The function of determiners

From local blocking to Cyclic Agree

The role and meaning of determiners in the history of French

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This paper shows that, rather than being necessary for argumenthood or referentiality, determiners in Old French were optional, but used in relation to discourse properties such as focus/emphasis on the one hand, and in relation to 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. This one-to-one mapping between form and function disappeared once the insertion of determiners became obligatory. It is shown that the compulsory insertion of determiners in modern French is connected to an alternation in the morphology of nominals and that it is driven by the operation Cyclic Agree.

1. Introduction

In this article, 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, to be 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 versus predicates as basic types, and the idea that features of D are not universal.

My specific proposal regarding the issue of optionality 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, among many others) nor for referentiality (Higginbotham 1985, 1987). In turn, this implies that the basic type of nouns is ⟨e⟩ (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).

On the diachronic issue, I argue 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 regarding 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 article is organised as follows. Section 2 introduces the relevant distributional facts about Old French bare nouns. 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.

2.   Bare nouns in Old French

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

Bare nouns were ubiquitous in Old French, especially in object positions, either on an existential (1)–(2)[1], 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
     if-it comes that I-have brothers.PL and I-have

     enfans   et   mi enfant ont **enfans**.
     children.PL and 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 coustumes 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.'   (*Eracle*, year 1180, line 1061)

(5) **Cocodrille** est   uns animaus a .iiij. piez et
     crocodile.SG be.PRES.3SG a   animal   at four feet and

     de jaune color
     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)

The examples in (4) and (5) show that, in addition to bare plurals (1)–(3), bare singulars were available in Old French. Example (6) shows another singular bare noun; in this case, the bare singular receives 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, line75)

Old French bare singulars can also be interpreted as generics (7), existentials (8), or even definites (9). In (9) *gardin* 'garden' is mentioned three times: the first time, with an indefinite determiner; the second time, with a definite determiner; but, the third time, it is determinerless. However, in the third instance, 'garden' is clearly unique, familiar, and identifiable—the three properties I assume for definite determiners.

(7) Quant **hom**   est   viex, vet   a bastons
     when   man.SG be.PRES.3SG old   carry.3SG to cane
     'When [a] man is old, it carries a cane.'

                                      (*Le Roman de Thèbes*, year 1150, line 2933)

(8) Ele respont: 'Sire, mon pere   Prist
     she reply.PRES.3SG Sir,   my   father take.PAST.3SG

     fenme aprés la   mort ma mere
     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'âtre périlleux, roman de la Table Ronde*, year 1268, lines 1189–1190)

(9) 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 the 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 sing in [the] garden.'
     (*Aucassin et Nicolette*, early 13th century, IV, 20–28; XII, 5–7, in Epstein 1995: 66–67)[3]

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3. Here is the full excerpt:

        Et li visquens estoit molt rices hom, si avoit un rice palais par devers un **gardin**. En
        une canbre la fist metre Nicolette en un haut estage… Puis si fist l'uis seeler c'on n'i

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.3SG 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, in 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. This is illustrated in (11).[5]

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peust de nule part entier ne iscir, fors tant qu'il i avoit une fenestre par devers le **gardin** assés 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 lorseilnol center en **garding**, se li sovint d'Aucassin sen ami qu'ele tant amoit.

The alternation between *gardin* and *garding* appears to be a matter of spelling variation in this text.

4.   Example (i-a) shows that the singular for 'horse' is *cheval,* while the plural for 'horses' is *chevaulx.* Example (i-b) shows that a count noun like *foiz* 'times' in Old French can be merged directly with a numeral such as *trois* 'three'.

(i)   a.   cheval → chevaulx

b.   trois foiz l'apele   par son nom
three times him-call.PRES.3SG by his name
'He/she calls him by his name three times.'
                    (*Enéas*, year 1150, line 2168)

In addition, it is clear that 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.

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

(11) a. * Chien   aime   chat.   *singular*
         dog.SG like.PRES.3SG cat.SG
         'The dog likes the cat.'

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

Example (12) gives a schematic definition of the parameter proposed by Chierchia, while (13)–(15) introduce the different instantiations of the parameter (∂ = null determiner).[6]

(12)   *The Nominal Mapping Parameter*: N $\Rightarrow$ [±pred, ±arg]

(13)   [–pred, +arg]   every (lexical) noun is mass $\Rightarrow$ Chinese
       Mass/count languages

(14)   [+pred, +arg]

       bare arguments allowed   {   no determiner $\Rightarrow$ Slavic
                                     determiners $\Rightarrow$ Germanic

(15)   [+pred, –arg]

       bare arguments disallowed   { $\partial \Rightarrow$ Italian
                                       no $\partial \Rightarrow$ (Modern) French

Although it might have been tempting without further ado to group Old French with Romance [+pred, –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

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6.   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.

Modern Romance languages (with the notable exception of Brazilian Portuguese, Munn & 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);[7] and (iii) 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 for bare plurals to be subjects. These can appear in post- or even pre-verbal positions.[8] The examples in (16)–(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** vienent   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)

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7.   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 et al. (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.

8.   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 while 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 Empty Category Principle (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.

(18) Il avint   que **homes** armez 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 & Goyens 1998: 100)

While *gaut* 'woods' (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' is 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)–(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 et al. 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)   *Spanish:*

     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   **películas**.
        Juan see.PAST .3SG movies
        'Juan saw movies.'

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

To summarize, we have 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 determiner started to lose its deictic force from the 14th century onwards and was thus used more and more generally, the definite determiner had difficulties imposing itself. Apart from Maupas (1607),[9] until *La Grammaire de Port Royal* (1660), no grammar regarded the definite determiner as an element 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 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. Indeed, it is not difficult 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 garding* 'in the garden' is used, a rich context is available because 'garden' has been mentioned twice already. We would

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9.   According to Maupas, articles are required in these contexts:

(i)   a.   j'ai acheté **un** cheval
              'I bought a horse',

       b.   * j'ai acheté cheval

(ii)   a.   prêtez-moi **une** épée
              'lend me a sword'

       b.   * voilà épée

(*Grammaire et syntaxe françoise*, 1607, p. 111).

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 clear cases where bare objects of prepositions can receive a definite interpretation.

Two further examples 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   vïele,   trait   arçon
       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)

Example (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… Cel   ⟨e⟩   terre   fesis,   ⟨e⟩   cele
       God   king of glory   this.one and   earth.SG do.PAST.3SG and   heaven.SG

       mer,   Soleil ⟨e⟩ lune,   tut ço   a   comandé
       sea.SG sun.SG and moon.SG all this have.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…
      thus as   the deer.sg REFL-of.it go.pres.3sg in.front.of the dogs
      '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;
      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)

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 precedes the aforementioned *La Vie de Saint Alexis*), 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 the prototypical use of definite determiners: a discourse referent has been introduced by a noun in the discourse, and the determiner picks 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 purpose of determiners?

(24) Niule cose non la   pouret   omque pleier
      no   thing not her can.past.3sg never give.up.inf
      La **polle**   sempre non amast   lo Deo menestier
      the young.girl.sg always not love.past.3sg the God service
      'Nothing could make the young girl not appreciate the service of 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 the previous couple of verses, as shown in (25). Here, it is clear that the prayers are the king's; they are not just anybody's prayers.

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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.

(25)   Ne   por or   ned   argent ne   paramenz Por
       neither for gold neither silver neither jewels   for

       menace regiel   ne   **preiement**.
       threat of.the.king neither prayers.PL

     'Neither for gold, silver, jewels, neither for the threat or **the** prayers of the king.'
             (*La Cantilene de Sainte Eulalie*, year 878, lines 7–8)

The optionality of determiners is not restricted to definite determiners. Indefinite determiners also appear to be optional in Old French. An indefinite determiner can accompany a nominal, as in (26), or it can be absent, as in (8). The case of (26) is particularly interesting, since *spede* 'spear' the use is not specific in this context. In addition, it is the object of a preposition (a typical environment for determiner drop, as mentioned above). *Spede* has not previously 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 accompanies 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.'
             (*La Cantilene de Sainte Eulalie*, year 878, line 22)

Similarly, in (27) a determiner is used with *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), and thus, on the traditional view, it should be used without a determiner.

(27)   Qued auuisset   de nos Christus mercit Post **la   mort**
       for   have.SUBJ.3SG of us Christ   mercy after the death.SG

       et   a lui   nos laist   venir   Par souue clementia.
       and to him   us let.PRES.3SG come.INF by his   clemency

     'In order for Christ to have mercy on us after death and for him to let us come
     to him thanks to his clemenc.'
             (*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 1983: 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"

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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)

(Brunot & Bruneau 1956: 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 to be 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 given 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 τ and any X: *τ(X), if there is a determiner D such that for any set X in its domain, D(X) = τ(X).   (Chierchia 1998: 360)

The problem that Old French appears to create for Chierchia's classification, however, is that it has lexicalised 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 localise 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.

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

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

> (i) a. $\cap$ $\langle e,t \rangle \rightarrow \langle e \rangle$
>   b. $\cup$ $\langle e \rangle \rightarrow \langle e,t \rangle$
>   c.   ι $\langle e,t \rangle \rightarrow \langle e \rangle$
>   d.   ∃ $\langle e,t \rangle \rightarrow \langle \langle e,t \rangle, t \rangle$

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 Sections 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 *gardin* '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 discuss 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. His 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 value'. The notion of focus that I use encodes new or old information that is emphasized and that becomes important for the speaker and for the addressee. A clear example, from Epstein (1995), is given in (29). 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, Le   plus fort   home
       there fight-PAST.1SG against Corsolt the-emir the more strong man

       de   **la** **crestienté** N'en   **paiennisme** que l'en   peüst trover.
       of   the   Christianity   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 (30). 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 routine 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; thus, a determiner is used (31).

(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 the 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) further illustrates this point. Example (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, realising that he has made a mistake, speaks of the importance of loyalty (the first mention of 'loyalty' made in the text). This is why the nominal 'loyalty' appears with a determiner, while an abstract noun it should normally be bare.

(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 have noticed the expressive role of determiners in Old French. Brunot & Bruneau (1956) note that: "l'article peut avoir une valeur expressive" (p. 218).[14] They give the example in (33), in which determiners are used in an otherwise prototypical environment where determiners 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.

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

(33) Quoi?...nostre avoir avés   vous parti, dont   nous avons   souffert
     what   our   stock have.3PL you   shared of-which we   have.1PL suffered

     <u>les</u> grandes **paines**   et   <u>les</u> grans **travaus,** <u>les</u> **fains**   et   <u>les</u> **sois**
     the big   pains.PL and the big   works.PL the hungers.PL and the thirst

     et   <u>les</u> **frois**   et   <u>les</u> **caus**,   si   l'avés   parti sans   nous?
     and 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 a determiner in Old French can be used to focalise 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 defocalisation (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 <u>**un**</u> **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 <u>**le**</u>   **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.'

(*Aucassin et Nicolette*, early 13th century, IV, 20–28; XII, 5–7, in Epstein 1995: 66–67)

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 (35). 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'. Here, the determiner is 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/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* and *Some dogs are barking,* or *I drank milk* and *I drank some milk*.[15] If we do not account for these examples, they remain a real problem for Chierchia's (1998) Blocking Principle. Luckily, the alternation can be accounted for if blocking is localised. 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 is a discourse function (focus), the other 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 that the grammar appears to always make use of what it has at its disposal: each 'free' form is associated with one meaning.[16] 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.

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

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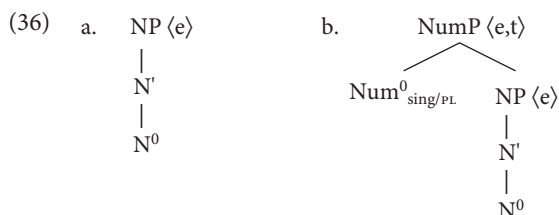
5.   Analysis

My aim in this 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 & Schroten (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 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; and (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 $\langle e \rangle$. 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 is instead to propose that bare nouns denote not $\langle e,t \rangle$, but $\langle e \rangle$ in all languages (Borer 2005; Tonciulescu, this volume). Treating all nouns with $\langle e \rangle$ as their default type allows us to completely do away 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 $\langle e,t \rangle$), nouns do not have to combine with Pred, the special functional projection introducing predicates that Baker postulates. Once NumP is projected, nominals are $\langle e,t \rangle$: 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.[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 ι operator, the covert Generalized Quantifier ∃, and the covert choice function operation. These are necessary because their semantic function is often not overtly spelled 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 aforementioned covert type-shifting operations can apply.

(36)   a. NP ⟨e⟩
           |
           N'
           |
           N^0

       b. NumP ⟨e,t⟩
           /   \
       Num$^0_{sing/PL}$ NP ⟨e⟩
                        |
                        N'
                        |
                        N^0

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 article, 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 put forward is closely related to the work of Déprez (2005), Delfitto & Schroten (1991), and Bouchard (2002, 2003) 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).

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17.   It may in fact be the case that number is simply a stuff divider as in Borer (2005). On this view, all nouns start out as ⟨e⟩ and need to be divided before they can be counted. If the role of number is simply to divide a mass term, then the role of # the category that is above NumP in Borer (2005) will be the category introducing object-level entities rather than NumP. In this article, I assume NumP is the level at which object-denoting elements are introduced, but nothing hinges on this matter.

Let me now go through some concrete examples and give a derivation for each. 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). Example (37a) is repeated from (5).

(37)   a.   **Cocodrille**   est   uns   animaus   a   .iiij.   piez
             crocodile.SG   be.PRES.3SG   a   animal   at   four   feet

             et   de   jaune   color
             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)

       b.   **Taupe**   est   une   diverse   beste
             mole.SG   be.PRES.3SG   a   diverse   animal
             'The mole is a diverse animal.'
                                     (*Li livres dou tresor*, year 1260–1267, CC, *De la Taupe*, p. 252)

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 φ-features, giving us the structure in (38).[18]

(38)   NP ⟨e⟩
        |
        N
        |
        N⁰

For all other cases, NumP projects, spelling out the configuration in (39). Num is associated with uninterpretable φ-features, and an Agree relation is established with the interpretable φ-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⟩.

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

       (i)   Et   sachiez   que **ostour**   sont   de   .iij.   manieres : petit, grant, meien.
             and   know   that vultures   be.PRES.3PL   of   three   kinds   small   big   average
             'Know that vultures come in three kinds: small, big, average.'
              (*Li livres dou tresor*, year 1260–1267, CXLVIII *De toutes manieres de Ostours*. p. 197)

In this case, I assume that NumP is projected, but that the NP is semantically turned back into a kind.

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.

(39)

NumP $\langle e,t \rangle$

Num$^0_{\text{sing/PL}}$ NP $\langle e \rangle$

~~u[φ]~~ |

N'

|

N^0

AGREE   i[φ]
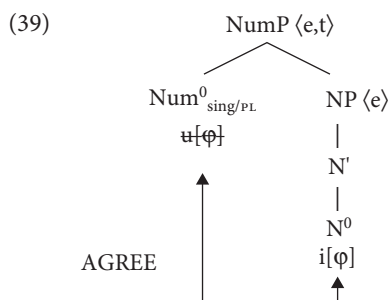
Evidence that nominals in Old French bear interpretable features comes from the fact that the morphology necessary to distinguish between singularity and plurality appeared on the noun. In (40a), the 's' on *chevalier* 'knight' indicates singular, while the absence of that 's' denotes plurality (40b). In Old French, the 's' for the singular was actually pronounced (we know this from rhyming effects).

(40)   *Nominative paradigm:*
    a.   li chevaliers   'the knight'
    b.   li chevalier   'the knights'

Since in the nominative paradigm, *li* could mean either 'the$_{\text{singular}}$' or 'the$_{\text{plural}}$' (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* was used for singular and *les* for plural. The noun also contains overt φ-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.

(41)   *Accusative paradigm:*
    a.   le chevalier   'the knight'
    b.   les chevaliers   'the knights'

I now turn to generics. If the sentence is habitual, as in (7) (see also (4)), the habitual aspect of the sentence functions as the modal operator *Gn* together with the accommodation of a contextual variable C. This is as in Chierchia (1998). Here again, the property that is quantified over is the property of being an instance of the kind that 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 ∃. 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 ?
       have.2PL you   thus purse.SG found
       'So have you found [any] purse?'   (Foulet 1928: 58)

(43)   Se vos volez   ne **chastel**   ne **cité**   Ne **tor**   ne **vile**,
       if you want.PRES.2PL or castle.SG or city.SG or tower.SG or town.SG,

       donjon   ne **fermeté**   Ja vos sera   otroié et graé
       donjon.SG or fortress.SG this you be.FUT.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.PRES.3SG fast   than NE-be.PRES.3SG bird.SG that fly.PRES.3SG
       'He is faster than [a] bird that flies.'
                                         (*La 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 documented in the literature (Carlson 1977, and many others).

(45) a. n   i   remest   **palie**   ne   neul ornement
              not there remain.PAST.3SG tapestry.SG nor none ornament
              'there remained no tapestry nor any ornament.'
                                         (*La Vie de Saint Alexis*, year 1050, line 24)

      b. *It is not the case that there remained a tapestry and an ornament.*

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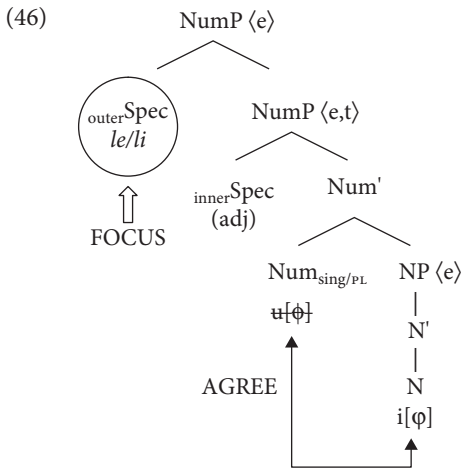   remained any.*

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 ι covert operation can be performed, shifting the property ⟨e,t⟩ back into an entity ⟨e⟩.

Finally, when a nominal is interpreted as a predicate as in (10), NumP is projected and the predicate (i.e., *estes* '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 are accounted for via the introduction of covert operators like ∃ and ι, 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 2006). 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 (46) (there is no morphological evidence for such a head in Old French).

(46)

NumP ⟨e⟩

outerSpec *le/li*

FOCUS

NumP ⟨e,t⟩

innerSpec (adj)

Num′

Num~sing/PL~ u[φ]

NP ⟨e⟩

N′

N i[φ]

AGREE

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).[20] It is my claim that this position in Old French corresponds to the outer specifier of Num^0 which was taken to be a focus position where *le/li* was generated. Although they were originally demonstratives, *le/li* lost their +deictic feature very early (recall the above discussion regarding 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

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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 *afto to vovlio* 'this book' (literally *this the book*) alongside *to vovlio afto* 'this book'. Reinforcers in French such as *ce livre-ci* 'this book' (literally *this book-this*) have also been taken to indicate that there is a low position for demonstratives in the DP (cf. Bernstein 1997).

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 I conclude this section, 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 Latin the difference between *ipse* and *ille* is clear: *ille* has both a distal and anaphoric role, while *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, *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* over a long period of time. This would explain why the optional Old French determiner was tied to focus/emphasis rather than another arbitrary discourse function.

To summarize, I have argued that there is a partial correlation between semantic type and syntactic structure. All nouns start out by denoting ⟨e⟩, and when NumP is projected, nouns denote ⟨e,t⟩. The maximization operator ι is used when a nominal is interpreted as definite and refers back to an entity already introduced in the discourse, while the Generalized Quantifier ∃ corresponds to indefinite interpretations of nominals. An Agree relation is instantiated between the noun, which carries interpretable 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 is why bare nouns disappeared from the grammar of Old French and why determiners became obligatory in the modern variety of the language. I 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 on object shift). The need for the outer specifier of *v*, which is needed for moving the shifted object, would disappear. For the same reasons, the outer specifier position in the Old French nominal domain became unneeded 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 & Roussou (2003). I argue that the change from demonstrative to definite determiner 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 argue, was a direct consequence of the change in morphology on the noun. The key fact is that while in Old French number could appear on the noun and sometimes on the determiner (as discussed in Section 5), in Modern French number appears only on the determiner: 'le' [lə] versus 'les' [le]. In *les pommes* 'the apples', the 's' on *pommes* cannot be pronounced.[21] The disappearance of this final 's' dates back to 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 φ-features. However, on this assumption, the question that immediately arises is how the uninterpretable φ-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 φ-features of Num. The determiners from the accusative paradigm, *le/les,* were chosen rather than $li_{singular}$ and $li_{plural,}$ 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 (Rezac 2003).

I propose that the introduction of the relevant determiners in order to satisfy the uninterpretable φ-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 recalcitrant 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 φ-features on Num starts with the complement of Num, but

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21.   Several authors who have noticed this before have 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).

because there is no match in the complement (no φ-features are introduced by the nominal in Modern French), the structure grows to include a higher specifier. The structure in (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)   a.

NumP ⟨e,t⟩

Num^0$_{sing/PL}$ NP ⟨e⟩
u̶[̶φ̶]̶ |
                   N'
                   |
                   N

Leads to crash-
No φ-features

⇒   b.

NumP ⟨e⟩

$_{outer}$Spec   NumP ⟨e,t⟩
le/la/les
i[φ] $_{inner}$Spec   Num'
         (adj)

         Num^0$_{sing/PL}$ NP ⟨e⟩
         u̶[̶φ̶]̶ |
                            N'
                            |
                            N
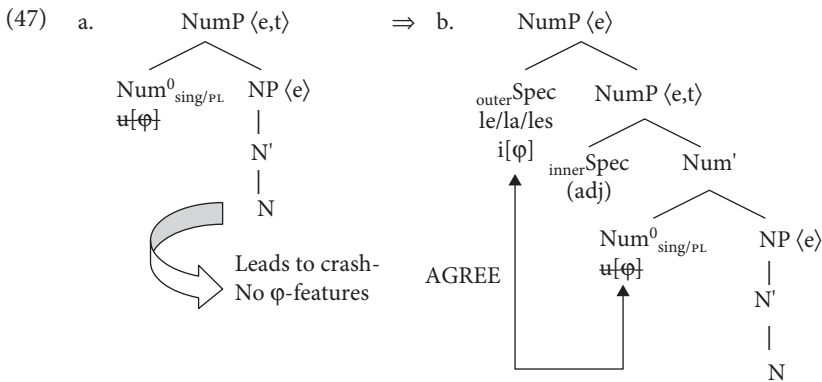
AGREE

The shift in agreement from nominals to determiners in Modern French created a situation where determiners became expletives everywhere, that is, the mere repository of interpretable φ-features (Lyons 1999). This explains why in Modern French, determiners 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 lexicalised 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' and *avoir envie* 'to feel like').

(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 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.'   'The biggest house.'

       e.   J'ai   honte.   e'. J'ai   **la** honte.
            I-have shame   I-have the shame
            'I am ashamed.'   '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. D^0 is the locus of definiteness (hence, the feature +def under D^0).[22] Thus, the determiner 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 (e.g., 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 D^0. Since French does not have affixal determiners, however, the head D^0 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

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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; Christophersen 1939). Not all languages have definite determiners that share these two features (Gillon, this volume) and not all optional determiners denote focus (Paul, this volume). Uniqueness implies there is only one referent for a particular DP (Russell 1905).
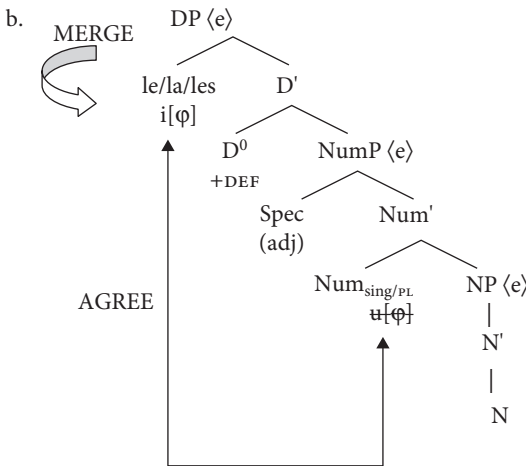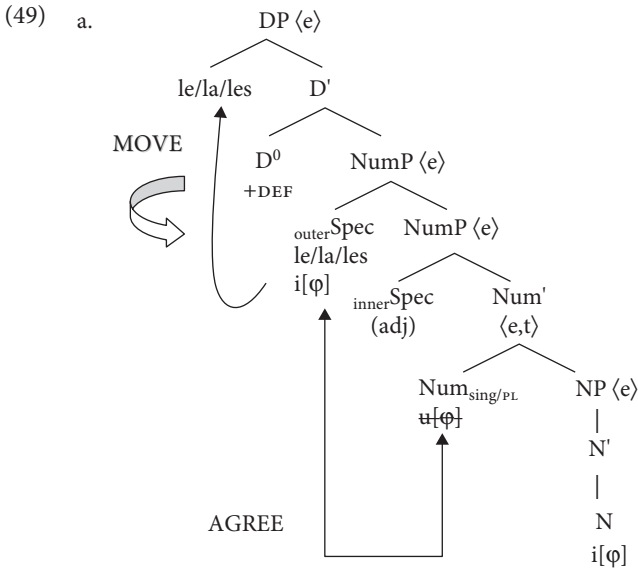
23.   A reviewer questions the motivation behind the treatment of determiners in Modern French as XPs sitting in specifiers, on the asumption that Modern French determiners are clitics. I think the assumption that Modern French determiners are clitics is mistaken. Although it appears that French determiners 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 person'), 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)   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)

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]

(49)   a.

DP ⟨e⟩
├── le/la/les
└── D'
     ├── D⁰ +DEF
     └── NumP ⟨e⟩
          ├── outerSpec le/la/les i[φ]
          └── NumP ⟨e⟩
               ├── innerSpec (adj)
               └── Num' ⟨e,t⟩
                    ├── Num_sing/PL u[φ]
                    └── NP ⟨e⟩
                         └── N'
                              └── N i[φ]

MOVE

AGREE

b.   MERGE

DP ⟨e⟩
├── le/la/les i[φ]
└── D'
     ├── D⁰ +DEF
     └── NumP ⟨e⟩
          ├── Spec (adj)
          └── Num'
               ├── Num_sing/PL u[φ]
               └── NP ⟨e⟩
                    └── N'
                         └── N

AGREE

Whereas Lyons (1999) correlates the obligatory insertion of French determiners to the earlier restructuring of the pronominal system of Latin, and 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 (Lyons 1999). The indefinite determiner *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.

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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)

(50) a.   NumP $\langle e,t\rangle$ b.   CardP $\langle\langle e,t\rangle, t\rangle$ $\exists$
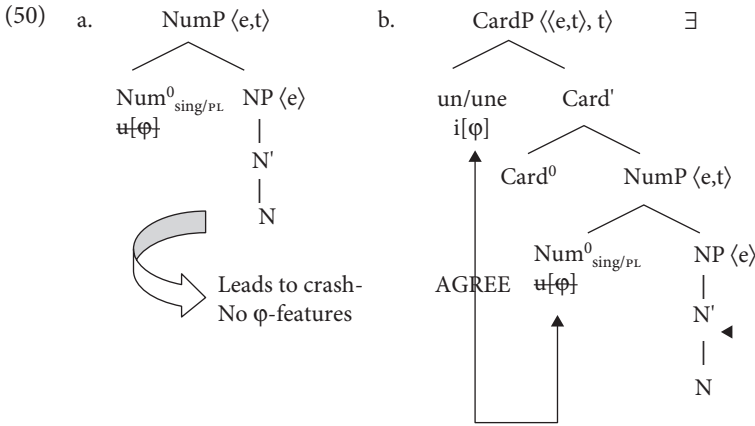
To summarize, it was argued that because nominals in Old French lost their (overt) interpretable φ-features and because determiners like *le/la/les* happened to have such features, the uninterpretable φ-features associated with Num were no longer satisfied by the noun, but by the determiner. Determiners 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 $\langle e\rangle$ at the NP level. NumP introduces a predicate and denotes $\langle e,t\rangle$. CardP corresponds to $\langle\langle e,t\rangle, t\rangle$ (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 ι.

Table 1. Summary of types for the nominal domain

Projection	semantic type	description
DP	$\langle e\rangle$	Definite operator
CardP	$\langle\langle e,t\rangle, t\rangle$	Existential quantifier
NumP	$\langle e,t\rangle$	Predicate
NP	$\langle e\rangle$	Entity

7.   Conclusion

I have argued that all nouns in Old French started out as ⟨e⟩, but that certain covert type-shifting operations—e.g., ι and ∃—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. I suggested that the use of determiners was related to either the encoding of focus or the satisfaction of a PF constraint, in addition to definiteness. 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 their interpretable φ-features, a determiner with the relevant interpretable φ-features needed to be inserted in the structure so that the uninterpretable φ-features of Num^0 could be satisfied.

Acknowledgements

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Charroi de Nîmes (12th century)
Le Chevalier à la Charrette (c. 1180)
Lai de Narcisse (1170)
Li livres dou tresor (1260–1267)
La vie de Saint Alexis (1050)
Aucassin et Nicolette (early 13th century)
L'âtre périlleux, roman de la Table Ronde (1268)
La Chanson de Rolland (1080)

Enéas (1150)
Yvain, Le Chevalier au Lion (1179)
La Cantilene de Sainte Eulalie (878)
Eracle (1180)
La Conquête de Constantinople (c. 1212)
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