From Local Blocking to Cyclic Agree: The role and meaning of determiners in the history of French

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1. Introduction

In this paper, I show that bare nouns were common in Old French, but that determiners were also to a large extent optional in the language, and that consequently a Blocking Principle of the type proposed by Chierchia (1998) appears, in view of this fact, problematic. I argue, however, that the Blocking Principle can be saved if we localize blocking, making it sensitive to the context (in the same spirit, see Krikfa 2003 for data pertaining to English and Grønn 2005 for data pertaining to Norwegian). My contribution to this volume addresses several key themes of the book: “optional” determiners, individuals vs. predicates as basic types and the idea that features of D are not universal.

My specific proposal about the optionality issue is that the use of determiners in Old French was tied to discourse properties such as focus/emphasis, on the one hand, and phonological/metric requirements, on the other. The choice between the use of a bare noun and the use of a noun with a determiner was not free, but created a one to one mapping between form and function (Williams 1997). One consequence of my analysis is that Old French determiners were neither required for argumenthood (i.e. not needed to turn a predicate into an argument as in Longobardi 1994 and many others) nor for referentiality (Higginbotham 1985, 1987). In turn, this implies that the basic type of nouns is <<< (as in Baker 2003, Borer 2005, Déprez 2005, Tonciulescu, this volume) and that nouns are inherently referential. Finally, I argue that determiners did not become obligatory in Modern French because of a putative semantic parameter switch à la Chierchia (e.g. from a [+pred, +arg] language to [+pred, -arg] language), but that the diachronic change is connected to an alternation in the morphology of nominals. Old French nominals lost their interpretable ϕ-features, a crucial feature for a language to have bare nouns (cf. Delfitto & Schroten 1991).

My original contribution to the diachronic issue is that the compulsory insertion of determiners in Modern French is driven by Cyclic Agree (see Rezac 2003 for the original conception of Cyclic Agree). Whereas Lyons (1999) correlates the obligatory insertion of French determiners to the earlier restructuring of the pronominal system of Latin and while Giusti (2001, 2002) relates it to the loss of morphological case, my account relies instead on the idea that the obligatory insertion of determiners is tied to the change in agreement morphology on the Old French noun. In this sense, my account is closer to that of Harris (1977, 1980) who argues that Modern French determiners are the mere carrier of agreement (see also Krámsky 1972). My proposal about Cyclic Agree can thus be seen as one way of formalizing Harris’ claim according to which French determiners became obligatory because of their agreement property.

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 introduces all the relevant distributional facts about Old French bare nouns needed for this paper. Section 3 concentrates on the use of determiners in Old French. Section 4 discusses the discourse and phonological properties associated with determiners in that language. Section 5 gives an analysis of the syntax and semantics of Old French bare nouns and determiners. Section 6 provides an account as to why determiners became obligatory in Modern French. Section 7 concludes the paper.
2. Bare nouns in Old French

Old French is interesting in the context of the discussion that was initiated by Chierchia’s (1998) seminal work on bare nouns, since bare nouns were very common in that language. In this respect, while many languages have recently been used to put Chierchia’s (1998) very influential theory of bare nouns to the test (Brazilian Portuguese, Munn and Schmitt 2001; Edo and Mohawk, Baker 2003; Haitian Creole, Déprez 2005; Inuktitut, Compton 2004; Dëne Súłiné, Wilhelm 2005), a careful assessment of how Old French fits in Chierchia’s typology has not yet been attempted. The present paper aims to fill that gap.

Bare nouns were ubiquitous in Old French, especially in object positions, either on an existential (1)/(2), a generic (3), an abstract (4) or a kind interpretation (5).²

(1) Donez moi **armes** por le besoing qu’abonde.
give.IMP.2PL me weapons.PL for the need that increase.PRES.3SG
‘Give me weapons because the need is pressing.’
(*La Prise d’Orange*, end of 12th century, line 964)

(2) S’il avient que j’aie **freres** et j’ai **enfans** et
if-it comes that I-have brothers.PL and I-have children.PL and
mi enfant ont **enfans**.
my children have children.PL
‘If it turns out that I have brothers and I have children and my children have children.’
(*Li livres des coutumes et des usages de Beauvoisins*, year 1283, p. 226)

(3) **Dames** en **canbres** fuit et het.
ladies.PL in chambers flee.PRES.3SG and hate.PRES.3SG
‘He hates ladies in their chambers and keeps away from them.’
(*Lai de Narcisse*, year 1170, line 120)

(4) **Envie** lor fait grant contraire
envy.SG them.DAT make.PRES.3SG big contrary
‘Envy is not good for them.’
(*Erocle*, year 1180, line 1061)

(5) **Cocodrille** est uns animaus a .iiij. piez et de jaune color
crocodile.SG be.PRES.3SG a animal at four feet and of yellow colour
‘The crocodile is a four-legged animal and is yellow.’
(*Li livres dou tresor*, year 1260-1267, V, *Dou cocodrille*, p. 184)

(4) and (5) show that, in addition to bare plurals ((1),(2),(3)), bare singulars were available in Old French. Example (6) is another case where a bare noun is singular. In this case, the bare singular receive a mass interpretation.

(6) Jo vos durrai **or** e **argent** asez.
I you give.FUT.1SG gold.SG and silver.SG enough
‘I will give much gold and silver.’
(*La Chanson de Roland*, year 1080, line 75)

Old French bare singulars can also be interpreted as generics (7), existentials (8) or even definites (9). In (9), before the word ‘garden’ is mentioned last, it has been mentioned twice already in the text, the first time with an indefinite determiner and the second time with a
definite determiner. Yet, the third time ‘garden’ is used it is determinerless, although it is clearly unique, familiar and identifiable, the three properties I take definite determiners to have.

(7) Quant hom est viex, vet a bastons; when man.SG be.PRES.SG old carry.SG to cane
‘When [a] man is old, it carries a cane.’
(Le Roman de Thèbes, year 1150, line 2933)

(8) Ele respon : ‘Sire, mon pere she reply.PRES.SG Sir, my father
Prist femme aprés la mort ma mere … take.PAST.SG wife.SG after the death my mother
‘She replies : Sir, my father took [a] wife [i.e. married] after the death of my mother.’
(L’àtre périlleux, roman de la Table Ronde, year 1268, lines 1189-1190)

(9) Et li visquens […] avoit un rice palais par dervers un gardin. and and the viscount have.PAST.SG a rich palace by front a garden.SG
‘The viscount owned a rich palace with a garden in front of it.’
[…]
It i avoit une fenestre par devers le gardin It there have.PAST.SG a window by front the garden.SG
‘There was a window overlooking the garden.’
[…]
Et si oï le lorseinol center en garding […] and thus hear.PAST.SG the nightingale sing in garden.SG
‘And one could hear the nightingale sing in [the] garden.’

Finally, the following example shows that bare nouns in Old French are not restricted to argument positions; they can also appear in predicate positions. In (10), the bare singular fame ‘woman’ is selected by the predicative verb ‘be’.

(10) Bien i pert que vos estes fame. well there appear.PRES.SG that you be.PRES.2PL woman.SG
‘One can tell very well that you are a woman.’
(Yvain, Le Chevalier au Lion, year 1179, line 1654, dans Joly 1998:257)

In view of these facts, and since Old French has a count/mass contrast together with a singular/plural distinction, it appears that, on Chierchia’s (1998) well-known typological scale, Old French is a [+pred, +arg] type of language (like Russian).4

The details of Chierchia’s system are as follows. He asserts that NPs do not systematically denote predicates cross-linguistically contrary to what has been suggested in the syntactic literature (Abney 1987, Higginbotham 1985, 1987, Longobardi 1994, 2000, Stowell 1989, Szabolcsi 1987, among many others). Rather, depending on the language, NPs start out as either arguments or predicates. This means that in some languages determiners are not essential for an NP to be or become an argument. In other languages, however, determiners are required for argumenthood. This is the case of Modern French, a [+pred, – arg] language, since bare nouns are not possible in that language. This is illustrated in (11).5
    dog.SG like.PRES.3SG cat.SG
    ‘The dog likes the cat.’

b. * Hommes ont vu chiens.
    men.PL be.PRES.3PL seen dogs.PL
    ‘Men saw dogs.’

(12) gives a schematic definition of the parameter proposed by Chierchia while (13), (14) and
(15) introduce the different instantiations of the parameter (\(\partial = \text{null determiner})\).

(12) The Nominal Mapping Parameter: \(N \Rightarrow [\pm\text{pred}, \pm\text{arg}]\)

(13) \([–\text{pred}, +\text{arg}]\) every (lexical) noun is mass ⇒ Chinese
Mass/count languages

(14) \([+\text{pred}, +\text{arg}]\) bare arguments allowed
\[
\begin{cases}
\text{no article} & ⇒ \text{Slavic} \\
\text{articles} & ⇒ \text{Germanic}
\end{cases}
\]

(15) \([+\text{pred}, –\text{arg}]\) bare arguments disallowed
\[
\begin{cases}
\partial & ⇒ \text{Italian} \\
\text{no} \partial & ⇒ (\text{Modern}) \text{French}
\end{cases}
\]

Although it might have been tempting without further ado to group Old French with Romance
\([+\text{pred}, –\text{arg}]\), it is clear that this option would be mistaken, since Old French appears to be
more like (14) than (15). But this should not come as a surprise, because we know
independently that Old French has properties that are no longer exhibited in Modern French
and these properties are not always Romance, but Germanic (e.g. V2, Adams 1987, among
many others; Stylistic Fronting, Cardinaletti & Roberts 2002, Dupuis 1989, Mathieu 2006a;
Quirky subjects, Mathieu 2006b; transitive expletive constructions and object shift, Mathieu,
2008).

There are three main differences between Old French and Modern Romance
languages: i) bare singulars are available in Old French, but are not possible in Modern
Romance languages (with the notable exception of Brazilian Portuguese, Munn and Schmitt
2001); ii) Old French bare nominals can combine with individual-level predicates (3) or with
predicates that select kinds (5), but this is not possible in Modern Romance languages
(Dobrovie-Sorin & Laca 2003); i) bare nominals can, not only be objects, but also subjects
in Old French whereas this is not an option in Modern Romance languages. Although object
bare plurals in Old French are more frequent than subject bare plurals, it is not entirely
impossible, however, for bare plurals to be subjects. These can appear in post- or even pre-
verbal positions. The example in (16), (17) and (18) illustrate the phenomenon.

(16) Ce fu en mai, el novel tens d’esté :
    it be.PAST.3SG in May the new time of-summer
    Fueillissent gaut, reverdissent li pré,
    blossom.PAST.3PL wood.PL green.PAST.3PL the prairie.PL
    ‘It was in May, at the beginning of summer: [The] woods were in bloom, the fields
    were becoming green.’
    (Charroi de Nîmes, 12th century, line 15)
(17) Chevalier viennent dis et dis.  
knights,PL come,PAST,3PL ten and ten  
‘[The] knights came in groups of ten.’  
(Le Chevalier à la Charrette, year c. 1180, line 5610)

(18) Il avint que homes arnez alerent  
it turn,out,PAST,3SG that men,PL armed go,PAST,3PL  
a faire force contre autres  
to do,INF force against others  
‘[some] men with weapons came in order to commit violent acts.’  
(JA chap. XLIX, in Carlier and Goyens 1998:100)

While gaut ‘wood’ (16) and chevalier ‘knights’ (17) are interpreted as definites, homes ‘men’ in (18) is interpreted as an indefinite. ‘Woods’ is accommodated in (16) and ‘knights’ has already mentioned previously in the discourse in (17). In (16), the predicate fueillir ‘blossom’ is unaccusative, but the theme appears post-verbally. In (17), the predicate venir ‘come’ is also unaccusative, but chevalier ‘knights’ appears in a pre-verbal position. Since V2 in Old French is possible only in matrix clauses, it is clear from example (18) that the subject occupies the subject position.

The facts in (16), (17) and (18) show that Old French clearly differs from Modern Romance languages. In Spanish, it is possible for a bare plural to be a subject only on the condition that it surfaces post-verbally, as shown in (19a) (see Contreras 1986, Longobardi 1994 and Dobrovie-Sorin, Bleam and Espinal 2005 for a summary of the facts). When a bare plural is a subject, it cannot appear in a pre-verbal position as (19b) illustrates. In object positions, however, bare nouns are free to occur as illustrated by (19c).

(19) a. Merodeaban leones en la selva.  
prowl,PAST,3PL lions,PL in the jungle  
‘Lions were prowling in the jungle.’

b. *Niños llegaron.  
children,PL arrive,PAST,3PL  
‘Children arrived.’

c. Juan vió peliculas.  
Juan see,PAST,3SG movies  
‘Juan saw movies.’

Now that we have established that Old French was [+pred, +arg] language, the question that arises at this point is whether Old French was more like Slavic, where no determiners can be found, or more like Germanic, where on the other hand determiners are available. The problem, as we shall see, is that determiners appear to be optional in Old French.

To summarize section 2: we established the fact that nominals in Old French did not require a determiner to be an argument: bare nouns, whether plural or singular, could appear in argument positions while receiving all sorts of interpretations depending on the context. Old French thus appears to be a [+pred, +arg] language.

3. The use of determiners in Old French
It is generally claimed in the literature that determiners developed slowly in the history of French. Bare nouns were the norm/the default case (Latin did not have determiners, thus bare nouns were common), and determiners slowly emerged from the Latin demonstrative ille for the masculine and illa for the feminine. Because of their demonstrative status, these proto-
determiners were said to have deictic force. The deictic force supposedly lasted until the end of the 13th century (Rickard 1989:55). Fournier (2002) even argues that, although the definite article starts to lose its deictic force from the 14th century onwards and is thus used more and more generally, the definite article has difficulties imposing itself. Apart from Maupas (1607),9 it is apparently necessary to wait for La Grammaire de Port Royal (1660) for the article to be regarded as a determiner in its own right.

I argue that there are many problems with this view: first, it turns out that the definite determiner surfaces much earlier than commonly believed and, second, when it surfaces it does not have deictic force of the distal kind (it is only deictic in that it can refer back to a nominal introduced in the discourse, a typical feature of definite determiners shared with demonstratives). My claim is thus that there is a mismatch between the prescriptive description of grammarians and actual use. To illustrate, I have looked at La Vie de Saint Alexis, a very early text dated 1050. It provides an extreme, but very interesting case: almost all nominals interpreted as definite are accompanied by a definite determiner, and none of these determiners have deictic properties in the distal sense described above.

The traditional view according to which bare nouns in Old French are felicitous only in non-individuated (i.e. abstract, non-referential or non-specific) contexts is equally problematic. It is not difficult, indeed, to show that this generalization is not correct. The fact that bare singulars such as those illustrated in (9) are possible with a definite interpretation but without a determiner runs counter to the received wisdom. In (9) by the time en gardin ‘in the garden’ is used, a rich context is available because ‘garden’ has been mentioned twice already. We would expect a definite determiner used anaphorically in this case, but instead the noun is used without the support of a determiner. Whereas Old French favoured objects of prepositions without a determiner for indefinites (as is still the case in Modern French), there are thus clear cases where bare objects of prepositions can receive a definite interpretation.

Two further examples will illustrate this phenomenon. In (20) it is clear from the context that the violin and the bow belong to Nicolette. A determiner of some sort would then be expected. Yet, both nominals are bare.

(20) Es vous Nichole au peron,
and here Nichole at-the steps
trait viéle, trait
take.out.PRES.3SG violin.SG take.out.PRES.3SG bow.SG
‘There is Nicolette on the steps, she takes out [her] violin, takes out [her] bow.’
(Aucassin et Nicolette, early 13th century, XXXIX, lines 11-12)

(21) is case of accommodation: the nominals are sufficiently identified by the receiver as unique for the determiners to be dropped. However, on the view that definite determiners are needed for elements that are unique, familiar and identifiable by both speaker and hearer, this example is problematic. Note that the enumeration appears to facilitate the drop of the determiner. Bare nouns are common in such contexts (Brunot & Bruneau 1956).

(21) Deus, reis de glorie…
God king of glory
Celt e terre fesis, e cele mer;
this.one and earth.SG do.PAST.3SG and heaven.SG sea.SG
Soleil e lune, tut ço a comandé
sun.SG and moon.SG all this have.PAST.3SG ordered
‘God, king of glory who has created the heavens, the earth, the sea, the sun and the moon has ordered all this.’ (Le Charroi de Nîmes, 12th century, lines 804-805)
These examples show that bare nouns can be used in individuated/referential contexts, contrary to what has been claimed in the traditional literature.

Conversely, nominals that should not, according to the traditional view, appear with a determiner often surface with one. In (22) a nominal interpreted generically, which would normally appear bare, surfaces with a determiner. The ‘deer’ has not been mentioned before in the text: it is a new discourse entity. In (23) the abstract nominal ‘loyalty’ should be bare (since it is non-individuated). Yet, it surfaces with a determiner. For example, in English abstract noun are used without a determiner: *kindness is a virtue*, not *the kindness is a virtue* (a determiner is possible only if a relative clause follows *kindness: the kindness that he showed was exceptional*). In (23), the determiner is not used anaphorically, since it is the first time in the text that leauté ‘loyalty’ is used.

(22) Si cum li cerfs s’en vait devant les chiens…
‘As the deer runs from the dogs.’

*(La Chanson de Roland, year 1080, lines 1874-1875, IN Epstein 1994:67)*

(23) Et dit li cuens: ‘Vos dites voir, beau niés ;
the loyalty must.I PRES.3SG it-one all days love.PRES.3SG
‘The count replied: ‘You speak the truth, dear nephew, one must always love loyalty.’

*(Le Charroi de Nîmes, 12th century, lines 441-442, in Epstein 1995:63)*

This optionality is attested not only across texts,10 but also within the same texts. In *La Cantilene de Sainte Eulalie*, a text written around 878 (a date that antecedes *La Vie de Saint Alexis* aforementioned), the presence and absence of the definite determiner alternate quite freely. To illustrate, in (24) the young girl has been discussed at great length in the previous verses and a determiner is used. This looks like that the prototypical use of definite determiners: a discourse referent has been introduced by a noun in the discourse and the determiner pick up that discourse referent. However, if bare nouns in French were capable of being interpreted as definites with an ability to pick up discourse referents (e.g. (9), (17)), the question is: what is the use of determiners?

(24) Niule cose non la pouret omque pleier
‘Nothing could make the young girl not appreciate the service God.’

*(La Cantilene de Sainte Eulalie, year 878, lines 8-10)*

A bare noun interpreted as definite in fact surfaces in the same text (in fact the previous couple of verses). This is illustrated in (25). It is clear that the prayers are the king’s; they are not anybody’s prayers.

(25) Ne por or ned argent ne paramenz
‘Neither for gold, silver, jewels, neither for the threat or the prayers of the king.’
The optionality of determiners is not restricted to definite determiners. Indefinite determiners also appear to be optional in Old French. Either an indefinite determiner accompanies a nominal as in (26) or it is absent as in (8). The case of (26) is particularly interesting, since *spear* is not used specifically in this context. In addition, it is the object of a preposition (a typical environment for determiner drop, as mentioned above). *Spear* has not been mentioned in the text: the context is such that the spear can be any spear as long as the head will be severed. Yet, a determiner accompanied the noun.

(26) Ad une spede li roveret tolir lo chieef.
with a spear SG her order-PAST.3SG cut-INF the head

`He ordered for her head to be cut with a spear.'

(26) *La Cantilene de Sainte Eulalie*, year 878, line 22

Similarly, in (27) a determiner is used with the word *mort* ‘death’ when it is not necessary and thus not expected. It is not necessary because the nominal *mort* ‘death’ is not individuated (it is an abstract noun). Therefore, as already mentioned, on the traditional view it should be used without a determiner.

(27) Qued auuisset de nos Christus mercit
for have.SUBJ.3SG of us Christ mercy
Post la mort et a lui nos laist venir
after the death SG and to him us let.PRES.3SG come-INF
Par souue clementia.
by his clemence

`In order for Christ to have mercy on us after death and for him to let us come to him thanks to his clemence.’

(27) *La Cantilene de Sainte Eulalie*, year 878, lines 27-29

The relative freedom with which determiners are used in Old French has not escaped researchers or grammarians throughout the years. To quote just a few experts on the matter: ‘L’expression de l’article dans ce vers prouve qu’il n’y a guère de ’règle’ absolument rigoureuse dans la syntaxe de l’ancienne langue.’ (Raynaud de Lage, Guy 1983 p. 46).11 ‘Il arrive que les poètes du moyen âge semblent employer indifféremment le nom sans article, le nom précédé de l’article et le nom précédé d’un démonstratif.’ (Brunot and Bruneau 1956 p. 218).12 The free variation between bare nouns and nominals with a determiner is also reported by Carlier & Goyens (1998).

The facts I have described for Old French may appear problematic for Chierchia’s (1998) view that if a determiner is available in a given language, then the equivalent/corresponding covert type shifting operation is blocked. His Blocking Principle is defined in (28). In a language such as Russian, no determiners are available, therefore all kinds of covert type shifting operations are free to operate: they are never blocked. Like Russian, Old French clearly shows that bare nouns can be arguments without the need of a determiner.13

(28) Blocking Principle (‘Type Shifting as last Resort’)
For any type shifting operation $\tau$ and any $X$:
* $\tau(X)$
if there is a determiner D such that for any set $X$ in its domain,
The problem that Old French appears to create for Chierchia’s classification, however, is that it has lexicalized determiners, i.e. vocabulary items that correspond to the and a. But if Old French nominals can be arguments without the support of a determiner, the question that arises is thus: what is the need for determiners in Old French? In the next section, I argue that despite the initial problems that Old French poses for Chierchia’s Blocking Principle, this principle can be saved if we localize blocking, making it sensitive to the context. However, if this hypothesis is on the right track (and it appears to be), then we have to abandon the idea according to which determiners are needed for argumenthood (as in Longobardi 1994) or referentiality (Higginbotham 1985, 1987). This is because Old French nominals can clearly be arguments and have referential import without being accompanied by a determiner. There is simply no evidence for a null determiner, since bare nouns in subject or object positions do not show an asymmetry in their distribution.

4. On the functions of determiners

So far, we have seen that, although it is sometimes claimed in the literature (e.g. Boucher 2003) that definite determiners in Old French are used to express referentiality, it is clear from some of the examples introduced in section 2 and 3 that this is not always the case. Although (9) shows that a determiner can be used anaphorically and denote definiteness (the second time garden ‘garden’ is used), it is also possible for a bare noun to be interpreted as definite and refer back to an entity already introduced in the discourse without the support of a determiner (see (9), (16), (17), (20), (21) and (25)). On the other hand, a determiner may be used with a nominal as in (23) and (27) when the nominal is clearly non-referential (it is a non-individuated abstract noun).

In the present section, I argue that the optional cases introduced in section 3 do not necessarily go against the Blocking Principle of Chierchia (1998). I show that this is because the choice between the use of a bare noun and the use of a noun with a determiner in Old French is not free, but tied to discourse properties, namely focus, on the one hand, and to phonological/metric requirements, on the other. First, I follow a series of work by Richard Epstein (1993, 1994, 1995) who argues that determiners in Old French can be used to express point of view. Second, I add examples showing that metric requirements may favour the insertion of determiners.

Epstein (1993, 1994, 1995) works within a cognitive approach, but his idea of point of view can easily be translated as what is known as ‘focus’ in other frameworks. The proposal is that when the speaker wants to emphasize the importance of a particular referent, a determiner is added so that the nominal is no longer bare. I take ‘focus’ here to be a cover term for ‘emphasis’ or ‘expressive’. The notion of focus that I am using encodes new or old information that is emphasized and that becomes important for the speaker and for the addressee. A clear example, reproduced here as (29), is given by Epstein (1995). It shows that both ‘Christianity’ and ‘paganism’ are identifiable (both notions belonged to the common ground at the time the text was written). The use of the determiner with ‘Christianity’ is expressive in that it serves to highlight Christianity in relation to paganism. The determiner expresses the favourable evaluation of Christianity by the writer (Guillaume) who is a Christian (cf. Epstein 1995).

(29) La combati vers Corsolt l’amiré, there fight-PAST.1SG against Corsolt the-emir
    Le plus fort home de la crestienté the more strong man of the Christianity
N’en **paiennisme** que l’en peüst trover.

not-of.It paganism that it-of.It can find

‘There, I fought against the emir Corsolt, the strongest man that one could find in Christianity or in the land of pagans.’

*(Le Charroi de Nîmes, 12th century, lines 136-138, in Epstein 1995:64)*

I found a similar example in *La Vie de Saint Alexis*. The first time *cristienté* ‘Christianity’ is mentioned, it appears bare. This is because in this context the nominal is interpreted as part of the predicate. It simply means ‘to be baptized’ and thus involves a routinized event (it is backgrounded). On the other hand, the second time ‘Christianity’ is used, emphasis is put on the fact that Christian tradition or laws require the young child under discussion to be christened. This is why a determiner is used.

(30) *Nostra anceisur  ourent **cristienté**.*

our ancestors have, PAST,3PL Christianity, SG

‘Our ancestors received Christianity.’

*(La Vie de Saint Alexis, year 1050, line 12)*

(31) *Bel   num  li  metent sur **la cristïentét.**.*

beautiful name to.him put on Christianity, SG

‘and they gave him a fine name, as Christianity demands.’

*(La Vie de Saint Alexis, year 1050, line 30)*

Another example given by Epstein (1995) will illustrate the point. (23), repeated here as (32), belongs to a text where the hero, Guillaume, complains to his nephew that the king has not yet rewarded him for his exploits. Guillaume speaks of revenge, but Bertrand, his nephew, is not happy with his uncle’s behaviour. Guillaume, realizing that he has made a mistake, speaks of the importance of loyalty. This is why the nominal ‘loyalty’ appears with a determiner whereas it should normally be bare, since it is an abstract noun. As I have mentioned previously, it is the first time in the text that the word ‘loyalty’ has been used.

(32) *Et  dit   li  cuens: ‘Vos  dites   voir, beau niés ;*

and say, PRES,3SG the count you say, PRES,2PL true dear nephew

**La leauté** doit l’en toz jorz amers.‘

the loyalty, SG must, PRES,3SG it-one all days love, PRES,3SG

‘The count replied: ‘You speak the truth, dear nephew, one must always love loyalty.’

*(Le Charroi de Nîmes, 12th century, lines 441-442, in Epstein 1995:63)*

Epstein is not the first to notice the expressive role of determiners in Old French. Brunot & Bruneau (1956) note that: ‘*l’article peut avoir une valeur expressive*’ (p. 218)\(^1\). They give the following example where articles are used in an otherwise prototypical environment where articles would be dropped, i.e. an enumeration context (this environment together with coordination are still possible contexts for determiner drop in Modern French, see Curat 1999 and Roodenburg 2004). The addition of determiners creates a certain emphasis that would be absent if the nominals had been bare.

(33) *Quoi?...nostre avoir  avés vous parti, dont nous avons  souffert*

what our stock have, 3PL you shared of-which we have, 1PL suffered

les grandes **paines** et les grans **travaus**, les **fains** et les **sois** et

the big pains, PL and the big works, PL the hungers, PL and the thirst and
les froids et les caus, si l’avés parti sans nous?
the colds,PL and the hots,PL thus it-have,2PL shared without us
‘What? you shared our goods, this stock for which we have suffered great pain, for
which we have worked so much, for which we went through hunger and thirst, cold
and heat, you shared it without us?’ (La Conquête de Constantinople, c. 1212,
p.100, lines 12-13), in Brunot & Bruneau 1956:218)

From these examples, I conclude that determiners in Old French can be used to focalize
the noun that it accompanies. Conversely, nouns that would normally be accompanied by a
determiner (because they are unique, familiar and identifiable) appear bare. This is a case of
defocalization (Epstein 1995:66). In (9), repeated here as (34), although the last use of
‘garden’ is definite, it appears without a determiner, simply because it has been mentioned
many times already in the text and it therefore loses emphasis.

(34) Et li visquens [...] avoit un rice palais par dervers un gardin.
and the viscount have,PAST.3SG a rich palace by front a garden,SG
‘The viscount owned a rich palace with a garden in front of it.’

Il i avoit une fenestre par devers le gardin
It there have,PAST.3SG a window by front the garden,SG
‘There was a window overlooking a garden.

Et si oï le lorseilnol center en garding [...] and thus hear,PAST.3SG the nightingale sing in garden,SG
‘And one could hear the nightingale in [the] garden.’


Before this section draws to a close, I would like to show that the use of optional
determiners in Old French may be tied to functions other than focus properties, in particular a
function not discussed by Epstein. For example, in Old French, phonological, i.e., metric,
requirements can force the presence of a determiner in a particular verse. This explains the
use of the determiner in the first, but not the second verse of the following portion of text. In
this case the presence of a determiner is totally gratuitous from the point of view of syntax
and semantics, since from the context it does not appear that ciel ‘sky’ and soleil ‘sun’ are
more focused than terre ‘earth’, mer ‘sea’ or feu ‘fire’. The determiner is here used to keep
the octosyllabic structure of the verse (for the generative metrics of the Old French
octosyllabic verse, see Noyer 2002).

(35) Il fist le ciel et le soleil
he do,PAST.3SG the heaven,SG and the sun,SG
Et terre et mer et feu vermel
and earth,SG and sea,SG and fire,SG red
‘He created the heaven and the sun, and the earth and the sea and the fire all red.’

(Le Roman Partonopeu de Blois, c. 1182-85, lines 1553-1554)

I argue that competition between various forms to match particular meanings or
functions occurs at a local level, i.e. it may depend on the context/on the construction.
Depending on the language apparent optional determiners may be correlated to different
meanings or to different PF functions. In English, it has been proposed that the alternation
between the use of the indefinite determiner some and a bare noun is possible because the
definite determiner expresses specificity (cf. Krifka 2003). The contrast is between *Dogs are barking* versus *Some dogs are barking* or *I drank milk* versus *I drank some milk*). These examples are real problems for Chierchia’s (1998) Blocking Principle if they remain unaccounted for. Luckily, the alternation can be accounted for if blocking is localized. On Krifka’s view, the difference that the determiner *some* makes in the structure is that it introduces a choice function, thus allowing for wide scope interpretations (the added meaning is specificity). While this works for English, Old French is different. We saw from example (26) that an indefinite determiner in Old French can accompany a noun without producing a specific reading.

In summary, I propose to save the Blocking Principle as envisaged by Chierchia and his followers by correlating the use of determiners to different functions, one of which being a discourse function (focus) while the other is a PF requirement. While the optional use of determiners in Old French has often been used as an indication that the grammar was simply undergoing change (cf. Carlier & Goyens 1998), a fact that I am certainly not denying, what is interesting is to note that the grammar appears to always make use of what it has at its disposal: each ‘free’ form is associated with one meaning. In other words, economy requires ‘competing grammars’ or ‘competing structures’ to be useful for communication (a kind of meta output condition). Beyond the case of determiners, further work is, of course, needed in order to test this hypothesis.

5. Analysis
My aim in the present section is to account for the distribution of Old French bare nouns (singulars and plurals) in a uniform and principled way as well as to give an account of the discourse properties with which determiners are associated in that language, formalizing some of the ideas introduced by Epstein (1993, 1994, 1995). My analysis of the Old French facts builds on Déprez (2005) and integrates elements of Delfitto & Schrotten (1991) and Bouchard (2002, 2003). Although I integrate many aspects of Chierchia’s (1998) analysis, I do not adopt his semantic analysis *en bloc*. This is because it appears to be the case that whether or not determiners are available in a given language is irrelevant for argumenthood. Old French is a case in point: all bare nominals are arguments and determiners are added for reasons other than core semantic characteristics such as argumenthood. There are two reasons why determiners are added to a noun in Old French: i) because of focus; ii) because of a metric requirement. The situation in Modern French will be discussed in section 6.

The hypothesis that I defend is as follows. Instead of relying on the presence or the absence of determiners to determine whether a nominal is a predicate or an argument, I argue that *all* nouns denote $<$e$. Whereas the received wisdom in the literature on NP structure is that NPs are essentially predicative categories, and determiners are needed to make them into something that can function as an argument, a growing trend in the linguistic literature has proposed instead that bare nouns denote, not $<$e, $t$, but $<$e in all languages (Borer 2005, Tonciulescu, this volume). Treating all nouns with $<$e as their default type allows us to do away completely with the idea according to which determiners are necessary for nominals to become full arguments. This is in the spirit of what Baker (2003) has recently proposed for the interpretation of nominals cross-linguistically. Baker goes further than Chierchia in explaining the ability of bare nouns to act as arguments in many languages, proposing that all “nouns are always inherently argumental as a matter of Universal Grammar” (p.116). According to Baker, nouns are special in that they bear a referential index: they are always realized as entities. Determiners are present only to convey discourse properties.

My proposal nevertheless differs from Baker’s in that, although I follow his view according to which determiners are not necessary to encode argumenthood in any language, I
assume that in order to act as predicates (i.e. of type \(<e,t\>)\), nouns do not have to combine with \text{Pred}, the special functional projection introducing predicates that Baker postulates. Once NumP is projected, nominals are \(<e,t>\): they can directly appear in predicate positions. The empirical evidence for a predicative head that turns entities into predicates is not overwhelming cross-linguistically. Instead, number (a morphologically very visible and ubiquitous category) is responsible for the introduction of predicates.\footnote{\textsuperscript{17}}

More precisely, I propose a compositional account based on the idea that syntactic structure builds almost all relevant architecture for the interpretation of bare nouns. I say ‘almost’ because I do retain the covert \(\iota\) operator, the covert Generalized Quantifier \(\exists\) and the covert choice function operation. These are necessary because their semantic function is often not overtly spell-out morpho-syntactically in Old French and in other languages. The basic projected structure, however, is always NP as in (36a) (which corresponds to the type \(<e>\), i.e. an argument) and NumP as in (36b) (which corresponds to type \(<e,t>\), i.e. a predicate). From the structure in (36b), the covert type shifting operations aforementioned can apply.

\begin{equation}
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{(36) a. NP} & \text{b. NumP}<e,t>\\
& \text{N'} \\
& \text{N'0} \\
\end{array}
\end{equation}

This proposal is the exact opposite of the dominant idea in the field, namely that \(D^0\) or even the overt realization of \(D^0\), is necessary to turn a predicate (an NP) into an argument (cf. Abney 1987, Longobardi 1994, 2000, Stowell 1989, Szabolcsi 1987) and to make a bare NP referential (Higginbotham 1985, 1987). On the view presented in this paper, \(D^0\) is not necessary for the introduction of reference or argumenthood. The DP/CP parallelism on which much of the traditional work is based contains many arguments and data that have turned out to be problematic (see Bruening 2008 for a recent comprehensive critique).

The overall parameter that I will be put forward is closely related to the work of Déprez (2005), Delfitto & Schroten (1991), Bouchard (2002, 2003) and Gebhardt (this volume) in that it states that if nouns have agreement morphology, determiners are not necessary and bare nouns denoting objects are possible (an insight which is already present in many traditional grammars since Port-Royal, see for example Brunot & Bruneau 1956).

Let me go through some concrete examples and give a derivation for each of them. I propose that in Old French, a bare noun, i.e. an NP, starts out as an element denoting \(<e>\) (a kind). No DP structure is projected. I provide some examples of bare nouns interpreted as kinds in (37). (37a) is repeated from (5).

\begin{equation}
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{(37) a.} & \text{Cocodrille est} \text{ uns animaux a .iiij. piez et de jaune color} \\
& \text{crocodileSG bePRES3SG a animal at four feet and of yellow colour} \\
& \text{‘The crocodile is a four-legged animal and is yellow.’} \\
& \text{(Li livres dou tresor, year 1260-1267, V, Dou cocodrille, p.184)}
\end{array}
\end{equation}

\begin{equation}
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{b.} & \text{Taupe est une diverse beste} \\
& \text{moleSG bePRES3SG a diverse animal} \\
& \text{‘The mole is a diverse animal.’} \\
& \text{(Li livres dou tresor, year 1260-1267, CC, De la Taupe, p. 252)}
\end{array}
\end{equation}
On the assumption that this NP is interpreted as mass (cf. Chierchia 1998), it is underspecified for (morphological) number, which means that NumP does not project and that the nominal does not carry any \( \phi \)-features, giving us the structure in (38). \(^{18}\)

\[
\text{(38)} \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{NP} <e> \\
\downarrow \\
\text{N'} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{N}^0
\end{array}
\]

For all other cases, NumP projects spelling out the configuration in (39). Num is associated with uninterpretable \( \phi \)-features and an Agree relation is established with the interpretable \( \phi \)-features of the nominal. \(^{19}\) As mentioned already, the role of NumP is to retrieve instantiations of a kind (objects or sub-kinds). The type of NumP corresponds to \( <e,t> \).

\[
\text{(39)} \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{NumP} <e,t> \\
\downarrow \\
\text{Num}^0_{\text{sing/pl}} \\
\uparrow \phi \\
\text{NP} <e> \\
\downarrow \\
\text{N'} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{N}^0 \\
\text{AGREE} \\
\downarrow \phi
\end{array}
\]

Evidence that nominals in Old French bear interpretable features comes from the fact that the morphology necessary to distinguish between singularity and plurality appeared on the noun. In (40a), the ‘s’ on *chevalier* ‘knight’ indicated singular while the absence of that ‘s’ denoted plurality. The ‘s’ for the singular was actually pronounced (we know this from rhyming effects).

\[
\text{(40)}
\begin{array}{c}
a. \text{li chevaliers} \quad \text{‘the knight’} \\
b. \text{li chevalier} \quad \text{‘the knights’}
\end{array}
\]

Since in the nominative paradigm, *li* could mean either ‘the_{singular}’ or ‘the_{plural}’ (its number morphology was not transparent), the only way to tell whether the noun was singular or plural was through the morphology on the noun. The accusative paradigm was more transparent since *le* for singular and *les* for plural were used. The noun also contains overt \( \phi \)-features. Plurals were marked with ‘s’. The fact that ‘s’ marked both singularity (in the nominative paradigm) and plurality in the accusative paradigm must have led to great confusion.

\[
\text{(41)}
\begin{array}{c}
a. \text{le chevalier} \quad \text{‘the knight’} \\
b. \text{les chevaliers} \quad \text{‘the knights’}
\end{array}
\]

Let me now turn to generics. If the sentence is habitual as in (7) (see also (4)), the habitual aspect of the sentence functions as as the modal operator \( Gn \) together with the accommodation of a contextual variable C. This is as in Chierchia (1998). Here again the
property quantified on is the property of being an instance of the kind which is number-neutral.

When the nominal is interpreted existentially, as in (8), I assume existential quantification over the instantiations of the kind via the introduction of the covert Generalized Quantifier $\exists$. This is basically the only source of existential quantification in bare nouns (Chierchia 1998). This explains why bare nouns always receive narrow scope and can never achieve wide scope over other operators. Existential closure over object-level properties allows us to account for interrogative (42), hypothetical (43) and comparative environments (44), since the bare nouns in these cases are automatically interpreted in the scope of the operator.

(42) Avés vous dont borse trovée?
‘So have you found [any] purse?’
(in Foulet 1928 :58)

(43) Se vos volez ne chastel ne cité
if you want$_{2PL}$ or castle$_{SG}$ or city$_{SG}$
Ne tor ne vile, donjon ne fermeté
or tower$_{SG}$ or town$_{SG}$, fortress$_{SG}$
Ja vos sera otroïé et graé
this you be$_{3SG}$ given and agreed
‘If you want [a] castle or [a] city or [a] tower or [a] town, [a] dungeon or [a] fortress, this will be granted and given to you.’
(Le Charroi de Nîmes, 12th century, lines 471-473)

(44) Plus est isnels que n’est oisel ki volet
more be$_{3SG}$ fast than NE-be$_{3SG}$ bird$_{SG}$ that fly$_{3SG}$
‘He is faster than [a] bird that flies.’
(Le Chanson de Rolland, year 1080, line 1616)

The example in (45) shows that bare nouns such as palie ‘tapestry’ and ornement ‘ornament’ cannot take wide scope over negation. This is clear from the context. This is typical of bare nouns, as is well-known, from the literature (Carlson 1977, and many others).

(45) n i remest palie ne neul ornement
not there remain$_{3SG}$ tapestry$_{SG}$ nor none ornament
‘there remained no tapestry nor any ornament.’
(La Vie de Saint Alexis, year 1050, line 24)

It is not the case that there remained a tapestry and an ornament.
*There is a tapestry and an ornament and it is not the case that there remained any.

When an indefinite is interpreted specifically, I assume that a choice function is introduced (the choice function is not correlated with the presence of a determiner, i.e. as in Krifka 2003 for the case of English described above; in (26) the indefinite determiner does not introduce a choice function, since the nominal is not interpreted specifically). When the nominal is interpreted as definite (without a determiner), the $\iota$ covert operation can be performed shifting the property $<e,t>$ back into an entity $<e>$. 

15
Finally, when a nominal is interpreted as a predicate as in (10), NumP is projected and the predicate (i.e. be in (10)) takes a NumP directly (no type shifting operation applies). No PredP need be projected as in Baker (2003).

Let us now turn to the cases where determiners are projected in Old French. So far, existential, definite and specific interpretations denoted by bare nouns in Old French were accounted for via the introduction of covert operators like $\exists$ and $\iota$, as well as choice functions. The main discourse property that determiners embody in the early stages of Old French, as we have seen, is their capacity to encode focus. When the speaker wants to emphasize a particular nominal, he/she adds a determiner. In this case, an outer specifier for NumP is created. This specifier is created only if it has an effect on output (in the sense of Chomsky 1995 and subsequent work). The position in which the demonstrative finds itself determines its final interpretation (in the spirit of Chomsky 2005). An alternative account that would capture exactly the same properties of $le/li$ in Old French involves the introduction of a Focus Projection. Instead of an extra specifier, a Focus Phrase would be projected. The reason why I favour the first alternative (outer specifier) is that we do not need to postulate an empty focus head (there is no morphological evidence for such a head in Old French).

Diachronically, we have evidence that French determiners like $le$ and $li$ came from Latin’s demonstratives $ille$ and $illi$ (Harris 1978, 1980, Lyons 1999, Vincent 1997) and that they were adjectives (it is very common cross-linguistically for determiners to originate from adjectives, cf. Greenberg 1978; Haspelmath 1995). As adjectives, demonstratives sit in a position below $D^0$ (Giusti 1997, 2002, Lyons 1999, Panagiotidis 2000, Brugè 2002, Shlonsky 2004). It is my claim that this position in Old French corresponded to the outer specifier of Num$^0$ which was taken to be a focus position where $le/li$ was generated. Although they are demonstratives originally, $le/li$ lost their +deictic feature very early (recall the above discussion around the text La Cantilene de Sainte Eulalie). They nevertheless retained their definiteness feature: they denoted uniqueness, familiarity and identifiability. This explains why $le/li$ can be used anaphorically (cf. (24)). However, in this example, the nominal is nevertheless focused, since
a determiner was in no way obligatory. Crucially, the Agree relation between N and Num\(^0\) remains the same as before (i.e. (39)).

Before section 5 draws to a close, it is worth mentioning that the focus/emphatic contexts in which the insertion of *le/li* is felicitous are exactly the same as the contexts that were felicitous for the insertion of *ipse* in Vulgar Latin. *Ipse* was a Latin demonstrative which was for a long time in competition with *ille*. As argued by Vincent (1997:154-155), in the classical language the difference between *ipse* and *ille* is clear. *Ille* has both a distal and anaphoric role. In contrast, *ipse* is used for singling out the topic of a discourse: it emphasizes and contrasts the relevant items in the discourse. Although *ille* and *ipse* were in competition for a long time, *ipse* fell into disuse to the advantage of *ille*. It is *ille* which was retained in all Romance languages. However, it is tempting to speculate that the emphatic function of *ipse* was retained in the use of *ille* for a long time. This would explain why the optional Old French determiner was tied to focus/emphasis rather than another arbitrary discourse function.

To summarize section 5: I have argued that there is a partial correlation between semantic type and syntactic structure. All nouns start denoting \(<e>\), and when NumP is projected, nouns denote \(<e,t>\). The maximization operator \(\imath\) is used when a nominal is interpreted as definite and refers back to an entity already introduced in the discourse, while the Generalized Quantifier \(\exists\) corresponds to indefinite interpretations of nominals. An Agree relation is instantiated between the noun, which carries uninterpretable features, and the Num head, which carries uninterpretable features, while determiners are added only if needed, i.e. when denoting discourse functions.

6. Cyclic Agree and the emergence of obligatory determiners in Modern French

The question that remains to be addressed before the present article draws to a close is why bare nouns disappeared from the grammar of Old French and why determiners became obligatory in the modern variety of the language. I would like to argue that the diachronic change is not due to a semantic parameter switch à la Chierchia, but that the change is correlated to the fact that definite determiners became obligatory once plural morphology disappeared from the morphological make-up of French nominals. Once a structure or a vocabulary item is obligatory, the dual interpretation (one meaning available when the determiner is present, another when it is absent) is lost. This is in accordance with many other phenomena, cf. Williams (1997). The use of determiners as focus markers fell into disuse as a direct consequence of the loss of rich agreement and the compulsory use of determiners as agreement markers (on the parametric variation between agreement and focus, see Miyagawa 2005, 2007). Since determiners became obligatory, they could no longer encode focus within the nominal domain. They became grammaticalized and lost their initial semantico-pragmatic function, which was tied to focus.

To illustrate what I have in mind: suppose that Norwegian loses its ability to shift its objects. Since object shift is correlated with a specific interpretation, the contrast between non-specificity and no movement, on the one hand, and specificity and movement, on the other, would be lost (see Holmberg 1999 and Chomsky 2001 about object shift). The need for the outer specifier of \(v\) which is needed for moving the shifted object would disappear. On the same line, the outer specifier position in the Old French nominal domain was no longer needed because there were no longer two forms available that could mark two functions.

The technical details of my analysis involve ingredients from Lyons (1999), Giusti (2001) and Roberts and Roussou (2003). I want to argue that the change from demonstrative to definite article is the result of an interaction between lexical specification and syntactic structure. As already mentioned, *le/li* lost its deictic feature very early on, but it also gradually lost its definiteness feature. This, I want to argue was a direct consequence of the change in morphology on the noun. The key fact is that, whereas in Old French number could appear on
the noun and sometimes on the determiner (as was discussed in section 5), in Modern French number appears only on the determiner: ‘le’ [le] versus ‘les’ [le]. In *les pommes* ‘the apples’, the ‘s’ on *pommes* cannot be pronounced. The disappearance of this final ‘s’ dates back from around 1300 (Fouché 1961, Joly 1995) and is part of a larger loss of final consonants in the language.

Formally, I propose that this chain of events correlates with N no longer being associated with \( \phi \)-features. However, on this assumption, the question that immediately arises is how the uninterpretable \( \phi \)-features of Num in (39) and (46) are satisfied. Since they are uninterpretable, they cannot survive at LF. I propose that determiners became obligatory through time because these were the elements that were capable of satisfying the uninterpretable \( \phi \)-features of Num. The determiners from the accusative paradigm *le/les* were chosen rather than \( \ell_{\text{singular}} \) and \( \ell_{\text{plural}} \) since the latter were opaque, i.e. they did not mark the singular/plural distinction). This explains the disappearance of *li/li*. As a last resort *le/les* was inserted in order to avoid crashing. I further argue that the obligatory insertion of determiners in Modern French follows from Cyclic Agree, an operation which is independently needed (see Rezac 2003).

I further propose that the introduction of the relevant determiners in order to satisfy the uninterpretable \( \phi \)-features of Num was made possible because the operation Agree is cyclic. Cyclic Agree is an operation independently needed in the grammar: it has been used to explain Georgian and Basque recalcultrant agreement data (for the idea that Agree is cyclic and for the relevant data, see Rezac 2003). In the case at hand, the search space of the \( \phi \)-features on Num starts with the complement of Num, but because there is no match in the complement (no \( \phi \)-features are introduced by the nominal in Modern French), the structure grows to include a higher specifier. (47a) becomes impossible while (47b) becomes obligatory. Suppose then that the determiners are merged in the outer specifier of Spec-NumP as before. Because the *le/la/les* series carry the relevant interpretable –features the derivation converges.

\[
(47) \quad \begin{align*}
\text{a.} \quad \text{NumP} & \leftarrow \text{NP} \leftarrow \text{N} \\
\quad & \uparrow \text{Num0}\leftarrow \text{Sing/Pl} \quad \text{NP} \leftarrow \text{E}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\text{b.} \quad \text{NumP} \leftarrow \text{NP} \leftarrow \text{N} \\
\quad & \uparrow \text{Num0}\leftarrow \text{Sing/Pl} \quad \text{NP} \leftarrow \text{E}
\]

\[
\text{Num0}\leftarrow \text{Sing/Pl} \quad \text{NP} \leftarrow \text{E}
\]

\[
\text{Num0}\leftarrow \text{Sing/Pl} \quad \text{NP} \leftarrow \text{E}
\]

\[
\text{Num0}\leftarrow \text{Sing/Pl} \quad \text{NP} \leftarrow \text{E}
\]

The shift in agreement from nominals to determiners in Modern French created a situation where determiners became expletives everywhere, i.e. the mere repository of interpretable \( \phi \)-features (see Lyons 1999). This explains why French determiners in the modern language are ubiquitous. They are used with generics (48a), alienable possession (48b) (Vergnaud & Zubizarreta 1992), proper names in some dialects (48c), in constructions such as (48d) and in...
newly created lexicalized light verb constructions such as (48e') (these constructions typically had bare nouns in Old French, some remnants in Modern French are *avoir faim* ‘to be hungry’, *avoir envie* ‘to feel like’, etc.).

(48) a. J’adore les chats.
   I-love the cats
   ‘I love cats.’

b. J’ai mal à la tête.
   I-have ache at the head
   ‘I have a headache.’

c. Ah, v’la le Paul.
   Ah, here comes the Paul
   ‘Here comes Paul.’

d. La plus grande maison. ⇒ d’. La maison la plus grande.
   the more big house the house the more big
   ‘The biggest house.’

e. J’ai honte. e’. J’ai la honte.
   I-have shame I-have the shame
   ‘I am ashamed.’

I argue that as a consequence of this, French determiners lost their inherent definiteness feature. When they needed to be associated to definiteness, however, a DP needed to be projected and definiteness was acquired structurally. D⁰ is the locus of definiteness (hence, the feature +def under D⁰).²² The determiner thus raised from the outer specifier of NumP to the specifier of DP. Following Lyons (1999), I assume that determiners appear in the specifier of DP. There are languages where double determination is encoded: a determiner and an affix are possible (Danish and written Icelandic). It is thus reasonable to assume that the determiner sits in the specifier of DP while the affix is on the head D⁰. Since French does not have affixal determiners, however, the head D⁰ remains empty.²³ Through time, the movement from Spec-NumP to Spec-DP became obligatory. Once the definiteness feature associated with French determiners was completely lost, the only way to obtain a definiteness reading for them was to be merged in Spec-DP.

To quote Roberts & Roussou (1999:1020): ‘[…] following a standard paradigm for work on language change in generative grammar starting with Lightfoot (1979), […] change is initiated when (a population of ) learners converge on a grammatical system that differs in at least one parameter value from the system internalized by the speakers whose linguistic behavior provides the input to the learners. As the younger generation replaces the older one, the change is carried through the speech community (subject to the vicissitudes of history).’ The change from (49a) to (49b) thus involves a typical change from Move to Merge (a simplification) in the sense of Roberts & Roussou (1999, 2003).²⁴
Whereas Lyons (1999) correlates the obligatory insertion of French determiners to the earlier restructuring of the pronominal system of Latin and while Giusti (2001, 2002) relates it to the loss of morphological case, my account relies instead on the idea that the loss of the definite feature carried by demonstratives and the obligatory insertion of determiners is tied to the change in agreement morphology on the Old French noun. In this sense, my account is closer to that of Harris (1977, 1980) who argues that Modern French determiners are the mere carrier of agreement (see also Krámsky 1972).25

My idea about Cyclic Agree is thus one way of formalizing Harris’ claim according to which French determiners became obligatory because of their agreement property. Despite the technical differences, my accounts shares many ideas with Giusti’s (2001, 2002) account. She claims: ‘The definite article is neither sufficient nor necessary to trigger referential interpretation on the noun phrase. This implies that the article is not the element which carries the referential index of the noun phrase at all.’ (Giusti 2002:65). As in Baker (2003), I take nominals to be referential because they carry referentiality as an intrinsic feature. This can be seen in the fact that even when they are used as predicates, nominals can be referred to (Baker 2003:163). This means that referentiality is not the same as argumenthood. These are two notions that must be set apart (see Stowell 1991 and Longobardi 1994 who both explicitly claim that argumenthood should be related to referentiality).

As for indefinite determiners, I assume that they project CardP (see Lyons 1999). The indefinite articles *un* ‘a’ is the same word as the cardinal *un* ‘one’. This takes care of examples such as (26). We may replace CardP with Borer’s (2005) #P without, I think, any loss of content. No type shifting covert ∃ operation is possible in Modern French, since an indefinite determiner is present, and since that determiner is no longer tied to focus, but to cardinality. As in the case of definite determiners, the obligatory insertion of indefinite
determiners in Old French and the obligatory correlation between their use and indefinites was triggered by the change in morphology on the noun.

(50) a. NumP ≜ b. CardP ≜

This concludes Section 6. To summarize: It was argued that because nominals in Old French lost their (overt) interpretable ϕ-features and because determiners like le/la/les happened to have such features instead, the uninterpretable ϕ-features associated with Num were no longer satisfied by the noun, but by the determiner. Determiners thus became obligatory, since they were the sole repository of the relevant ϕ-features. The operation Cyclic Agree made this possible, because the search for matching features involves not only the complement of a given head, but may include (as a kind of last resort) the search to a (higher) specifier. The direct consequence that the obligatory insertion of determiners had in the grammar is that definite determiners lost their definite feature (they became expletives). Thus, determiners had to raise to the D domain where definiteness is encoded structurally. This was grammaticalized through time and the movement operation mutated into simple merge. Since the presence of overt determiners in Modern French precludes the use of covert type-shifting operations, each syntactic maximal node corresponds to a well-defined type. This is summarized in Table 1. The basic type is ≜ at the NP level. NumP introduces a predicate and denotes . CardP corresponds to ≜ (an Existential Quantifier). Finally, DP denotes an entity, albeit of a special kind, since it corresponds to identifiability, familiarity and uniqueness. DP thus corresponds to the definite operator i.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projection</th>
<th>semantic type</th>
<th>description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>≜</td>
<td>Definite operator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CardP</td>
<td>≜ , t</td>
<td>Existential operator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NumP</td>
<td>≜ , t</td>
<td>Predicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP</td>
<td>≜</td>
<td>Entity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1
7. Conclusion
In this paper, I have argued that all nouns in Old French started out as <e>, but that certain covert type shifting operations, e.g. 1 and 3, could be performed such that nominals were either interpreted as definite or indefinite. I further argued that the use of determiners in Old French was peripheral to the core semantic make-up of the nominal architecture, i.e. argumenthood and referentiality. It was argued that, in addition to definiteness, their use was related to either the encoding of focus or the satisfaction of a PF constraint. Blocking of determiners was therefore not global, but local. Finally, the parametric change that took place between Old French and Modern French, namely the disappearance of bare nouns in the modern version of the language, was argued to follow from Cyclic Agree, an operation independently needed in the grammar. Once nominals lost the interpretable φ-features they carried, a determiner with the relevant interpretable φ-features needed to be inserted in the structure so that the uninterpretable φ-features of Num⁰ could be satisfied.

Texts used/cited

La Prise d’Orange (end of 12th century), Charroi de Nîmes (12th century), Le Chevalier à la Charrette (year c. 1180), Lai de Narcisse (year 1170), Li livres dou tresor (year 1260-1267), La vie de Saint Alexis (year 1050), Aucassin et Nicolette (early 13th century), L’âtre périlleux, roman de la Table Ronde (year 1268), La Chanson de Rolland, year 1080. Enèas (year 1150), Yvain, Le Chevalier au Lion (year 1179), La Cantilene de Sainte Eulalie (year 878), Eracle (year 1180), La Conquête de Constantinople (c. 1212), Bestiaire Marial, from the Rosarius (14th century), Le Roman Partonopeu de Blois (c. 1182-85), Li livres des coustumes et des usages de Beauvoisins (1283).

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By existential, I mean that the noun is interpreted as ‘there is some x’ or ‘there is an x’. The examples in (1) and (2) are narrow scope existentials.

Old French was a V2 language (Adams 1987); this is why *dames en cambres* ‘ladies in their chambers’ appears in the pre-verbal position.

Here is the full excerpt: ‘Et li visquens estoit molt riches hom, si avoit un rice palais par devers un gardin. En une cambre la fist mettre Nicolette en un haut estage... Puis si fist l’uis seeler c’on n’i peust de nule part entier ne isicr, fors tant qu’il i avoit une fenestre par devers le gardin assës petite dont il lor venoit un peu d’essor. Nicolette jut une nuit en son lit, si vit la lune luire cler par une fenestre et si oï le lorseiulnol center en garding, se li sovint d’Aucassin sen ami qu’ele tant amoit.’

(i)   a. cheval → chevaux
    b. trois foiz l’apele par son nom
        three times him-call,PRES,SG by his name
        ‘He/she calls him by his name three times.’
        (*Enéas*, year 1150, line 2168).

In addition, it is clear bare nouns in Old French are not number neutral. A bare singular can only be interpreted as singular – it cannot be interpreted as plural – and bare plurals cannot be interpreted as singular.

There are some notable exceptions, see Curat (1999) and Roodenburg (2004) for details.

The logical combination [-pred, -arg] is not possible/attested, since a language with this alternative could not allow the insertion of NPs in a given derivation at all.

From this point of view, Old French fits quite nicely with Chierchia’s (1998) typology. The fact that in Italian, Spanish and Romanian, (unmodified) bare plurals appear not to be able to combine with predicates that select kinds or with i-individual predicates has been taken to be problematic for Chierchia’s theory. Because of this, Dobrovie-Sorin & Laca (2003) and Dobrovie-Sorin, Bleam & Espinal (2005) have argued for an analysis according to which bare plurals denote a property. On this view, the kind or generic reading is not the basic interpretation from which others are derived contrary to what Carlson (1977) and Chierchia (1998) have argued.

This generalization is based on a systematic search in *Frantext* and *Base de français médiéval*. I do not have, at this point, any statistical data, so my generalization is based purely on observation, nor is there any statistical evidence in the literature about whether Old French bare nouns are more often than not objects rather than subjects. I leave this for further research. As pointed out by a reviewer, asymmetries between subjects and objects in the context of bare nouns, but also in the context of other constructions (Negative Polarity Items, Noun incorporation, etc.) are well-known cross-linguistically. It is often recognized in the literature that there is a tighter connection between objects and verbs than between subjects and verbs. This is because the object is introduced in the derivation as a sister of the verb, the subject is introduced, not with the verb, but with a higher functional projection, namely v. Since the notion of government is no longer a core principle of generative syntax, the ECP cannot be appealed to in order to differentiate between bare nouns in subject positions versus bare nouns in object positions. A minimalist (government-free) analysis like that of Landau (2007) might be useful in explaining such a contrast.

Maupas requires the following: ‘j’ai acheté un cheval’ (I bought a horse), ‘prêtez-moi une épée’ (lend me a sword). It would be wrong, according to him, to say ‘j’ai acheté cheval’, ‘voilà épée’ (*Grammaire et syntaxe française*, 1607, p.111).
are not lexicalised (when determiner). The down operator ('the other woman'), a fact pointing to the conclusion that they are weak, this process is idiosyncratic to the items in French determiners can be reduced with certain nouns or adjectives (e.g., 'the money'). Although French determiners are weak elements, it is far from obvious, as pointed out by Lyons (1999), whether a weak item like a determiner is a clitic or whether its uniqueness implies there is only one referent for a particular DP (Russell 1905).

10 I have controlled for the dates when the texts were written. Most of my examples involve texts written at the beginning of the 12th century and at the end of the 11th century, except those very early texts where I am making a point about the early appearance of determiners.

11 'The use of the article in this verse shows that there is in the syntax of Old French no rigorous rule as to whether or not the article is present' (my translation)

12 'There are cases where Middle Ages poets seem to use freely nouns without an article, nouns preceded by a determiner or nouns preceded by a demonstrative.' (my translation)

13 (i) gives a list of the type shifters available cross-linguistically. Both \( \cap \) and \( \cup \) are automatic type shifters: they are not lexicalised (when \( \cap \) is lexicalized, it is lexicalized as the same element that \( \cap \) turns into, i.e. a definite determiner). The down operator \( \cap \) shifts an NP from \( <e,t> \) to \( <e> \). The up operator \( \cup \) shifts an NP from \( <e> \) to \( <e,t> \) giving us the property of being a specimen of the kind. \( \cap \) is the maximization operator: when applied to a predicate \( P \), it returns the greatest individual in \( P \). \( \exists \) is the standard Generalized Quantifier.

14 'The article can have an expressive value.' (my translation)

15 In this spirit, Grønn (2005) argues that weak bidirectionality (cf. Blutner 1998, 2000) seems to be what is needed to explain certain facts in Norwegian.

16 Another area where this appears to be relevant is the case of WH in situ in French (see Mathieu 2004).

17 It may in fact be the case that number in the beginning of the 12th century and at the end of the 11th century, except those very early texts where I am making a point about the early appearance of determiners.

18 It is also possible for plurals to be interpreted as kinds as (i) shows:

(i)  

a. \( \cap \) \( <e,t> \rightarrow <e> \)

b. \( \cup \) \( <e> \rightarrow <e,t> \)

c. \( \cap \) \( <e,t> \rightarrow <e> \)

d. \( \exists \) \( <e,t> \rightarrow <e,t>, t \)

19 I use the terms ‘interpretable’ and ‘uninterpretable’ instead of more recent (and perhaps more appropriate) terms such as ‘valued’ and ‘unvalued’, but nothing hinges on this matter.

20 For example, it is possible in Spanish to have la casa esta ‘this house’ (literally the house this) alongside esta casa ‘this house’ and in Greek afio to vovlio ‘this book’ (literally this the book) alongside to vovlio afio ‘this book’. Reinforcers in French ce livre-ci ‘this book’ (literally this book-this) has also been taken to indicate that there is a low position for demonstratives in the DP (cf. Bernstein 1997).

21 Several authors who have noticed this before have thus argued against Cinque’s (1994) idea that the features of Num\(^0\) are strong in Romance, thus attracting the noun to a position higher than adjectives. See Lamarche (1991), Bouchard (1998), Laenzlinger (2005) and Knittel (2005).

22 This can viewed as a shorthand for [+identifiable] and [+unique]. Identifiability implies that the speaker signals that the hearer is able to locate the referent for a particular DP (the concept is similar to familiarity, Heim 1982 and originally Christophersen 1939). Not all languages have definite determiners that share these two features (see Gillon, this volume) and not all optional determiners denote focus (see Paul, this volume). Uniqueness implies there is only one referent for a particular DP (Russell 1905).

23 A reviewer questions the motivation behind the treatment of determiners in Modern French as XPs sitting in specifiers on the assumption that Modern French determiners are clitics. I think the assumption that Modern French determiners are clitics is mistaken. Although it appears that French determiners are weak elements, it is far from obvious, as pointed out by Lyons (1999), whether a weak item like a determiner is a clitic or whether its weakness follows merely from its being a ‘function word’ (in the sense of Selkirk 1984). Although French determiners can be reduced with certain nouns or adjectives (e.g., l’argent ‘the money’, l’autre personne ‘the other woman’), a fact pointing to the conclusion that they are weak, this process is idiosyncratic to the items in
question; it is not instantiating general phonological rules. The fact that determiners can be stressed in French also shows that it is not the case that determiners in that language are even always weak elements:

\[(i) \quad \text{Tous nos produits alimentaires sont importés : la viande, les légumes, les fruits, le blé, les produits laitiers - enfin tout.} \]

‘All our food products are imported: meat, vegetables, fruit, wheat, dairy products – in fact everything.’

(Lyons 1999:66)

24 My proposal is in line with Greenberg’s (1978) hypothesis about the development of the definite determiner which involves four basic stages: zero stage, no definite article available to express definiteness; stage 1: the definite article emerges out of a demonstrative; stage 2: the use of the definite determiner becomes more general; stage 3: the demonstrative becomes grammaticalized.

25 ‘Essentially, the definite article has come in French to have a second purely grammatical, function – as the bearer of number and gender marking – in addition to its original, semantically motivated function of specifying a particular noun.’ (Harris 1978:74)

‘[…] the article in French is not precisely the same as the article in other languages. This can lie in an insignificant semantic difference but also in the fact that the article in French has, besides its principle function, also some secondary functions: it indicates gender and number; the article in French is often the only distinction between two numbers, e.g. une maison, des maisons, la maison, les maisons.’ (Krámsky 1972:29)