not possible when a subject is present. In order for inversion to take place in embedded contexts, the subject position must be phonologically empty. Such cases are instances of the Stylistic operation rather than Germanic Topicalization.
3. Stylistic Fronting: Early Old French versus Late Old French

Recently, Labelle (2007) has made a distinction between Early Old French and Late Old French and argues that while inversion in embedded clauses was truly Stylistic Fronting in Late Old French, this was not the case in Early Old French. She claims that Early Old French involves V2 in embedded clauses because it is not exceptional, but very common. In particular, Labelle (2006:304) argues that ‘If one sees Stylistic Fronting simply as a means of filling a preverbal position not already filled by a subject, it is unclear under what criteria it can be distinguished from V2 (where the preverbal constituent is either a subject or some other element).’ The idea is that since inversion of the Germanic type is often accompanied by null subjects in Old French (V2 is a prerequisite for the licensing of null subjects in Old French, cf. Adams 1987 Hirschbühler 1990) and since null subjects are not uncommon in embedded clauses in the early French period, it is not so easy to distinguish Stylistic Fronting from Germanic Topicalization.

However, I want to argue that it is possible to distinguish the two constructions. Since Mathieu (2006) makes no difference between Early Old French and Late Old French, it is important to address Labelle’s (2007) claim. I argue that the crucial difference between Stylistic Fronting and Germanic inversion is that the first type of operation is always optional while the second type is always obligatory. Although Stylistic Fronting was very common in embedded clauses in the period Labelle describes (1100-1150), a fact which leads her to conclude that inversion in Early Old French embedded clauses was not Stylistic Fronting, she is nevertheless forced to admit that Early Old French is atypical from the point of view of the generalized V2 languages discussed in the literature, e.g. Yiddish (Santorini 1995), in that there was in fact never any requirement in Old French that the embedded clause be V2 (in fact, one wonders whether Yiddish, Faroese and Icelandic are really generalized V2 languages – see footnote 4 – but this question is beyond the scope of the present paper).

Labelle (2007) claims that in Early Old French embedded V2 appears to be freely available in all types of embedded clauses (the idea is that V2 is obligatory in both main and embedded clauses). According to her, Early Old French is not a symmetric V2 language (as in Lemieux and Dupuis 1995 and Sitaridou 2004) in that she takes main clauses to involve a layered CP with movement of the verb to Fin and inverted elements in the specifier of a discourse projection (as in traditional V2) but in embedded clauses V2 is derived by the verb in T with the pronominal subject or clause initial constituent under the specifier of the highest inflectional head (bearing a [D] feature) and a scrambled constituent within an FP projection. However, on her view, V2 is nevertheless generalized: V2 order applies to both main and embedded clauses. V2 order in main clauses is CP-related but V2 order in embedded clauses is IP-related (see footnote 6). This means that inversion in embedded clauses is not Stylistic fronting.

However, Labelle’s (2007) hypothesis cannot be on the right track because inversion in Old French embedded clauses is not obligatory. Labelle herself provides a few examples reproduced here as (12) that show nothing has to be Stylistically Fronted in the sentence.

(12) a. U que __ trove tes chevalers, sis prent, where that finds your knights, si take ‘wherever he finds your knights, he takes them’ (La Chanson de Guillaume, year ~1140, 966)
b. Puis qu’out ço dist, plus n’i targe;
after that-had this said, no-more neg-there-stay
‘having said this, he didn’t stay any longer’
(Le voyage de Saint Brandan, year ~1120, 619)
c. Puis vunt ferir des espees qu’ __ unt ceintes.
then go battle of-the swords that have girded
‘then they go to battle with the swords that they have girded’
(La chanson de Roland, year 1100, 3598, p. 252)
d. E ne sept __ est devenuz /
and neg know-3p what is become
Ne en quel leu est detenuz
nor in which place is held
‘and they don’t know what has become of him nor in which place he is held captive’ (Le voyage de Saint Brandan, year ~1120, 1495–1496)

In the above sentences, I have again added the position of the empty subject by using a gap __. This helps in situating the verb and the potential element to undergo fronting (marked in bold). Crucially, in these cases, nothing is fronted. In situ examples like those, where Stylistic Fronting could, but has not applied, are numerous and I agree with Labelle (2007) that they are problematic for a Holmberg type of analysis, since on his account the subject position must be filled by overt phonological material. This non-obligatory nature of Stylistic Fronting continues in Later Old French as the following examples illustrate:

(13)  a. L’amor que __ vos ai demandee.
the-love that you have asked
‘The love that I asked (from) you.’
(Le Chevalier à la Charrette, year ~1180, 5508)

b. Oiez, seignor chevalier de la Table Reonde
listen Sir knight of the Round Table
qui __ avez [juree] [la Queste del Saint Graal]
who have.2PL sworn the Quest of-the Saint Graal
‘Listen, Knight of the Round Table who has sworn in the Quest of the Graal.’
(La Queste del Saint Graal, year ~1220, 12-14, p. 19)

It is worth noting that Labelle also fails to recognize the importance of an empty subject in the possibility of Stylistic Fronting. Inversion in embedded clauses in the period that she describes is possible generally only if an empty subject is available in the embedded clause. For example, in (13a), the subject pronoun je ‘I’ is not expressed. Inversion of the Germanic type is not tied to empty subjects and if Early Old French was really a generalized V2 language then we would expect inversion to occur even with full subjects. Although there are a few cases where this appears to be possible (cf. 4a-b), these are not numerous enough for a generalized V2 analysis to be warranted.

Other examples with inversion in embedded clauses with full subjects can be analysed as Stylistic Fronting cases. If the subject remains in its base position (assumed to be within the verbal domain), then it is possible for another element to raise to the subject position and then
move to the specifier of Top+P. This is exactly the case in the following examples. In (14a) *le rois* ‘the king’ has remained in the verbal domain (a case of Free inversion, an operation quite common in Romance languages such as Spanish and Italian) freeing the canonical subject position Spec-TP. The PP *a eus* ‘to them’ has raised to the subject position. In (14b) *mon pere* ‘my father’ is the subject that has remained in the verbal domain freeing the higher subject position. The PP *a la vostre bonté* ‘against your good will’ has raised to that position:

(14) a. quant [PP a eus] __ est li rois venus, ...

   when to them be.3SG the king come, ...

   ‘When the king came to them, ...’ (Dupuis 1989:148)

b. s’[PP a la vostre bonté] __ vousist mon pere

   if- against the your good-will want.PAST.3SG my father
   prendre garde
   take.INF precaution

   ‘If against your good will my father wanted to take precautions.’

   (*Huon le Roi – Le Vair Palefroi*, in Adams 1987b:19)

These constructions are rare probably because they are marked: the subject has to remain internal to the predicate for the subject position to be free. This is a rule (i.e. Free inversion) not common at the time and which probably involves detopicalization of the subject, a possibility that was new at that stage.

Let us now turn to Labelle’s (2007) list of criteria that she uses to distinguish Stylistic Fronting from Germanic Topicalization. Although she argues that Stylistic Fronting is difficult to distinguish from Germanic Topicalization (see discussion above) – an argument she makes for Early Old French in relation to the availability of empty subjects – she nevertheless clearly separates the two constructions for Late Old French. The criteria that she puts forward also help her set Early Old French apart from Late Old French in relation to Stylistic Fronting. Some of the criteria that she uses are well-known in the literature (cf. Maling 1980/1990), but she ignores others, which means that her characterization of Stylistic Fronting is incomplete (Labelle 2007: 305).

(A) Stylistic Fronting is an exceptional construction in a language where embedded clauses are normally SVO. As a result of Stylistic Fronting, Spec-IP is filled, i.e. the verb remains in second position of the clause.

(B) Stylistic Fronting requires a subject gap. It occurs: (a) in subject relative clauses; (b) in embedded subject questions; (c) in impersonal sentences where the subject remains within vP (Fischer and Alexiadou, 2001:117); (d) in stylistically marked constructions like extraposition where the subject is right-adjoined to the clause.

(C) Stylistic Fronting involves mainly X0 categories – negation, adverbs, predicative adjectives, untensed verbs – (Jónsson, 1991; Maling, 1990:76), although XP’s are apparently not totally excluded (Holmberg, 2000). Jónsson claims that only heads are affected and that Stylistic Fronting of bare nouns is always very marginal (1991:13).

(D) Stylistic Fronting is subject to an accessibility hierarchy: negation (& sentence adverbs) > adjective > verb & particle. This hierarchy appears to stem from the fact that Stylistic Fronting tends to affect the element closest to Spec-IP.
Stylistic Fronting is clause-bound. By contrast, embedded V2 is not subject to these constraints.\(^9\)

With regard to (A), referring to Stylistic Fronting as exceptional is strange, because it is no more exceptional than, say, Left Dislocation. It appears that her remark on exceptionality is put forward in order to keep inversion cases in Early Old French embedded clauses under the Germanic Topicalization umbrella, since inversion in such contexts appears to be so common in Early Old French. I want to argue that Old French seems to allow Stylistic Fronting much more than Old Scandinavian languages or present day Icelandic, because as argued by Roberts (1993), null subjects were more freely available in Old French. Modern Icelandic, for example, tolerates null subjects only in impersonal clauses. I do not think it is controversial to say that as null subjects disappeared in Old French, the more restricted Stylistic Fronting became ((B) follows from this).

With regard to (C), although it is true that the original literature on Stylistic Fronting mainly described the operation as applying to heads, later works on the topic described the possibility of Stylistically Fronting XPs as well (cf. Holmberg 2000, and especially Hrafnbjargarson 2003, 2004). The examples in (15) show that a wide range of nominals (modified nouns, bare nouns) can undergo Stylistic Fronting in Old French:\(^10\)

\begin{enumerate}
\item Cil qui [toute rikeche]i avoit ti,
\item Cuers qui [tel compaignie]i pert ti
\item cil qui compaignon i en doivent estre t i
\end{enumerate}

\begin{align}
\text{a.} & \quad \text{the-one who all richness have.PAST.3SG} \\
& \quad \text{Pour homme povres devenoit.} \\
& \quad \text{for man poor became.PAST.3SG} \\
& \quad \text{‘He who was rich became poor.’} \quad \left( \text{Le Roman de Mahomet, year 1258, 892} \right) \\
\text{b.} & \quad \text{heart that such company lose.3SG} \\
& \quad \text{Doit bien plourer le dessevrance.} \\
& \quad \text{must.3SG well cry.INF his separation} \\
& \quad \text{‘A heart that loses such company must be crying his separation.’} \quad \left( \text{Le Roman de Mahomet, year 1258, 96} \right) \\
\text{c.} & \quad \text{those who comrade of-it must.3PL be.INF} \\
& \quad \text{‘Those who must be knight of it (of the Round Table).’} \quad \left( \text{La Queste del Saint Graal 6, year ~1220, p. 18} \right)
\end{align}

Stylistic Fronting of DPs is not unique to Old French (we have already mentioned Modern Icelandic). According to Falk (1993), Stylistic Fronting of DPs can be found in Old Swedish; and according to Barnes (1987), it occurs in Faroese. Apparently, the possibility of Stylistic Fronting is improved in Icelandic if the DP is non-specific/abstract. If the DP is specific, the sentence is not fully grammatical (Holmberg 2004). As noted by Holmberg (2006) himself, this is an exception to his (2000) generalization that Stylistic Fronting has no semantic effect. The non-specific/abstract constraint does not seem to apply in Old French. For instance, in (15c) the DP that undergoes Stylistic Fronting, i.e. compagnon, is not abstract (rikeche ‘richness’ in (15a) and compagnie ‘company’ in (15b) might be argued to be abstract).\(^11\)
With respect to (D) Labelle (2007), claims that inversion in the following examples could not be cases of Stylistic Fronting, because the accessibility hierarchy would lead us to expect the negative adverb *pas* in (16a) to front (*pas* is ranked high in the hierarchy – see D above), blocking the raising of the PP *a Gormund* ‘to Gormund’, and in (16b) one would expect the infinitive *desfendre* ‘defend’ to raise instead of the PP complement of that infinitive:

(16) a.  Huelin dist une novele [qui [a Gormun[d]e fut pas bele t,] Huelin said a piece-of-news [which to Gormund neg was not good]
    ‘Huelin brought news which didn’t please Gormund.’
    (*Gormont et Isembart, year ~1130, 239–240)

b.  [Se [de ce] vous volez desfendre t,], alez en tost voz armes prendre
    if of this you want defend-INF, go loc soon your weapons take
    ‘if you want to defend yourself, go get your weapons now.’
    (*Le Roman de Thèbes 1, year ~1150, p. 96)

The second example is technically not problematic even if we do not postulate a special category like Top+, because as shown by Holmberg it is possible to skip one element for the Stylistic Fronting calculus provided the two candidates for Stylistic Fronting are sisters. (17) is Holmberg’s (2000) implementation of Maling’s (1980) Accessibility Hierarchy and his revised version Minimal Link Condition (Chomsky 1995).

(17) **Minimal Link Condition**
    A feature F attracts the closest feature that can check F.
    Closeness is defined in terms of c-command: in a configuration [α. . . β . . γ] where α c-commands β and γ, β is closer than γ to α, if β asymmetrically c-commands γ.

This allows a verb or a complement PP to undergo Stylistic Fronting as shown for Icelandic by (18a) and (18b) respectively, since they are sisters, thus equally close to the target.

(18) a.  Peir sem buiði __ hafa t, í Ósló          (Icelandic)
    those that lived have.3PL in Oslo

b.  Peir sem [í Ósló],__ hafa buið t,í
    ‘Those that have lived in Oslo.’ (Holmberg 2000:464)

As for (16a), we know independently that it is possible to Stylistically front *pas* ‘not’ together with another element as shown by (19). In this case a DP *sa boche* ‘his mouth’ has raised, but so has the negative element *pas*, since under normal circumstances it appears after the verb (the verb has raised to T). Since in embedded contexts only one specifier and one head position are available for fronting at the left periphery, I am assuming that *sa boche* ‘his mouth’ has raised to the specifier of Top+0 while *pas* ‘not’ has raised to the head position Top+0 (this makes negative reinforcers in Old French heads rather than XPs).

(19) Quant la pucele le salue, Qui [sa boche]j pas; __
    when the young-girl him salute.3SG who his mouth FORC
n’en palue tιtι Ne ne li a neant costé.

The young girl’s greeting which was not unpleasant did not cost him anything.’

*Le Chevalier à la Charrette*, year ~1180, 1570-1573)

To conclude Section 3, we saw that there is no motivation for claiming that Early Old French was a generalized V2 language (Labelle 2007) or even a symmetric V2 language (Lemieux and Dupuis 1995, Sitaridou 2004). Inversion in main clauses in both Early Old French and Late Old French was of the Germanic Topicalization type while inversion in embedded clauses was of the Stylistic Fronting type.

4. V3, V4

The introduction of a special topic position at the left periphery for Stylistic Fronted elements makes interesting predictions for Old French main clauses. For example, it predicts that V3 and V4 orders should be possible in such environments. This prediction is indeed borne out as we shall see in the present section.

On the grounds that Old French freely allowed V3 and V4 orders rather than strictly V2, Kaiser (2000) makes the claim that Old French was not a V2 language. This section will argue against this idea. Consider the following examples of matrix clauses that do not show V2 word order:

(20) a. [Aprés la biere]PP [venir]V voient __

   behind the coffin come.INF see.3PL

   ‘Behind the coffin they see an escort coming and in front of it came…’

   *(Le Chevalier à la Charrette*, year ~1180, 560-561)

b. [Par mi le flanc]PP [l’espié]DP li mist __

   among the side the-sword him put.PAST.3SG

   ‘He put the sword through his side’

   *(Gormont et Isembart*, year ~1130, 170)

c. [As pez le abét]PP [mercit]N atent __

   at-the feet the priest forgiveness await.3SG

   ‘At the feet of the priest, he is asking for forgiveness’

   *(Le voyage de Saint-Brandan*, year ~1120, 338)

In (20a) the verb voient ‘see.3PL’ is in third position: a PP aprés la biere ‘behind the coffin’ and a verb venir ‘come.INF’ have been fronted. In (20b), again the verb mist ‘put’ appears in third position (the object pronoun li is a clitic and therefore does not enter into the V2 calculus – it attaches to the verb forming with it one unit); a PP par mi le flanc ‘through his side’ and a DP l’espié ‘the sword’ have been fronted and appear side by side. In (20c), the verb atent also appears in third position: a PP as pez le abét ‘at the feet of the priest’ (a noun construct) and a noun mercit ‘forgiveness’ have been fronted.
Labelle (2007) also introduces many examples of matrix clauses in Old French in which the verb is not in second position. Some of her examples appear in (21).

(21) a. [Ma longe atente]$_{DP}$ [a grant duel]$_{PP}$ est venude 
my long wait to great pain is come

‘My long wait has ended in great pain.’

(\textit{La Vie de Saint Alexis}, 11th c., LXXXIX, 443)

b. [Je]$_{DP}$ qu'en diroine?
I what-of.it say.COND.1SG

‘Me, what should I say about it?’

(\textit{Le Roman de Thèbes} 1, year ~1150, p. 37)

c. [La bone enseine qu'il tint]$_{CP}$, /[de l'autre part]$_{PP}$ en fit eissir
the good spear that-he held / on the other side gen made come.out

‘He made the good spear that he held come out on the other side (of his opponent).’ (\textit{Gormond et Isembart}, year ~1085, 171–172)

In (21a), the verb \textit{est} ‘is’ is in third position: a DP \textit{ma longe atente} ‘my long wait’ and a PP \textit{a grant duel} ‘to great pain’ have been fronted. In (21b), a DP \textit{je} ‘I’ has been fronted while the verb \textit{diroine} ‘say.COND.1SG’ is not in second position, since an interrogative word \textit{que} ‘what’ appears to the right of \textit{je} ‘I’. In (21c), a CP \textit{la bone enseine qu'il tint} ‘the good spear that he held’ and a PP \textit{de l'autre part} ‘on the other side’ disturb the V2 order: the verb \textit{est} ‘is’ is in third position. (Some of Labelle’s (2007) examples, e.g. 21c, are cases of Left Dislocation rather than Stylistic Fronting. We will come back to the distinction between the two kinds of fronting operations below).

Although not possible for Modern German, the presence of several XPs before the finite verb is not unusual for Old Germanic languages (Kiparsky, 1995; Tomaselli, 1995; Fuss, 1998; Axel, 2002). Indeed, in Old English and Old High German, the position of the finite verb was more variable than it is in modern V2 languages. Main and embedded clauses could be V1, V2, V3 and V-final. Two XPs could front before the finite verb. Axel (2002) attests this for Old High German. According to her analysis, V1 occurs frequently in Old High German prose documents (Old French also allows V1 freely), and so is XP XP sequences before a finite verb.

Therefore, Old French shares with Older Germanic V2 languages (and with Older Romance languages, e.g. Old Italian, cf. Benincá 2006) a richer left periphery than do Modern Germanic V2 languages, indicating that it would be too premature to place Old French outside the group of languages with V2. Older Germanic V2 languages were V2 despite the fact that they allowed V3 and V4 orders. It is thus wrong to compare Old French V2 with Modern German V2 (as does Kaiser 2000 and many others recently, e.g. Sitaridou 2004, Elsig 2008, 2009).

I want to argue that V3 and V4 orders are possible in main clauses because the elements that appear just before the verb are Stylistically Fronted. As mentioned earlier, the fact that at least two elements can undergo Stylistic Fronting in Old French (an XP and a head in that order) prompted me to propose in Mathieu (2006) that Stylistically Fronted elements in that language moved to a dedicated position at the left periphery of the clause with one specifier and a head. I dubbed this category Top+ to differentiate it from the Topic position associated with Germanic
Topicalization (see (10)). Since there is no reason to assume that Top+P is unavailable in main clauses, I add this projection in the representation of main clauses in (11) giving us (22):

(22) $\left[\text{Top}^0 \shortmid \text{Top} \quad \text{Spec} \quad \text{Top}^0 \left[\text{Top+P} \quad \text{Spec} \quad \text{Top}^+ \left[\text{FinP} \quad \text{Spec} \quad \text{Fin}^0 \left[\text{TP} \quad \text{Spec} \quad T^0\right]\right]\right]\right]$}

Par mi le flanc l’espié li mist (cf. (18a))

The special topic position is sandwiched between the projection hosting Germanic Topicalized elements and FinP, which contains Fin$^0$ where the verbs sits (this is similar to what is proposed by Labelle and Hirschbühler 2005 except that I add Top+P in between the Top position and the Fin position).

In embedded clauses, V3 orders are of course possible, since both a specifier and a head position are available (those of the Top+ category). However, it is predicted that V4 orders will not be possible. I have found no such examples in my corpus.

It must be noted that although Stylistically Fronted elements are topics, they are not topics in the traditional sense. The literature acknowledges two main kinds of topics: either a topic is a background element (already mentioned in the discourse or accommodated) or it is an element that indicates that this is what the sentence is about. Stylistic Fronted elements have neither of these properties: they are not what the sentence is about and they are not necessarily backgrounded or presupposed. In the general cases, the only reason why they seem to undergo raising is to make sure that the focused element in the clause is in final position (an operation akin to P-movement, cf. Zubizarreta 1998). This operation is common in verse because the element that is focused is also the element that rhymes with the final element appearing in the next verse. In other words, the Stylistic Fronting operation does not seem to bear on truth-conditional semantics.

These “topics” should thus not be confused with Left Dislocated or Hanging Topics. The examples of Stylistic Fronting that I introduced are strictly topics of the non-presupposed/non-aboutness kind. This does not mean that Old French had no such topics. As already mentioned, some of the examples introduced by Labelle (2007) are cases of Left Dislocation, e.g. (21c). Typically, these introduce old information. That Old French also allowed Left Dislocated elements is clear not only for main clauses, but also for embedded clauses as in (23) shows (the difference between (23) and (8) above is that in (23) we have an overt subject whereas in (8) we do not – I assume that in order to obtain Left Dislocation a subject is needed, with a possible pause between the Left Dislocated element and the subject; no such pause should appear in Stylistic Fronting, an operation which systematically makes use of empty subject positions):\(^{12}\)

(23) … que par mon chief je vos ferrai
that by my head I you make-FUT.1SG
‘… that by my head I shall strike you.’ (\textit{Le Chevalier à la Charrette}, year ~1180, 761)

This example contains an overt subject \textit{je} ‘I’ and although there is no comma indicating we might be dealing with a Left Dislocated element, there is every reason to believe that this
element is not a Stylistically Fronting element. First, the subject position is not phonologically empty. Second, *par mon Chief* ‘by my head’ is an expression that emphasizes the speaker’s attitude towards the comment made. It is clearly emphatic. In the next section, we turn to Left Dislocation and Hanging Topics and study their exact position in the sentence.

To summarise Section 4: I have shown that Stylistically Fronted elements in Old French were topics, albeit from a different kind from the traditional notion of topic. They appeared at the left periphery of the clause in addition to more traditional topics, making sense of the fact that V3 and V4 orders were possible in the language. Old French (Early and Late) was an asymmetric V2 language not only despite the fact that apparent V2 orders were possible in embedded clauses (See Section 3), but also despite the fact that a strict V2 order was not always respected.

### 5. Left Dislocation and Hanging Topics

In the previous sections, we saw that Old French had two different positions for two different kinds of topics: one position (the traditional Topicalization position at the left periphery) for topics and focused elements and another for non-presupposed topics (Stylistic Fronting). In this section, I turn to two other kinds of topics: Left Dislocation and Hanging Topics. Left Dislocation is often called Clitic Left Dislocation in Romance languages, since it is possible only with a clitic that doubles the subject or object that has been topicalized. On the other hand, Hanging Topics are found in English: they appear without a clitic.

It is traditionally thought that, as a productive construction, the general displacement of an object to the left periphery of the clause surfaces quite late in the history of French: “P. Ruelle (1966) qui leur a consacré une étude, n’a même pas pu en rassembler une dizaine d’attestations avant le XIVe siècle. C’est en fait à partir du moyen français que ce tour va devenir moins rare [...]” (Marchello-Nizia 1995:54) or “cette construction est très rare” (Marchello-Nizia 1995:54). However, I want to show in this section that there exist more examples than traditionally conceded. Both Left Dislocation and Hanging Topics are possible early in the history of Old French.

Starting with Left Dislocated elements, Labelle (2007:303) introduces a few examples all belonging to the Early Old French period. These examples are introduced in (24). They are both from the 11th century.

(24) a. Icoste folg gent de Francei,/ mut par unt ili folg esperance these mad people of France, very much have they unreasonable hope ‘these mad people of France, they have a very unreasonable hope’ (*Gormond et Isembart*, year ~1085, 78–80)

b. Sed a mei soule vels une feiz parlasses,/ if to me only want one time speak /
Ta lasse medrei si lai reconfortasses.
your poor mother thus her comfort ‘If you had spoken to me at least once/ you would have thus comforted your poor mother’. (*La Vie de Saint Alexis*, 11th century, XC, 449)
Rouveret (2004, p. 219) introduces the following examples from the 12th century (I introduce many examples in order to show that Left Disclocated elements/topics are not that rare in Early Old French):

(25) a. Li quens Rollant, il est mult irascut
the king Rollant he is very angry

("La Chanson de Roland", year 1100, 777)

b. Li niés Marsilie, il est venuz avant
the nephew Marsilie, he is come avant

‘Nephew Marsilie, he came.’

("La Chanson de Roland", year 1100, 860)

c. « le cumandement Deu jô l’oï, si l’ai furni… »
the commandment God I it-heard, thus it-have provided

‘God’s will, I heard it, and I have obeyed it.’

("Li Quatre Livres des Rois", 30, 12th century, 20)

d. Les batailles nostre Seignur, tu les meintienz é furnís ;
the battles our Lord you them mantain and provide

‘Our Lord’s battles, you maintain and obey them.’

("Li Quatre Livres des Rois", 12th century, 51, 28)

e. « Cest chevalier, je ne l’aim pas. »
this knight, I NE him-like not

‘This knight, I don’t like him.’ (Erec, year 1170, 602)

Other authors have introduced examples of Left Dislocated topics in their studies of Old French discourse properties, some of which date back as early as "La Chanson de Roland. Here is a collection:

(26) a. Ses dras, il les ostad […].
his clothes he them took-off

‘His clothes, he took off.’

("Livre des Reis", 39,76, in Härmä 1990: 163)

b. Les deuxiesmes, on les doit aussi ouyr,
the second ones we they must also hear

‘The second ones, we must also hear.’


c. [Cels qu’ils unt mort], ben les poet hom priser.
[those that-they have killed] well they could one to-praise

‘Those that they killed, one could praise indeed.’

("La Chanson de Roland", year 1100, 1683, in Priestley 1955: 10)

In fact, Left Dislocation is not rare in "La Chanson de Roland" (year 1100). I have found additional examples which appear below:

(27) a. Reis Corsalis, il est de l’altre part:
king Corsalis, he is from the-other part

‘King Corsablis is from the other part.’ ("La Chanson de Roland", year 1100, 885)
b. Li nies Marsilie, il ad a num Aelroth;  
the nephew Marsilie he has as name Aelroth;  
‘Marsilie’s nephew, his name is Aelroth.’  
(*La Chanson de Roland*, year 1100, 1188)

b. E Berenger, il fiert Astramariz:  
and Berenger he strikes Astramariz  
‘and Berenger, he strikes Astramariz.’ (*La Chanson de Roland*, year 1100, 1304)

It is clear that we are dealing with a Left Dislocated kind of topic, since we have a comma after the topic, a typical written marking that corresponds to the introduction of a pause in discourse. With V2 and Stylistic Fronting no such pause is necessary (or in fact possible).

Some structures which appear to be left-dislocated are in fact Hanging Topics. Hanging Topics are topics which appear without a pronoun or a clitic. This is how they differ from Left Dislocated topics. What is interesting is that Hanging Topics also appear in Old French earlier than traditionally thought. Here is a collection of relevant examples, mostly from the 12th century.

(28)  
a. [Vostre terre] qui defandra?  
your land who will-defend  
‘Who will defend your land?’ (*Chanson de Lyon* 1617, in Arteaga 1997: 2)
b. [Cest nostre rei], por coi lessas cunfandre?  
this-one our king why let flounder  
‘Why do you let our king flounder?’  
(*La Chanson de Roland*, year 1100, 1.2583, in Arteaga 1997: 2)
c. Et ce conseil nous vous donnons.  
and this counsel we to-you give  
‘And this counsel, we give you.’  
d. Un grail entre ses ii. mains / Une dameisele tenoit…  
a grail between her two hands a demoiselle hold.PAST.3SG  
‘A demoiselle was coming forward, holding a grail in her two hands.’  
(*Perceval ou le Conte del Graal*, year ~1181, 3208)
e. « Les citez que mis peres prist sur le tun, jos te rendrái; … »  
the cities that my father took on the yours I you give.back-FUT  
‘The cities that my father took from you, I will give back.’  
(*Li Quatre Livres des Rois*, 12th century, 164, 34)

All the examples above show that, like other Old Romance languages, Old French had a series of topics before the zone dedicated to Germanic style topicalization. The left periphery thus must have consisted of something akin to what has been proposed by Benincà and Poletto (2002) and Benincà (2006) for other languages as in (29).

(29)  
[Hang. Topic [Scene Sett.[DeclForce[Left disl. [List interpr [[[Focus CP] [Wh-op CP]]]]]]]]
However, we must add one layer between the topics to the left and Focus CP, namely the one corresponding to Stylistic Fronting. As discussed in Section 4, Stylistically Fronted elements are topics, albeit of a special kind: they are neither what the sentence is about nor are they presupposed. They appear to undergo dislocation simply so that the focus of the sentence falls on the most embedded element (Zubizarreta 1998). This metrics explains why Stylistic Fronting was so common in verse: the emphasis and main stress would fall on the last word in the verse: in order to target a certain word in the sentence other material made way for the focused and rhymed element to appear in the position where main stress and rhyming surfaced. This type of process is typical is contemporary poetry.

The representation in (30) gives the skeleton of the clause at the left periphery for Old French.

(30) \[ \text{Hang. Topic/Left dislocation} [\text{TopP Spec Top}^0 [\text{Top+P Spec Top+}^0 [\text{FinP Spec Fin}^0 [\text{TP Spec T}^0]]]] \]

Four different kinds of topics are available: Hanging Topics, Left Dislocated elements, Germanic/V2 topicalized elements, Stylistically Fronted elements. This concludes Section 5.

6. Conclusion
In this paper, I argued that the Old French CP should be split into several projections. In addition to the familiar FinP and TopicP that ornate the pre-verbal area in V2 languages, I argued that the French CP should be further decomposed into a special topic position hosting Stylistically Fronted elements. The decomposition of the CP layer in Old French gives a rationale to the possibility of V3 and V4 order in the language (there is no need to claim that Old French was not a V2 language as Kaiser 2000, Sitaridou 2004 and Elsig 2008, 2009 have recently claimed). Stylistic Fronting was argued to be available throughout the Old French period (both the Early and the Late period), making Old French consistently a non-generalized V2 language (contra Labelle 2007). Finally, it was argued that the Old French CP consisted of two additional topic positions: one for Left Dislocated elements, the other for Hanging Topics. These topics were argued to have appeared much earlier than traditionally thought in the literature.

References


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1 An asymmetric V2 language is one where V2 is possible only in main clauses; a symmetric V2 language is one where V2 is possible in both main and embedded clauses.

2 The reason why I use a gap rather than pro is that I believe that the postulation of pro has theoretical underpinnings that are best avoided. For example, if pro is considered to be a syntactic element (as is the case in traditional Government and Binding) then the subject position is technically not empty. However, as will become clear later in this paper, I do not want to assume that the subject position is filled by anything when the subject does not occupy the subject position. On the contrary, I will argue that Stylistic Fronting occurs precisely because there is nothing in the subject position. In addition, according to Minimalism, it is best not to postulate empty categories when it can be avoided (nothing can license empty categories anymore since the notion of Government has disappeared from the theoretical framework).

3 An alternative is to assume, following Roberts & Roussou (2002), that there is a higher complement projection which acts like an embedded clause (ForceP), and a lower one which acts like a main clause (FinP). This is similar to what has been proposed by Vikner (1995) and Holmberg and Platzack (1995) with the difference that distinct
feature specification is attributed to the relevant C heads. The complementizer in Force\(^0\) is in complementary
distribution with verbs in first position.

4 Traditionally, subject clauses are claimed to contain a gap or a null operator. The null is base-generated in Spec-TP
and then raises to Spec-CP. I use a gap instead of an empty operator since the latter has theoretical underpinnings. I
therefore want nothing in the subject position (see footnote

5 According to Benincà (2001), topic is always higher (to the left of) focus and focus is higher than Fin. Therefore,
the specifier of Fin\(^P\) can simply not count as a topic position.

6 By ‘generalized V2’ I mean V2 order in both main and embedded clauses, but not necessarily through the same
process (e.g. CP-related V2 for main clauses versus IP-related V2 for embedded clauses, e.g. Labelle 2007) and by
symmetric V2, I mean V2 order in both main and embedded clauses through the same process (e.g. CP-related V2
for both main and embedded clauses or IP-related V2 for both types of clauses).

7 It is in fact doubtful that languages such as Yiddish (Diesing 1990, Santorini 1995), Faroese and Icelandic
(Rögnvaldson and Thráinsson 1990, Sigurðsson 1990), which have been described as symmetric V2 languages, are
really symmetric V2 languages, since these languages also appear to have Stylistic Fronting as part of their
grammars. In particular, with respect to Icelandic, Maling (1980/1990) shows that embedded V2 clauses in that
language result from an operation of Stylistic Fronting. Consequently, Icelandic is now often, if not always,
described in the literature as an asymmetric V2 language.

8 It is not easy to find a truly uncontroversial symmetric V2 language. The reason behind this state of affairs might
be because there is a general universal constraint against V2 in embedded clauses: it simply does not exist (see
previous footnote).

9 Labelle (2007) does not really discuss criterion E. I will not discuss it either, since there are not many data that can
be used to show the difference between Stylistic Fronting and V2 when it comes to extraction phenomena. This
criterion is in fact not directly relevant to the discussion at hand.

10 I assume (uncontroversially) that subject relative clauses contain a null subject.

11 Interestingly, the restriction does not apply to Old and Middle Danish either, see Hrafnbjargarson (2004).

12 Modern French has not lost the ability for topics to appear in embedded contexts. Although this is not traditionally
taken to be possible in English, such topics are possible in Modern French, (cf. de Cat 2007).

13 “P. Ruelle (1966) who has studied this construction could not even gather ten examples before the 14th century. It
is in fact only from the Middle French period that this construction becomes less rare [...]” (my translation)

14 “this construction is very rare” (my translation)