

# The Values of the Vernacular

Essays in Medieval Romance Languages  
and Literatures in Dialogue with Simon Gaunt



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Prima edizione: luglio 2025  
ISBN 979-12-5469-375-9 (carta)  
ISBN 979-12-5701-012-6 (ebook)  
DOI 10.52056/9791257010126

This volume is published thanks to contributions from the French Section of the University of Cambridge, King's College London, Scuola Superiore Meridionale (Naples), Université de Caen Normandie, and Université Libre de Bruxelles.

THE VALUES

of the vernacular : essays in medieval Romance languages and literatures in dialogue with Simon Gaunt / edited by Hannah Morcos ... [et al.] - Roma : Viella, 2025. - 452 p. : ill. ; 24 cm. - (I libri di Viella ; 544)

Testi in italiano, catalano, spagnolo, francese, tedesco o inglese.

Indici dei manoscritti e dei nomi: p. [439]-452.

ISBN 979-12-5469-375-9

eISBN 979-12-5701-012-6

1. Filologia romanza - Scritti in onore I. Morcos, Hannah II. Gaunt, Simon  
840.09 (DDC WebDewey) Scheda bibliografica: Biblioteca Fondazione Bruno Kessler



**viella**

*libreria editrice*

via delle Alpi, 32

I-00198 ROMA

tel. 06 84 17 758

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[www.viella.it](http://www.viella.it)

ADAM LEDGEWAY

## The Old French Case System: Evidence from Franco-Italian\*

### 1. Introduction

A hallmark of much of Gaunt's later work was to criticize the desire within modern scholarship to read medieval literary production in terms of the largely restrictive monolingual practices that narrowly characterize post-medieval literary culture in relation to national literatures.<sup>1</sup> Within this context, hybridized literary languages have a significant role to play in developing a less Franco-centric view of Francophone medieval textual culture which is often the product of complex and still poorly understood multilingual settings and interactions. A particularly revealing case in this respect is the transmission, translation, reworking and, indeed, even original production of French texts in medieval Italy which, to varying degrees, seem to mix French with Italo-Romance.<sup>2</sup> This heterogeneous body of literary texts, typically referred to as "Franco-Italian",<sup>3</sup> thus reminds us that in the medieval period French was widely used outside France, and not just in northern Europe but also across the Mediterranean, as a supralocal language rather than as a (proto-)national language.<sup>4</sup> As a consequence, the familiar distinctions and

\* I wish to thank Nicola Morato, J.C. Smith and Simone Ventura for their most valuable comments and suggestions on a first draft of the present article. Any remaining errors are my sole responsibility.

1. See S. Gaunt, *Linguistic difference, the philology of romance and the romance of philology*, in *A Sea of Languages: Rethinking the Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History*, ed. by S. Akbari, K. Mallette, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2013, pp. 43-61, and Id., *Marco Polo's Le Devisement du Monde: Narrative Voice, Language and Diversity*, Cambridge, D.S. Brewer, 2013.

2. P. Wunderli, *Franko-Italienisch: ein sprach- und literaturgeschichtliches Kuriosum*, in «Vox Romanica», 62 (2003), pp. 1-27, p. 1.

3. For recent overviews see M. Barbato, *Il franco-italiano: storia e teoria*, in «Medioevo Romanzo», 39 (2015), pp. 22-51, F. Zinelli, *Espaces franco-italiens: les italianismes du français-médiéval*, in *La Régionalité lexicale du français au Moyen Âge*, Volume thématique issu du colloque de Zurich (7-8 sept. 2015), organisé sous le patronage de la Société de Linguistique Romane, éd par M. Glessgen et D. Trotter, Strasbourg, ÉliPhi, 2016, pp. 207-268; Id., *Francese d'Italia e francese di Toscana. Tradizioni manoscritte e processi di vernacolizzazione*, in *Toscana bilingue (1260 ca.-1430 ca.). Per una storia sociale del tradurre medievale*, a cura di S. Bischetti, M. Lodo- ne, C. Lorenzi, e A. Montefusco, Berlin, de Gruyter, 2021, pp. 59-104.

4. Gaunt, *Linguistic difference*, p. 45; Id., *French literature abroad: towards an alternative history of French literature*, in «Interfaces», 1 (2015), pp. 25-61, p. 59.

boundaries between different languages and dialects that linguists and philologists readily apply to different areas and texts in the cultivated and literate communities of modern Europe do not necessarily apply in the past in the same way.<sup>5</sup> By the same token, Gaunt argues that notions such as grammatical correctness are not criteria that would have occurred to Italian copyists or authors of texts in French outside France at a time when there was no form of “standard” French against which they could be measured.<sup>6</sup> Against this backdrop, it would therefore be erroneous to dismiss the language of these Franco-Italian texts – as so often has been the case in textual criticism in the past – as “corrupt” or “incompetent” forms of French.<sup>7</sup> Rather, the French language of these texts should be considered on its own terms as forming part of an internally consistent system.

The aim of this contribution is therefore to consider and compare one particular linguistic aspect of Franco-Italian, namely the Old French case system, in relation to three representative textual samples. Two of these are texts, our understanding and interpretation of which have been greatly enhanced by Gaunt’s own work, namely *Le Devisement dou monde* (Paris, BnF, fr. 1116; henceforth *DM*),<sup>8</sup> an original French text produced in 1298 by Marco Polo in conjunction with Rustichello da Pisa in Genova,<sup>9</sup> and the earliest manuscript (London, BL, Royal 20 D I) – and most probably the extant archetype<sup>10</sup> – of the so-called second redaction, a substantially revised version, of the *Histoire ancienne jusqu’à César* (henceforth *HA*) made in Naples around 1337-38.<sup>11</sup> The third text is an

5. Gaunt, *Marco Polo’s Le Devisement du Monde*, p. 93

6. *Ibidem*; see also S. Gaunt, *La “contaminazione” del testo medievale: l’esempio del Devisement dou Monde*, in «Critica del testo», XVII (2014), 3, pp. 9-23, p. 10. As pointed out by J.C. Smith (p.c.), it is not clear to what extent grammatical correctness was an issue even in medieval France, inasmuch as the variety of the Île de France, which gradually became the norm, was associated more with prestige rather than “correctness”, especially since Francien itself contained a fair amount of variation. In short, prescriptive grammar in France is a post-medieval invention.

7. See A. Varvaro, *Critica dei testi classica e romanza. Problemi comuni e esperienze diverse*, in Id. *Identità linguistiche e letterarie nell’Europa romanza*, Roma, Salerno Editrice, 2004 [1970], pp. 567-612; P. Wunderli, “Interferenze” in franco-italiano. L’esempio dell’*Aquilon de Bavière*, in «Vox Romanica», 58 (1999), pp. 124-148, p. 125; F. Zinelli, *Il francese di Martin da Canal*, in *Francofonie medievali. Lingue e letterature gallo-romanze fuori di Francia (sec. XII-XV)*, a cura di A.M. Babbi e C. Concina, Verona, Fiorini, 2016, pp. 1-66, p. 2; Id., *De la France-Italie à l’Italo-France (ou de l’histoire littéraire comme délocalisation)*, in *Transfert culture franco-italiano au Moyen Âge / Trasferimenti culturali italo francesi*, études réunies par R. Antonelli, J. Ducos, C. Galderisi, A. Punzi, Tunouht, Brepols, 2020, pp. 169-199, pp. 173 ff.

8. Marco Polo, *Le Devisement dou monde*, I, *Testo*, a cura di M. Eusebi, Venezia, Edizioni Ca’ Foscari, 2018.

9. See Gaunt, *Marco Polo’s Le Devisement du Monde*.

10. L. Barbieri, *La solitude d’un manuscrit et l’histoire d’un texte: la deuxième rédaction de l’Histoire ancienne jusqu’à César*, in «Romania», 138 (2020), pp. 39-97.

11. *The Histoire ancienne jusqu’à César: A Digital Edition*, ed. by H. Morcos, S. Gaunt, S. Ventura, M.T. Rachetta, H. Ravenhall, N. Romanova and L. Barbieri, technical ed. by G. Noël, P. Caton, G. Ferraro and M. Husar, available at: <<http://www.tvof.ac.uk/textviewer/>> (accessed: 23 December 2023); L. Barbieri, *La versione “angioina” dell’Histoire ancienne jusqu’à César. Napoli crocevia tra cultura francese e Oriente latino*, in «Francigena», 5 (2019), pp. 1-26; S. Gaunt, *Texte*

original translation of Amato da Montecassino's late eleventh-century *Historia Normannorum* generally known as *L'Ystoire de li Normant* (ms. Paris, BnF, fr. 688),<sup>12</sup> commissioned and produced in Campania, southern Italy, by an unknown translator in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>13</sup> These three case studies which involve different parameters of variation in terms of textual typology (original composition vs copy with substantial revision vs original translation), diachrony (late 13<sup>th</sup> vs early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries), diatopy (north-centre – Genoa, Venice, Pisa – vs south) and diastraty (diversity of intended readerships) will be explored to determine the extent to which different attestations of Franco-Italian can be said to share similar linguistic features, how these, in turn, may differ from textual varieties of French produced within the medieval kingdom of France, and what, if anything, the Franco-Italian evidence might teach us about the distribution, use and eventual decline of the old Gallo-Romance case system.<sup>14</sup>

*et/ou manuscript? A propos de l'Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César*, in *En français hors de France: Textes, livres, collections du Moyen Âge*, éd par F. Zinelli et S. Lefèvre, Paris, Éditions de Linguistique et de Philologie, 2021, pp. 1-23.

12. V. de Bartholomaeis, *Storia de' Normanni di Amato di Montecassino volgarizzata in antico francese*, Roma, Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo, 1935.

13. C. Bougy, *La langue improbable de l'Ystoire de li Normant (Italie du sud, XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle), traduction en français de l'Historia Normannorum d'Aimé du Mont Cassin*, in «Annales de Normandie», 55 (2005), pp. 77-85, p. 78; C. Lee, *Letteratura franco-italiana nella Napoli angioina?*, in «Francigena», 1 (2015), pp. 83-108, pp. 95-96. By contrast, P. Wunderli and G. Holtus, *Zum Verhältnis von Oralität und Schriftlichkeit im Franko-Italienischen*, in *Testi, cotesti e contesti del franco-italiano*, Atti del 1<sup>o</sup> simposio franco-italiano (Bad Homburg, 13-16 aprile 1987) in memoriam Alberto Limentani, ed. G. Holtus, H. Krauss and P. Wunderli, Berlin-Boston, de Gruyter, 1989, p. 3, adopt a narrower interpretation of the term Franco-Italian, restricting it to the literary production of northern Italy (see also Wunderli, *Franko-Italienisch*, p. 3). This narrow view is rightly criticized by Lee, *Letteratura franco-italiana*, pp. 84, 100, who argues that Naples, and consequently Campania and the entire Kingdom of Naples, occupies a privileged position within the Franco-Italian literary canon as a major centre of French literary production under Angevin rule, recalling that French was also a spoken language among the élite of this area for almost 400 years between the arrival of the Normans at the beginning of the second millennium and the fall of the Angevin dynasty during the course of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. See also F. Zinelli, «*je qui li livre escrive de letre en vulgal*»: *scrivere in francese a Napoli in età angioina*, in *Boccaccio angioino. Materiali per la storia culturale di Napoli nel Trecento*, a cura di G. Alfano, T. D'Urso e A. Perriccioli Saggese, Brussels, Peter Lang, 2012, pp. 149-173; Id., *Espaces franco-italiens*, pp. 240-241; Id., *Il francese di Napoli*, in *Antologia del francese d'Italia XII-XV secolo*, a cura di F. Gambino e A. Beretta, Bologna, Pàtron, 2023, pp. 401-415.

14. See J.-P. Chambon, *La déclinaison en ancien occitan, ou: comment s'en débarrasser?: Une réanalyse descriptive non orthodoxe de la flexion substantivale*, in «Revue de linguistique romane», 67 (2003), pp. 343-363; U. Detges, «*How useful is case morphology?*». *The loss of the old French two-case system within a theory of preferred argument structure*, in *The Role of Semantic, Pragmatic, and Discourse Factors in the Development of Case*, ed. by J. Barðdal and Sh. Chelliah, Amsterdam, Benjamins, 2008, pp. 93-120; L. Schøsler, *How useful is case morphology? From Latin to French*, in *Latin tardif, français ancien. Continuités et ruptures*, éd par A. Carlier et C. Guillot-Barbance, Berlin-Boston, de Gruyter, 2018, pp. 127-170; Ead., *Les catégories nominales: noms, adjectifs et participes*, in *Grande grammaire historique du français*, éd par C. Marchello-Nizia, B. Combettes, S. Prévost et T. Scheer, Berlin, de Gruyter, 2020, I, pp. 632-664.

## 2. Overview of Old French case system

A well-known fact of early Gallo-Romance varieties, especially those spoken in northern and eastern regions,<sup>15</sup> is that they retain to varying degrees, and especially in masculine forms of the nominal declension, a formal binary case distinction between the nominative (subsuming vocative functions) and the oblique, the so-called *cas sujet* and *cas régime*, respectively. Consequently, traditional textbook treatments provide Old French paradigms like those in Table 1.<sup>16</sup>

Table 1: Paradigms of Old French case system

	Class 1		Class 2		Class 3a		Class 3b	
	WALL(S)		FATHER(S)		BARON(S)		EMPEROR(S)	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Nominative	<i>murs</i>	<i>mur</i>	<i>pere</i>	<i>pere</i>	<i>ber</i>	<i>baron</i>	<i>emperere</i>	<i>emperëör</i>
Oblique	<i>mur</i>	<i>murs</i>	<i>pere</i>	<i>peres</i>	<i>baron</i>	<i>barons</i>	<i>emperëör</i>	<i>emperëörs</i>

Taken in the abstract, the forms illustrated in Table 1 reveal a somewhat impoverished inflectional system. Most masculine nouns (and adjectives), which continue the Latin second declension (henceforth Class 1), mark a binary formal distinction between a bare stem (e.g. *mur*) shared by the oblique singular (< MUR(UM)) and nominative plural (< MUR(I)) and a sigmatic form (e.g. *murs*) shared by the nominative singular (< MUR(U)S) and the oblique plural (< MUR(O)S). Such superficial syncretism is, however, usually resolved by accompanying determiners such as the definite article which also mark case, albeit with a loss of number distinction in the nominative, viz. nom. *li murs/mur* ‘the wall/s’ vs obl.sg/pl. *le/s (/lo(u)s) mur/s* ‘the wall/s’. Class 2 nouns (and adjectives), which continue masculine parasyllabic forms from the Latin third declension, did not originally display a case distinction, alternating between a singular bare stem (e.g. *pere* < PATER / PATRE(M)) and a plural sigmatic form (e.g. *peres* > PATRES). By analogy with Class 1 nouns (and adjectives) final *-s* in the nominative plural was quickly jettisoned, giving rise to the binary formal opposition exemplified in Table 1, although analogy with Class 1

15. L. Schøsler, *La déclinaison bicasuelle de l'ancien français*, Odense, Odense University Press, 1984, Chapter 8; Ead., *How useful is case morphology?*, p. 158; Ead., *Les catégories nominales*, pp. 645, 649; G. Raynaud de Lage, G. Hasenohr, *Introduction à l'ancien français*, Paris, SEDES, 1990, p. 27.

16. See G. Price, *The French Language: Present and Past*, London, Grant & Cutler, 1984, pp. 93-105; Raynaud de Lage, Hasenohr, *Introduction à l'ancien français*, pp. 17-24, 35-37, 65-68. Instructive in this respect is Bédier's quip that «Si l'on met à part les plus anciens textes, ceux du IX<sup>e</sup> et du X<sup>e</sup> siècle, comme *Sainte Eulalie* ou *Saint Léger*, les règles de la déclinaison n'apparaissent dans toute leur pureté que dans les grammaires modernes de l'ancien français» (*La Chanson de Roland*, commentée par J. Bédier, Paris, Piazza, 1927, p. 248).

may often extend the sigmatic form to the nominative singular (viz. *pere(s)*)<sup>17</sup> in accordance with a tendency also occasionally attested with feminine third-declension nouns (e.g. nom.sg. *flor(s)* ‘flower’ < FLORE(M)). This pattern of a marked nominative singular is also reinforced by imparisyllabic nouns (and adjectives) from the Latin third declension which display a ternary formal distinction through a combination of stem allomorphy (henceforth Class 3a) and/or stress placement (henceforth Class 3b). Consequently, in this class a marked nominative singular (e.g. *ber* < BÁRO, *emperére* < IMPERÁTOR), itself frequently further marked by an analogical *-s* (viz. *ber(s)*, *emperére(s)*),<sup>18</sup> contrasts with a syncretic oblique singular (e.g. *barón* < BARÓN(EM), *emperëör* < IMPERATÓR(EM)) and analogical nominative plural form (e.g. *barón* < *baróns* < BARÓN(E)S, *emperëör* < *emperëórs* < IMPERATÓR(E)S) on the one hand and a sigmatic oblique plural (e.g. *baróns* < BARÓN(E)S, *emperëórs* < IMPERATÓR(E)S) on the other (see also exceptional nom.fsg. *suer* < SÓR(OR) ‘sister’ vs obl.fsg. *serór* < SORÓR(EM) vs fpl. *serórs* < SORÓR(E)S).

In sum, the following generalizations can be made about the Old French case system: (i) it is predominantly limited to the masculine gender; (ii) it involves a marked nominative singular (albeit optionally in Class 2) which may correspond to the oblique plural (Class 1, and optionally Class 2); (iii) the oblique plural is always transparently built on the corresponding oblique singular through adjunction of final *-s* (see also case-neutral feminines such as *porte/-s* ‘door/-s’);<sup>19</sup> and (iv) it is not found in masculine nouns and adjectives ending in *-s*, whether original neuters (e.g. COR(PU)S > *cors* ‘body’) or masculines (e.g. NAS(UM) > *nas* ‘nose’), which are invariably failing to inflect for number, gender or case.

### 3. Methodology

Our investigation is based on an examination of parallel samples of masculine nominals according to three basic syntactic functions: (i) subject (*a priori* associated with the morphological forms traditionally labelled *cas sujet*) and, within the oblique (*a priori* associated with the morphological forms traditionally labelled *cas régime*), (ii) object (*régime direct*), including prepositional dative and genitive, and (iii) complement of preposition (*régime prépositionnel*). For each of these three syntactic functions the first 100 occurrences of masculine singular and first 100 occurrences of masculine plural nominals were extracted, amounting to 600 tokens (300 for each of singular and plural) for each of the three texts. Tokens involving nominals which *a priori* are undifferentiated for the nominative-oblique distinction (e.g. *cors* ‘body/bodies’ and many proper names), and hence not possible exponents of case distinctions (and therefore not glossed for case in our examples),<sup>20</sup> were not

17. See Schösler, *Les catégories nominales*, p. 648.

18. See *ibidem*.

19. Price, *The French Language*, p. 97.

20. In the examples below we do not gloss nominal forms that are not directly relevant to the discussion.

included. For example, a foreign proper name such as *Argon* ‘Arghun’ in (1) may function both as subject and object (viz. genitive) and hence is unable to tell us anything about the robustness or otherwise of the case system.

- 1 **Argon** prist trois sez baronç / Caçan, le filz **Argon**<sup>21</sup>  
 Arghun took.3SG three his barons Ghazan the.OBL.SG son Arghun  
 ‘Arghun took three of his men / Ghazan, the son of Arghun’

By contrast, when such nominals co-occur with a case-inflecting modifier (determiner, quantifier, adjective or nominal predicate), either within the NP or elsewhere in the clause, they are included in our sample. For instance, in (2a) both the head noun *baçaler* and pronominal adjective *jeune* occur in what appear to be oblique forms (see nom. *jeunes baçalers*) but they co-occur with the distinctive nominative article *li*. By contrast, in (2b) where the invariant *cors* occurs with the oblique form of the definite article *le* rather than the expected *li*, nominative singular is marked through final *-s* on the passive participle *remués*. By the same token, invariant *Thodosius* in (2c) and oblique marked *le baron tartar* (see nom. *li berre(s) tartars*) in (2d) are coreferential with the nominative marked *emperere* and *amalaides*, respectively.<sup>22</sup> All such examples, although showing mixed or incoherent marking for case, are included in our sample alongside more consistent examples such as (2e), in which both the determiner and nominal forms of the subject and its coreferential predicative adjectives are all unambiguously marked nominative.

- 2 a **Li** **jeune** **baçaler** fait sa enbasee  
 the.NOM young.OBL.SG adolescent.OBL.SG do.3SG his mission  
 ‘The young adolescent carries out his duty.’
- b **le** **cors** fu **remués** a nostre grant pesance  
 the.OBL.SG body was.3 removed.NOM.SG to our great grief  
 ‘the body was moved to our great sadness’
- c Quant Thodosius estoit **emperere** de Roume  
 when Theodosius was.3 emperor.NOM.SG of Rome  
 ‘When Theodosius was emperor of Rome’
- d **le** **baron** **tartar** [...] chei **amalaides**  
 the.OBL.SG lord.OBL.SG Tartar.OBL.SG [...] fell.3SG ill.NOM.SG  
 ‘the Tartar lord [...] fell ill’
- e **li** **enfes** estoit si **biaus** et **amiables**<sup>23</sup>  
 the.NOM child.NOM.SG was.3 so beautiful.NOM.SG and kind.NOM.SG  
 ‘the child was so beautiful and kind’

21. *DM* XVII.5/XVIII.8.

22. See also G. Ineichen, *La mescolanza delle forme linguistiche nel Milione di Marco Polo*, in *Testi, cotesti e contesti del franco-italiano*, pp. 65-74, p. 68.

23. 2a (*DM* XV.5); 2b (*HA* 530.25); 2c (*HA* 526.19); 2d (*DM* VIII.4); 2e (*HA* 526.4).

#### 4. Preliminary results

In Tables 2-4 below we provide basic figures for the distribution of case forms according to each of the three syntactic functions in each of the three texts where, as we shall see, even the most cursory of comparisons of the data reveals some significant differences in the case systems of the three texts. The label “+Nom” indicates the presence of at least one distinct marker of nominative in relation to a given nominal which may variously surface on noun, determiner, adjective, participle or nominal predicate. Typically, this involves in the singular and plural the respective presence and absence of final inflectional *-s* (e.g. *mur-s* vs *mur-Ø*) and/or a distinct singular nominative stem (e.g. *berre(-s)* vs *baron-Ø*), as well as through distinct nominative forms of the determiner or quantifier (e.g. *li* ‘the’). By the same token, the label “+Obl” indicates a nominal form or string in which there is at least one distinctive marker of oblique, variously involving in the singular and plural the absence and presence of final *-s* (e.g. *mur-Ø*, *mur-s*), distinctive stem allomorphy (e.g. *baron(s)*) and forms of determiners and quantifiers (e.g. *le/s* ‘the.OBL.SG/PL’).<sup>24</sup>

##### 4.1. Histoire ancienne

The data for the *Histoire ancienne* (paragraphs §§ 525-553.16 from the *Eneas* section) are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of case forms in *Histoire ancienne*

	Subject Function		Oblique Functions			
			Direct Object		Prepositional Object	
	+Nom	+Obl	+Nom	+Obl	+Nom	+Obl
Sg	92	8	–	100	–	100
Pl	96	4	–	100	1	99

It is immediately clear from the figures in Table 2 that the *Histoire ancienne* preserves a remarkably robust case system in which nominative (3a) and oblique forms (3b-c) are distributed almost entirely in accordance with textbook descriptions (see Table 1),<sup>25</sup> the latter not only in direct object functions,

24. Here and throughout we use final *-s* as an archigrapheme for the allographs *-s* [s, z, ts] and *-z* [z, ts].

25. As suggested by N. Morato (p.c.), it would be instructive to compare the results of the *Histoire ancienne* with a similar examination of the distribution of case forms in the manuscripts of the *Roman de Méliadus* (L1 [= BL Add. 1228]; see *Il Ciclo di Guiron le Courtois. Romanzi in prosa del secolo XIII*, ed. critica dir. da L. Leonardi e R. Trachsler, I, *Roman de Meliadus. Parte prima*, a cura di L. Cadioli e S. Lecomte, Firenze, SISMEL – Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2021) and the *Statuti*

but also in prepositional contexts where the absence of final *-s* in just one plural example (4a) probably finds a phonological explanation in the simplification of the consonantal cluster [rfs] > [rf] given the tendency towards maintenance and generalization of final *-[f]* in the lexeme *cerf* ‘deer’ in all positions,<sup>26</sup> witness the mixed example (4b).<sup>27</sup>

3 a Quant **li** **empereres** **Valentins** sot que [...] / **il**  
 when the.NOM emperor.NOM.SG Valentin.NOM.SG knew.3SG that they.NOM

*dell’Ordine del Nodo* (Paris, BnF, fr. 4274; see G. Palumbo, *Stratigrafia linguistica e testimone unico: il “francese di Napoli” nel ms. BnF, fr. 4274*, in *Innovazione linguistica e storia della tradizione. Casi di studio romanzi medievali*, a cura di S. Resconi, D. Battagliola e S. De Santis, Milano-Udine, Mimesis, 2020, pp. 305-324), both composed some 20-30 years later than the *Histoire ancienne* but destined like the former for a learned Francophone readership. Although this task lies outside the scope of the present article, preliminary observations by Palumbo (*ibidem*, p. 310), and Cadioli and Lecomte (*Il Ciclo di Guiron le Courtois*, p. 89), would suggest a less robust formal opposition between nominative and oblique forms in both manuscripts, with only sporadic survival of nominative singular *-s* and not infrequent aberrations from the expected patterns. Of course, a systematic examination of the evidence, especially the apparent aberrations, is required to establish whether there is some regularity to the observed patterns. For instance, a number of the cases cited by Cadioli and Lecomte (*ibidem*) as involving the erroneous extension of *-s* involve unaccusative predicates which, as we shall see in more detail below, are characterized by surface subjects which, at an underlying level, function to all intents and purposes as complements. Consequently, final *-s* with the masculine plural subjects *chevaliers* in examples (a-b) with the unaccusative predicates *estoient* ‘be’ and *gisent* ‘lie’ can be understood as a reflex of the fact that, underlyingly, they are complements which, in the plural, are canonically marked by final *-s*. A different explanation is available in the case of the appearance of *-s* on singular *roi-* in (c) where it can be understood to reflect its semantic function as the subject of the unaccusative *venir* ‘come’, rather than its grammatical function as the object of the complex perception predicate SEE + COME.

a li dui chevaliers estoient si cruelment entrebatuz (*RdM* 76.1)  
 the.NOM two.NOM knight.OBL.PL be.PST.IPFV.3PL so cruelly fight.PTCP.OBL.PL  
 ‘both knights had fought so cruelly with each other’

b Illuec gisent une grant piece li chevaliers (*RdM* 76.2)  
 here.in lie.3PL a big piece the.NOM knight.OBL.PL  
 ‘The knights lie there for a while’

c Quant il voient entr’ els venir le rois Artus (*RdM* 323.4)  
 when they see.3PL among them come.INF the.OBL.SG king.NOM.SG Arthur.NOM  
 ‘When they see King Arthur come among them’

Although an in-depth examination of the relevant evidence is required, examples like these highlight the need to subject apparent aberrations to detailed careful analysis which often can reveal systematic regularities to otherwise irregular surface patterns.

26. See Price, *The French Language*, p. 48.

27. On the opposite tendency [rfs] > [rs] in, for example, *serf* ‘servant.OBL.SG/NOM.PL’ vs *sers* ‘servant.NOM.SG/OBL.PL’, see Price, *The French Language*, pp. 104-105, and H., Jacobs, *Évolutions prosodiques*, in *Grande grammaire historique du français*, I, 2020, pp. 462-472, pp. 469-470. Note furthermore that the plural reading of *cerf* is licensed in both examples in (4) by its co-occurrence with the collective noun *conpengine* in the first case and the oblique plural articulated preposition *as* in the second.

- furent **venu** devant Dido  
 were.3PL come.NOM.PL before Dido  
 ‘When emperor Valentin discovered that [...] / they had come before Dido’
- b ele n’ avoit **baron** ne **fil** / les dames ploroient  
 she NEG had.3SG baron.OBL.SG nor son.OBL.SG the ladies cried.3PL  
 leur **amis** et lor **enfans**  
 their friend.OBL.PL and their children.OBL.PL  
 ‘she had neither husband nor son / the ladies were crying for their friends and children’
- c ses nes estoient **au port** / vers **les murs**<sup>28</sup>  
 his ships were.3PL at.the.OBL.SG port.OBL.SG towards the.OBL.PL wall.OBL.PL  
 ‘his ships were in the port / towards the walls’
- 4 a une grant compengnie de **cerf**  
 a big company of deer  
 ‘a large herd of deer’
- b si trest **as** **cerf**<sup>29</sup>  
 thus aimed.3SG at.the.OBL.PL deer  
 ‘and he aimed at the deer’

In subject function, by contrast, there is some evidence of limited weakening of nominative marking. Of the 8 exceptions in the singular 3 involve proper names (*Saint Jehan* ‘Saint Jean (= toponym)’ (525.12), *Palladion* ‘Palladion (= statue of Pallas)’ (530.24) and *Hector* (528.8)), a class of nominals which is independently known to show a tendency towards fossilization of form irrespective of case function.<sup>30</sup> There are no other occurrences of the first of these in the manuscript, whether in subject or object function, but the expected nominative form *Sainz Johans (de Salogres)* does occur in another section (Assyrian Kings) of the Paris, BnF, fr. 20125 manuscript (647.22). Similarly, *Palladion* (in conjunction with the oblique form of the definite article *le*) is the only occurrence in the *Eneas* section,<sup>31</sup> but there are a further 6 occurrences of this form in subject function in other sections of the manuscript (3 in conjunction with the nominative article *li*, 1 in conjunction with a nominative passive participle in *-s*, and 2 others in conjunction with the oblique determiners *le* ‘the’ and *ce* ‘this’) alongside just 1 occurrence of the expected nominative form (*li*) *Palladions*. As for *Hector/Ector* this occurs twice in the *Eneas* section in subject function (and 5 times in object function), but occurs 5 times in other sections of the manuscript in the expected nominative form *Hectors*.<sup>32</sup> Of the remaining 5 exceptions in the nominative singular, one of these involves *pere* ‘father’ (cf. § 535.10) which, as already noted

28. 3a (526.10/529.1); 3b (528.6/536.9); 3c (528.17/543.1).

29. 4a (527.9); 4b (527.10).

30. Raynaud de Lage, Hasenohr, *Introduction à l’ancien français*, p. 28; L. Schösler, *From Latin to modern French: actualization and markedness*, in *Actualization: Linguistic Change in Progress*, ed. by H. Andersen, Amsterdam, Benjamins, 2001, pp. 169-185, p. 174.

31. In the Paris manuscript it occurs in the expected nominative form *li Palladions* (599.15).

32. In the *Eneas* section of the Paris manuscript in subject function there are 3 occurrences of *Hector/Ector* (and 5 examples in object function) and 5 examples of *Hectors*.

(cf. Class 2 in Table 1), oscillates since earliest texts in the nominative singular between the original undifferentiated form *pere* (< PATER) and the analogical form *peres* modelled on Class 1 nouns. Another involves the example *a cele part ala lui et son compengnon* ‘to that place he and his companion went’ (528.4) where selection of the oblique *son compengnon* (cf. nom.sg. *ses compains/compainz*) can be understood as an effect of coordination with the tonic oblique form *lui* ‘him’ in the first conjunct.<sup>33</sup> This leaves us with just 3 genuine cases of failed nominative marking reported in (5a-c),<sup>34</sup> although it cannot be excluded that the extension of the oblique form in (5b-c) might be motivated by the unaccusative nature of the predicates *estre* ‘be’ and *durer* ‘last’.<sup>35</sup> As UNDERGOERS, unaccusative subjects are standardly taken to be generated underlyingly as objects and hence more readily amenable to oblique marking in line with the progressive emergence of an active-inactive alignment in the passage from Latin to Romance.<sup>36</sup>

- 5 a en quel terre le vent l' avoit amené<sup>37</sup>  
 in which land the.OBL.SG wind.OBL.SG him= had.3SG brought  
 ‘to which land the wind had brought him’
- b Il n' est nul regne ou [...]<sup>38</sup>  
 it NEG is no.OBL.SG kingdom.OBL.SG where  
 ‘There is no kingdom where [...]’

33. See also *Que Eneas et si compengnon vindrent* ‘Eneas and his companion came’ (529; see also 597 of the Paris ms.). Elsewhere in the *Eneas* section there are 5 tokens of *compains* all in vocative function, and 3 tokens of *compainz* in subject function in other sections of the manuscript.

34. N. Morato (p.c.) points that there is a tendency for copyists to omit final -s when the word occurs at the end of the line. An examination of all three examples shows, however, that this is not the case in (5a-c) where the relevant words are all line-medial.

35. Although this hypothesis requires further investigation, it is notable that our other exceptions *Saint Jehan*, *Palladion*, one of the two occurrences of *Hector* in *Eneas*, and *pere* all occur with the unaccusative copula/passive *estre* ‘be’ and *son compengnon* with the unaccusative *aler* ‘go’.

36. On the extended accusative, see A. Ledgeway, *From Latin to Romance. Morphosyntactic Typology and Change*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 328-335. Although unaccusative verbs are standardly argued not to license structural accusative case (L. Burzio, *Italian syntax: a government-binding approach*, Dordrecht, Springer, 1986), at least in languages with a nominative-accusative alignment, the analysis proposed here applies to those varieties increasingly characterized by an active-inactive alignment where morphological accusative case represents the surface spell-out of underlying semantic roles. On this view, nominative encodes AGENT/ACTOR subjects while accusative (viz. oblique) marks UNDERGOER subjects. For a striking parallel in the actualization of such an active-stative alignment in the Italo-Greek of southern Italy, see A. Ledgeway, N. Schifano, G. Silvestri, *Changing alignments in the Greek of southern Italy*, in «The Journal of Greek Linguistics», 20 (2020), pp. 5-60.

37. See the use of the nominative plural in the Paris manuscript *en quel terre li vent l'avoient amené* (594.4). Elsewhere in the *Eneas* section of the Royal manuscript there is one further occurrence of *vent* in subject function (see 529.2), but no examples of the expected nominative form *vens/venz*, which does, however, occur 25 (18/7) times in other sections of the manuscript in subject function.

38. There are no occurrences of the expected nom.sg. *regnes* in the *Eneas* section, but it does occur 9 times in other sections of the manuscript.

- c combien **le** **siege** dura<sup>39</sup>  
 how.much the.OBL.SG siege.OBL.SG lasted.3SG  
 ‘how long the siege lasted’

As for the 4 exceptions in the nominative plural (6a-d), all lend themselves to a possible structural explanation. In particular, they all involve once again unaccusative predicates where the use of the oblique form can potentially be interpreted as a possible reflex of an active-inactive syntax. In the case of (6d) there is the further consideration that the oblique form *ses compengnons* is no doubt also motivated by its coordination with the tonic oblique *lui* ‘him’ (cf. discussion of singular example above), both, in turn, right-dislocated to an extraposed position where a-syntactic uses of the oblique are more readily licensed.<sup>40</sup>

- 6 a Et comment que **vos** soiés **arivés**  
 and how that you.PL.NOM~OBL are.2PL arrived.OBL.PL  
 ‘And as you have now arrived’
- b **nos** sommes ci **arivés**  
 we.NOM~OBL are.1PL here arrived.OBL.PL  
 ‘we have arrived here’
- c ·iii<sup>c</sup> **chevaliers** estoient **issus** de Laurence tuit **armés**  
 300 knight.OBL.PL were.3PL exited.OBL.PL from Laurentum all armed.OBL.PL  
 ‘300 knights had come out of Laurentum heavily armed’
- d il entrèrent es nes, lui et **ses** **compengnons**<sup>41</sup>  
 they entered.3PL in.the ships he.OBL and his.OBL.PL companion.OBL.PL  
 ‘they entered their ships, he and his men’

39. 5a (527.14); 5b (529.9); 5c (531.1; see *li sieges dura* [600.1] in Paris ms.). In other sections of the Royal manuscript (*e*)*siege* occurs 5 times in subject function, including 2 tokens with an oblique determiner (*cest siege*, *le siege*) and 3 with a nominative determiner (*li (e)siege*), alongside 3 occurrences of the expected nominative form *li sieges*.

40. F. Villar, *Ergatividad, acusatividad y género en la familia lingüística indoeuropea*, Salamanca, Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1983, p. 31; A. Zamboni, *Dal latino tardo al romanzo arcaico: aspetti diacronico-tipologici della flessione nominale*, in *Sintassi storica*, Atti del XXX congresso internazionale della Società di linguistica italiana (Pavia, 26-28 settembre 1996), a cura di P. Ramat ed E. Roma, Roma, Bulzoni, 1998, pp. 127-146, p. 131. In our sample there is also a mixed example in the nominative plural (a), hence not a genuine exception, which combines the nominative article *li* with the oblique plural form *dex* ‘gods’. This example contrasts with the other 11 occurrences of the nominative plural of this lexeme in the *Eneas* section which all involve the expected form *li deu* ‘the gods’, including example (b) which occurs in the same paragraph as (a).

- a li **dex** li avoient commandé (534.10)\*  
 the.NOM god.OBL.PL him.DAT= had.3PL commanded  
 ‘the gods had ordered him’
- b comme **li** **deu** le voloient (534.1)  
 as the.NOM god.NOM.PL it= wanted.3PL  
 ‘as the gods wanted it’

\* See also *li deu* (604.12) in Paris ms.

41. 6a (539.6); 6b (539.14); 6c (545.1); 6d (542.8).

In summary, the evidence of the *Histoire ancienne* reveals a case system which, within the limits of its functionality, realizes a fully productive and robust opposition between subject and oblique functions. This is perhaps hardly surprising since, although the manuscript derives from the second redaction made in Naples and is itself no doubt the product of previous copies, it is ultimately based on an early thirteenth-century original composed in Flanders, hence from a northern dialectal area where the case system is known to have been at its strongest.<sup>42</sup> Where the system does show some attrition, albeit very limited, it always involves, as expected, an extension of the oblique forms at the expense of the more marked nominative forms. With very few exceptions, however, such extensions have been shown not to be random but, rather, are structurally conditioned in accordance with an initial extension of the oblique to unaccusative syntax involving UNDERGOER subjects.

#### 4.2. Devisement dou monde

The relevant distributions of the nominative and oblique forms attested in our sample of the *Devisement dou monde* (prologue–XL.5, pp. 35–64) are given in Table 3.<sup>43</sup>

Table 3: Distribution of case forms in *Devisement dou monde*

	Subject Function		Oblique Functions			
			Direct Object		Prepositional Object	
	+Nom	+Obl	+Nom	+Obl	+Nom	+Obl
Sg	29	71	2	98	1	99
Pl	46	54	10	90	13	87

42. Schøsler, *La déclinaison bicasuelle*, Chapter 8; Ead., *How useful is case morphology?*, p. 158; Ead., *Les catégories nominales*, pp. 645, 649.

43. Given the large number of (often foreign) proper names (e.g. *(Grant) Ka(a)n, Argon, Casan, Marc(h), Nicolao*) contained in the text and their widespread failure to display formal case distinctions, witness their invariable forms recorded in Burgio's (Marco Polo, *Le Devisement dou monde*, II, *Glossario*, a cura di E. Burgio, Venezia, Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2018, pp. 307–335) index of names, these have been excluded from the sample. Also very frequent are the titles *sire/meser* 'sir, (my) lord' (and variants; see *ibidem*, p. 15) and the nominal *sire/seignor* 'sire, lord' (and variants) which, as highlighted in Burgio (*ibidem*, pp. 200, 270–271), show a tendency towards invariability (especially in titular function) and some ongoing reanalyses of their formal distributions yielding two innovative subparadigms based on a nom.sg. *sire(s)* and another with nom.sg. *seignors* alongside the traditional paradigm which contrasts nom.sg. *sire(s)* with nom.pl/obl. *seignor(s)* (see Schøsler, *Les catégories nominales*, pp. 637–638). As a consequence, these forms have also been excluded from our sample to avoid an unhelpful and unrepresentative skewing of the data.

On the surface, the distribution of the oblique forms in (prepositional) object functions continues to be robustly represented in the singular (7a) and, to a slightly lesser degree, the plural (7b), though there are some aberrations to this pattern (8a-b).

- 7 a jamés ne avoient veu **nul latin** / les baille as  
 never NEG had.3PL seen no.OBL.SG Latin.OBL.SG them= consign.3SG to.the.OBL.PL  
 deus freres et **a son baron**  
 two.OBL brother.OBL.PL and to his.OBL.SG baron.OBL.SG  
 ‘never had they seen a westerner / he hands them over to the two brothers and to his lord’
- b Argon prist **trois sez baronç** / estoit seingnor **de**  
 Arghun took.3SG three his.OBL.PL barons.OBL.PL was.3SG lord of  
**tous les Tartars**<sup>44</sup>  
 all.OBL.PL the.OBL.PL Tartar.OBL.PL  
 ‘Arghun took three of his lords / he was lord of all the Tartars’
- 8 a il donoit **chascu(n)s jors** du pan / il alerent **a un**  
 he gave.3SG each.NOM.SG day.NOM.SG of.the bread they went.3PL to a.OBL  
**sajes clercs**<sup>45</sup>  
 wise.NOM.SG cleric.NOM.SG  
 ‘he would offer bread each day / they went to a wise cleric’
- b je vos firai **tuit** occire / les mainç **de lor baron**<sup>46</sup>  
 I you.PL= make.FUT.1SG all.NOM.PL kill.INF the hands of their baron.NOM.PL  
 ‘I’ll have you all killed / the hands of their lords’

While it is difficult to pinpoint any overarching patterns for all observed instances of absence of final *-s* in the plural of oblique functions, it is interesting to note that in the 13 examples of prepositional objects 4 involve the preceding invariable possessive *lor* ‘their’ (e.g. *les mainç de lor baron* ‘the hands of **their lords**’ (XVIII.15)), where the absence of final *-s* on the possessive (< ILLORUM) may have exerted an analogical (purely orthographic?) influence on its associated noun (e.g. *baron(s)*), 3 examples involve the nominative plural proximal demonstrative *cest(i)* ‘these’ (cf. OBL.PL *ces/cez*) in combination with the cardinal *trois/iii* ‘3’ (e.g. *le onor{e} de cest trois mesajes* ‘the honour of **these three** messengers’ (XVIII.13)), where the presence of the numeral is arguably sufficient to mark plural number, and 2 further examples where the nominal is the complement of a collective noun that itself already implies plurality (e.g. *moltitudine (de)* ‘multitude (of)’ in *si grant motitudine de saracin* (XXVIII.5) ‘such a great multitude of **Saracens**’). In another example the unmarked oblique plural is coordinated

44. 7a (III.5/VII.6); 7b (XVII.5/VII.2).

45. Although *chascuns jors* ‘each day’ is clearly not an object, it should be recalled that the oblique also marks adverbial functions. However, as pointed out by J.C. Smith (p.c.), this might be an apparent exception since, theoretically, it could also be an oblique plural if *chascuns* is being used here in the plural (see G. Moignet, *Grammaire de l’ancien français*, Paris, Klincksieck, 1988<sup>2</sup>, p. 176; C. Buridant, *Grammaire nouvelle de l’ancien français*, Paris, SEDES, 2000, p. 167).

46. 8a (XXVI.8/IX.3); 8b (XXV.10/XVIII.15).

with a marked oblique plural (e.g. *l'aüst donés a chevalers et a soldaer* 'you would have given it to knights and to **mercenaries**' (XXIV.11)), where plural marking on the first conjunct *chevalers* 'knights' might be argued to license the plural interpretation of the second. Of the 3 remaining cases, 1 inexplicably lacks any marking for number on the noun as well as on its accompanying article and prenominal adjective (*Or voç volun conter de le autre confin qe sunt entre midi et levant* (XXII.12) 'Now we want to tell you about **the other borders** which are between the south and east'), and the other 2 involve the distinctive nominative plural quantifier *tuit* 'all' (cf. OBL.PL *toz/tous*) functioning as a by-phrase in the passive, e.g. *et mout furent servi et honorés de tuit* (XIII.5) 'and they were greatly served and honoured by **all**'.

The latter two uses of *tuit* also account for 5 of the 10 examples of failed oblique plural marking in object function (e.g. *je voz firai tuit morir a male mors* (XXV.10) 'I will make you **all** die a cruel death'), where in all 5 examples, as in this latter example, *tuit* invariably represents the underlying semantic subject of the infinitive introduced by causative *fair(e)* 'make'. What these 5 examples have in common with the 2 previous examples of prepositional *tuit* is that they all involve an underlying subject which surfaces as a (prepositional) object; this might suggest that the exceptional use of nominative *tuit* in all 7 examples reflects the underlying subject function of the nominal rather than its surface grammatical function. Finally, in the 5 remaining examples 2 involve a nominal in combination with the plural quantifiers *aseç* 'many' and *cc* '200' which already overtly mark plural number (e.g. *il vendent le un bien .cc. libre de tornis* (XXXII.5) 'they sell each one for a good 200 pounds of tornesels'), 1 example involves a tripartite coordination where, once again, plurality via *-s* is only marked on the first conjunct (*et coltres et coisin et horeiler laborent ausi mout sotilment* (XXXIV.6) 'and they are also very skillful in making **blankets and cushions and pillows**'), and the final 2 examples remain somewhat opaque: whereas in *il menuent datal et peison* (XXXVI.12) 'they eat **dates** and fish' *datal* presents the typical invariable form found elsewhere in the text in oblique plural function (viz. 7 occurrences of *datal* vs just 1 occurrence of *datres*; Marco Polo, *Le Devisement dou monde*, a cura di Burgio, p. 91), in *ha mouton grant com asne* (XXXV.9) 'there are **sheep** as big as donkeys' *mouton* occurs in the unmarked form despite the preponderance of the marked oblique plural form elsewhere in the text (viz. 10 occurrences of *montonz/montons/moutonz*; see *ibidem*, p. 204). As pointed out by J.C. Smith (p.c.), the contexts of overt plural marking in the examples above are reminiscent of those operative in so-called Brazilian Portuguese non-redundant agreement.<sup>47</sup>

In subject function, by contrast, the formal retention of distinctive nominative marking illustrated in Table 3, especially in the singular, shows some quite

47. See E.M. Almeida, *A variação da concordância nominal num dialeto rural*, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, MA thesis, 1997; A. Castro, J. Ferrari Neto, *Um estudo contrastivo do PE e do PB com relação à identificação de informação de número no DP*, in «Letras de Hoje», 42 [2007], pp. 65-76.

considerable weakening in relation to the *Histoire ancienne*. Consequently, alongside the expected singular and plural nominative forms in (9a-b), we also find in subject function an extension of the oblique forms as illustrated in (10a-b).

- 9 a Hai **desloiaus** et **traites**, a cui penses tu?  
 alas disloyal.NOM.MSG and traitor.NOM.MSG to whom think.2SG you.SG  
 ‘Alas, o unfaithful traitor, who are you thinking of?’
- b **il** sunt **buen** **beveor**<sup>48</sup>  
 they.NOM are.3PL good.NOM.PL drinker.NOM.PL  
 ‘they are good drinkers’
- 10 a **Le roi** d’ Armenie fist armer une galee as dues freres  
 the.OBL.SG king.OBL.SG of Armenia made.3SG arm.INF a galley to.the two brothers  
 ‘The king of Armenia had a galley armed for the two brothers’
- b **les** trois **baronç** [...] adonc distrent entr’ aus<sup>49</sup>  
 the.OB.PL three barons.OBL.PL then said.3PL among them  
 ‘the three lords [...] then said to one another’

On this point, Burgio observes that «[l]a declinazione è incoerente, e non presenta con regolarità la distinzione tra il caso soggetto e il caso obliquo, tra il singolare e il plurale».<sup>50</sup> While there is some truth to his observation, in that nominals in subject function predominantly (singular) or more frequently (plural) surface with oblique marking, distinctive marking of object functions continues to be robustly marked with very little formal interference from the nominative paradigm.<sup>51</sup> Even where nominative forms continue to surface, cases like (9a-b) in which all nominal elements are marked nominative are far from the norm. Rather, in 15/22 out of the total of 29/46 singular/plural cases of nominative marking at least one of the associated elements of the nominal assumes oblique marking (see also 2a-d), giving rise to examples of mixed marking such as (11a-d).

- 11 a ne fu **cristienç** ne **paiens** ne **tartar** ne  
 NEG was.3 Christian.NOM.SG nor pagan.NOM.SG nor Tartar.OBL.SG nor  
**yndiens**, ne **nulç** **home-s** de nulle generasion, que [...] <sup>52</sup>  
 Indian.NOM.SG nor no.one.NOM.SG man.OBL-NOM.SG of no generation who

48. 9a (XXI.17); 9b (XIX.5).

49. 10a (XI.5); 10b (XVII.8).

50. Marco Polo, *Le Devisement dou monde*, a cura di Burgio, p. 12.

51. Of course, if distinctive nominative marking (e.g. presence/absence of final -s) is already weakened in subject function, then its potential for extension to oblique functions is naturally much reduced.

52. Note that the other 4 occurrences of TARTAR in subject function in the text occur in the expected nominative singular form *tartars/tartarç* (see Marco Polo, *Le Devisement dou monde*, a cura di Burgio, p. 279). As for the lexeme MAN, there are no examples in the text of the expected nominative singular form (*h*)om/on/uem (except for impersonal *l'en* lit. ‘the man’ on par with modFr. *l'on*), with generalization of the non-nominative stem (*h*)ome(-) to all functions. In singular subject function the text offers 51 examples of unmarked (*h*)ome and 32 examples of the marked (*h*)omes (*ibidem*, pp. 156-157), the latter with analogical extension of nom.sg. -s to the oblique stem.

‘there was neither Christian, nor pagan, nor Tartar, nor Indian nor any man of any generation who [...]’

- b **il** est **mon filz** et vestre **home**  
 he.NOM is my.OBL.SG son.NOM.SG and your.PL man.OBL.SG  
 ‘he is my son and your man’
- c **il** estoient **servi** et **honorés** en totes les pars  
 they.NOM were.3PL served.NOM.PL and honoured.OBL.PL in all the parts  
 ‘they were served and honoured everywhere’
- d quant **les deus frers** **prescaor** virent ce<sup>53</sup>  
 when the.OBL.PL two.OBL brother.OBL.PL preacher.NOM.PL saw.3PL this  
 ‘when the two Dominican brothers saw this’

By the same token, even where oblique marking is retained there are once again a fair number of cases of mixed marking in which one or more elements of the nominal string is marked nominative (12a-d). In our sample this happens in the singular in 6/1 cases out of a total of 98/99 examples of oblique marking (direct/prepositional object), but rises in the plural to 13/18 cases out of a total of 90/87 cases of oblique marking (direct/prepositional object).

- 12 a **il l’** ont **truvé** **sain** et **haitiés**  
 they him.ACC= have.3PL found.OBL.SG healthy.OBL.SG and cured.NOM.SG  
 ‘they found him healthy and cured’
- b por **le maus** tens  
 by the.OBL.SG bad.NOM.SG weather  
 ‘in the bad weather’
- c **Les chevoil** portent **peitet** a mainere de clerges  
 the.OBL.PL hair.NOM.PL wear.3PL small.NOM.PL to manner of clerics  
 ‘They wore their hair short like clerics’
- d lor demande **des rois** et **des princes**  
 them= ask.3SG of.the.OBL.PL kings.OBL.PL and of.the.OBL.PL prince.OBL.PL  
**et d’ autres baron**<sup>54</sup>  
 and of other.OBL.PL baron.NOM.PL  
 ‘he asks them about the kings, the princes and other lords’

This contrast in the incidence of incoherent or mixed marking of obliques in the singular and the plural reflects the general instability of final *-s*, whatever its function: in the plural weakening of final *-s* will naturally give rise to a number of cases of failed oblique marking (e.g. *murs* > *mur*), whereas the innovative extension of an already weak morphophonological feature in the singular (e.g. *mur* > *murs*) represents a much more marked, and hence rarer, phenomenon. On the other hand, the distribution of distinctive nominative forms in Table 3

53. 11a (Prol. 2); 11b (XIV.5); 11c (VIII.4); 11d (XII.7).

54. 12a (XIV.4); 12b (VIII.5); 12c (XXII.3); 12d. (V.2).

highlights an ongoing but advanced reanalysis of final *-s* as a number marker: in the singular expected final *-s* is only found in 29 cases whereas in the plural the expected bare form occurs in just 46 cases. As a result, we witness a growing tendency towards the establishment of an unmarked nominative singular (71 cases) contrasting with a marked nominative plural in *-s* (54 cases) in line with a development which, in the fullness of time, will yield the modern French contrast between an unmarked singular (*mur, père, baron, empereur*) and a sigmatic plural (*murs, pères, barons, empereurs*).<sup>55</sup>

Above in § 3.1 it was noted that many of the apparent exceptions to nominative marking in subject function in the *Histoire ancienne* could be more insightfully analysed as structural extensions of oblique marking to unaccusative subjects in accordance with their underlying object status. It is therefore worth asking whether this active-inactive opposition is also observable in the *Devisement*. An examination of the 71 singular and 54 plural examples of oblique marking in subject function reveals that in 53 (74.7%; see 13a-b) and 36 (66.7%; cf. 14a-b) cases, respectively, the relevant predicate is unaccusative. While this leaves a fair number, albeit still a minority, of examples of oblique-marked singular (13c) and plural (14c) subjects with transitive/unergative predicates, the overall distribution is nonetheless still strongly suggestive of an original active-inactive alignment that shows signs of weakening through the progressive extension of oblique marking to transitive/unergative subjects which, in the course of time, will lead to the generalization of the oblique in French as part of a new innovative nominative-accusative alignment.<sup>56</sup>

- 13 a **cestu** **legat** fu **esleu** apostoille  
 this.OBL.SG legate.OBL.SG was.3 elected.OBL.SG pope  
 ‘this legate was elected pope’
- b quant **il** fu **vinu**  
 when he.NOM was.3SG come.OBL.SG  
 ‘when he had arrived’
- c quant **le** **legat** ot entendu ce ke [...] <sup>57</sup>  
 when the.OBL.SG legate.OBL.SG had.3SG heard this that  
 ‘when the legate had heard what [...]’
- 14 a quant **il** furent la **venus**  
 when they.NOM were.3PL there come.OBL.PL  
 ‘when they had arrived there’

55. Schøsler, *How useful is case morphology?*, p. 158, and Ead., *Les catégories nominales*, pp. 647-648, hypothesizes an intermediate stage in the development of the Old French case system whereby loss of final *-s* in the nominative singular and oblique plural was probably compensated by lengthening of the preceding vowel, e.g. nom.sg./obl.pl. *li/les murs* [li/lez myrs / myrz] > *li/le mur* [li/le: my:r].

56. See Ledgeway, *From Latin to Romance*, Chapter 7.  
 57. 13a (XI.3); 13b (XXVII.3); 13c (IX.5).

- b **les mercans** de Venese et de Jene et de toutes pars  
 the.OBL.PL merchant.OBL.PL of Venice and of Genoa and of all parts  
 hi vinent  
 there= come.3PL  
 ‘the merchants from Venice and Genoa and from everywhere come here’
- c **les marchians** de Jene najerent por cel mer<sup>58</sup>  
 the.OBL.PL merchant.OBL.PL from Genoa navigated.3PL through that sea  
 ‘the merchants from Genoa navigated through that sea’

#### 4.3. Ystoire de li Normant

We turn finally to our examination of a textual sample (*Dedica*–3.XXVIII, pp. 3-143) of the *Ystoire de li Normant*, the figures for which are given in Table 4.

Table 4: Distribution of case forms in *Ystoire de li Normant*

	Subject Function		Oblique Functions			
			Direct Object		Prepositional Object	
	+Nom	+Obl	+Nom	+Obl	+Nom	+Obl
Sg	14	86	–	100	–	100
Pl	93	7	50	50	72	28

As noted by Bartholomaeis<sup>59</sup> among others,<sup>60</sup> the language of the text is said to represent un «pessimo francese» and according to Meyer «une langue très incorrecte».<sup>61</sup> Indeed, even the title of the work itself (*Ystoire de li Normant*) reveals a spectacular weakening and restructuring of the case system in comparison to the traditional paradigm through the use of the nominative plural *li Normant* ‘the.NOM Norman.NOM.PL’ in place of the oblique plural *les Normants/Normaniz* following the preposition *de* ‘of’.<sup>62</sup> This fact is confirmed by the distributions in Table 4 where in the plural of prepositional objects the (nominative) plural form without final -s (15a-b) prevails over the expected sigmatic form (15c), with a respective distribution of 72 vs 28 cases (for a possible explanation, see footnote 70).

58. 14a (XII.6); 14b (XIX.6); 14c (XXII.11).

59. Bartholomaeis, *Storia de' Normanni*, p. 38.

60. See P. Wunderli, G. Holtus, *La “renaissance” des études franco-italiennes. Retrospective et prospective*, in *Testi, cotesti e contesti del franco-italiano*, pp. 3-23, p. 10; Bougy, *La langue improbable*, p. 79; Lee, *Letteratura franco-italiana*, p. 97; Zinelli, *Espaces franco-italiens*, p. 242.

61. P. Meyer, *De l'expansion de la langue française en Italie pendant le moyen-âge*, in *Atti del Congresso internazionale di scienze storiche* (Roma 1-9 aprile 1903), IV, *Storia della letteratura*, Roma: Accademia dei Lincei, 1904, pp. 61-104, p. 94.

62. See Bougy, *La langue improbable*, p. 79.

- 15 a Salerne, laquelle estoit assegé **de** **Sarrasin**  
 Salerno which was.3SG sieged of Saracen.NOM.PL<sup>63</sup>  
 ‘Salerno, which was sieged by the Saracens’
- b li autre **avec** **li** **sien** **chevalier**  
 the other.one with the.NOM his.NOM.PL knight.NOM.PL  
 ‘the other one with his knights’
- c Gisilbere **avec** **ses** **freres**<sup>64</sup>  
 Gilberto with his.OBL.PL brothers.OBL.PL  
 ‘Gilberto with his brothers’

These data suggest an advanced general weakening of final *-s*, as further confirmed by: (i) the very low incidence of *-s* in singular nominals in subject function where it only occurs in 3 (see 16a) of the 14 examples of distinctive nominative forms (the other 11 cases involving the use of the erstwhile nominative article *li* ‘the’, see 16b), with generalization of the corresponding oblique forms (all without *-s*) in the remaining 86 cases (16c-d); and (ii) by the very few examples, just 7 (17a-b; see 54 examples in the *Devisement* reported in Table 3), of analogical extension of *-s* from the oblique plural to plural nominals in subject function which otherwise predominantly occur without *-s* (17c-d).

- 16 a Coment **Atenulfe abbé** [...] fu **noïes** en mer  
 how Atenulf abbot.OBL.SG was.3 drowned.NOM.SG in sea  
 ‘How Father Atenulf [...] was drowned at sea’
- b **li** **Empereor** manda domps  
 the.NOM emperor.OBL.SG sent.3SG gift.OBL.PL  
 ‘the Emperor sent gifts’
- c Et adont dist **cestui** **bon** **moine**  
 and now said.3SG this.OBL.SG good.OBL.SG monk.OBL.SG  
 ‘And now this good monk said’
- d Pourquoi l’ **Impereor** fu **esmut** en ire contre Pandolfe<sup>65</sup>  
 why the emperor.OBL.SG was.3 moved.OBL.SG in ire against Pandulf  
 ‘Why the Emperor was moved to anger against Pandulf’
- 17 a à lo temps que **ces** **Normans** vindrent  
 at the time that this.OBL.PL Norman.OBL.PL came.3PL  
 ‘at the time when these Normans came’
- b par toute Ytalie furent **receüz**  
 by all Italy were.3PL received.OBL.PL  
 ‘they were welcomed by the whole of Italy’

63. Here and in subsequent examples of this kind, we gloss the relevant examples according to their formal case and number values in the traditional nominal declension of Old French (see Table 1), although their syntactic functions in the text often diverge quite radically.

64. 15a (1.XVII); 15b (1.XXIII); 15c (1.XX).

65. 16a (1.XXVII); 16b (1.XXII); 16c (*Dedica*); 16d (1.XXVI).

- c **li**            **larron** [...] m'    ont    desrobé  
 the.NOM    thief.NOM.PL    me=    have    robbed  
 'the thieves [...] have robbed me'
- d **il**            lui                    estoient    **traïtor**<sup>66</sup>  
 they.NOM    DAT.3SG=    were.3PL    traitor.NOM.PL  
 'they were treacherous towards him'

However, this tendency appears to be contradicted by the distribution of final *-s* in the oblique plural of nominals in object function, where both outcomes are evenly distributed ( $-\emptyset$ : 50 vs *-s*: 50). Despite appearances, however, the variation is in the overwhelming majority of cases not random, but is structurally conditioned by the presence or otherwise of an accompanying determiner or quantifier and, if present, by the form of the latter. In the absence of a determiner or quantifier, final *-s* is the norm since it is presumably the only overt marker of plurality in conjunction with bare plural nominals. We thus witness in this case a complementary distribution between the realization of a determiner/quantifier on the one hand and *-s* marking on the other. Consequently, 24 of the 50 examples displaying *-s* involve bare nominals (18a-b), whereas of the 50 examples without *-s* only 3 involve bare nominals (18c). We can presumably include here the 3 occurrences of plural nominals in *-s* introduced by the invariable *lor* 'their' (18d) – significantly there are no examples of non-sigmatic forms in conjunction with *lor* – since final *-s* functions once again as the sole marker of plural number.

- 18 a Et    quant    il            orent    pris    **armes**            **et**    **chevaux**  
 and    when    they    had.3PL    taken    arms.OBL.PL    and    horses.OBL.PL  
 'And when they had taken arms and horses'
- b il            troverent    **homes**            **plus**    **febles**  
 they    found.3PL    men.OBL.PL    more    weak.OBL.PL  
 'they found weaker men'
- c lo            Impereor            lui            mandoit    **present**            de    Alemaingne  
 the.OBL.SG    emperor.OBL.SG    DAT.3=    sent.3SG    present.NOM.PL    from    Germany  
 'the Emperor sent him presents from Germany'
- d li            Grex    [...]    avoient    usance    de    veinchere    **lor**    **anemis**<sup>67</sup>  
 the.NOM    Greeks.NOM.OBL    had.3PL    custom    of    conquer.INF    their    enemies.OBL.PL  
 'the Greeks [...] were accustomed to conquering their enemies'

When, however, a determiner or quantifier is present, if the latter assumes a distinctive oblique form itself ending in *-s* (e.g. *les* 'the', *ces* 'these', *to(u)z* 'all', *autres* 'other', *aucuns* 'some'), then the accompanying noun typically also shows *-s*, accounting for 13 of the remaining 23 examples of non-prepositional oblique plurals in *-s* (19a-c). When however, the determiner or quantifier assumes a(n

66. 17a (1.IV); 17b (1.XX); 17c (*Dedica*); 17d (1.XV).

67. 18a (1.XVII); 18b (2.XX); 18c (2.XXXV); 18d (1.XV).

erstwhile) distinctive nominative form without *-s* (e.g. *li* ‘the’, *cil/cei* ‘those’, *tuit* ‘all’), the noun also occurs without *-s* (20a-c), accounting for 43 of the remaining 47 examples of non-prepositional oblique plurals in  $-\emptyset$ .

- 19 a pristrent **les** **domps**  
 took.3PL the.OBL.PL gift.OBL.PL  
 ‘they took the gifts’
- b Et assembla avec lui [...] **autres** **pedons** sanz nombre  
 and assembled.3SG with him other.OBL.PL foot.soldier.OBL.PL without number  
 ‘And he brought together under his leadership [...] numerous foot soldiers’
- c ferai **alcuns** **vers**<sup>68</sup>  
 do.FUT.1SG some.OBL.PL verse.SG~PL  
 ‘I shall write some lines of verse’
- 20 a Et prenoit **li** **buf** por arer  
 and took.3SG the.NOM oxen for plough.INF  
 ‘And he took the oxen for ploughing’
- b satura plenment **cei** **citadin** de la terre  
 satisfied.3SG fully that.NOM.PL citizen.NOM.PL of the land  
 ‘he completely satisfied those inhabitants of the lands’
- c Et proïa **tuit** **li** **chevalier** que [...] <sup>69</sup>  
 and beseeched.3SG all.NOM.PL the.NOM knight.NOM.PL that  
 ‘And he beseeched all the knights to [...]’

This alternation, whether ultimately phonological or purely orthographic, between sigmatic and non-sigmatic forms of the nominal head (and accompanying adjective(s)) in accordance with the presence of a sigmatic or non-sigmatic determiner or quantifier can be readily observed in contrasts such as those between the articles *les* and *li* ‘the’ (21a-b), the demonstratives *ces* ‘these’ and *cil* ‘those’ (22a-b) and the quantifiers *to(u)z* and *tuit* ‘all’ (23a-b).<sup>70</sup>

68. 19a (2.III); 19b (1.II); 19c (*Dedica*).

69. 20a (3.VIII [sic]); 20b (2.XXXXV [sic]); 20c (2.XXXXV [sic]).

70. The same structural principles appear to be at play in the distribution of sigmatic (28) and especially non-sigmatic (72) forms in the oblique plural in prepositional contexts. For instance, there are 63 examples of non-sigmatic nominals following the non-sigmatic article *li* ‘the’, 1 example following each of the non-sigmatic quantifiers *autre* ‘other’, *moult* ‘many’, *molt de* ‘many (of)’, and *petit de* ‘few (of)’, and 2 examples following the non-sigmatic numerals *viii* [= *uit*] ‘eight’ and *II.C.L* [= *deux cent cinquante*] ‘two hundred and fifty’. By contrast, 11 of the 28 examples of sigmatic plurals are introduced by sigmatic determiners (*des* ‘of.the.OBL.PL’, *ces* ‘that.OBL.PL’, *ses/sez* ‘his/her.OBL.PL/(NOM.SG)'), quantifiers (*alcuns* ‘some.OBL.PL’, *divers* ‘several.OBL~NOM/SG~.PL’) or a combination of both (*tous ceaux* ‘all.OBL.PL that.OBL.PL’, *touz ses* ‘all.OBL.PL his.OBL.PL’), but these contrast with 11 examples introduced by the non-sigmatic article *li* and 1 example introduced by the non-sigmatic cardinal *dui* ‘two’ (see obl. *dous/deus*). Once again, however, we see a preference, albeit slight (*viz.* 5 vs 3), for the sigmatic form in conjunction with bare plural nominals.

- 21 a vit [...] **les** **champs** **pleins** de molt de beste  
 saw.3SG the.OBL.PL field.OBL.PL full.OBL.PL of many of beast.NOM.PL  
 ‘he saw [...] the fields full of many animals’
- b doient garder **li** **prestre**<sup>71</sup>  
 must.SBJV.3PL respect.INF the.NOM priest.NOM.PL  
 ‘they must respect the priests’
- 22 a **ces** **chastelz** d’ entor voloient par bataille  
 this.OBL.PL castel.OBL.PL of around wanted.3PL by battle  
 ‘they wanted to take these surrounding castles by battle’
- b virent **cil** **chevalier**<sup>72</sup> (2.XX)  
 saw.3PL that.NOM.PL knight.NOM.PL  
 ‘they saw those knights’
- 23 a fu condempné en prison **touz** **les** **jors** de sa vie  
 was condemned.OBL.SG in prison all.OBL.PL the.OBL.PL day.OBL.PL of his life  
 ‘he was condemned to imprisonment for the rest of the days of his life’
- b Et amoit molt **tuit** **li** **Normant**<sup>73</sup>  
 and loved.3SG much all.NOM.PL the.NOM Norman.NOM.PL  
 ‘And he loved very much all Normans’

Nonetheless, there are a small number of exceptions to this general tendency. In particular, in our sample there are 9 examples introduced by a cardinal numeral: while all 4 non-sigmatic forms are introduced by numerals that occur themselves without final *-s*, namely, *dui* ‘two’, *trois .c.* [= *cent?*] ‘three hundred’, *.xll.* [= *do(u)ze*] ‘twelve’, *.xx. mille* ‘twenty thousand’ (24a), there are 5 cases of sigmatic forms introduced in 2 cases by numerals in *-s*, viz., *troiz cens* ‘three hundreds’, *troiz* ‘three’ (24b) and in 3 others by non-sigmatic numeral forms *XL* [= *quarante*] ‘forty’, *LX* [= *soissante/seixante*] ‘sixty’, *cent* ‘hundred’ (24c). Other counterexamples include 3 otherwise exceptional occurrences of the article *li* ‘the’ followed by a sigmatic form (but significantly no examples of the sigmatic form *les* ‘the’ followed by a non-sigmatic form) in contrast to 42 examples of *li* followed by a non-sigmatic form (25a), and one example of the non-sigmatic quantifier *molt* ‘many’ followed by a sigmatic form (25b).

- 24 a et **.xx. mille** **solde** de or païa Pierre  
 and 20 thousand.NOM.PL coin.NOM.PL of gold paid Pierre  
 ‘and Pierre paid twenty thousand gold coins’
- b Et lor donna **troiz cens** **fortissimes** **Normans**  
 and DAT.3PL= gave.3SG three hundred.OBL.PL very.strong.OBL.PL Norman.OBL.PL  
 ‘And he gave them three hundred very strong Normans’

71. 21a (3.VIII); 21b (3.XVI).

72. 22a (1.XXXII); 22b (2.XXXV).

73. 23a (2.VII); 23b (2.XXXV).

- c Se je avisse **cent** **chevaliers**<sup>74</sup>  
 if I had.SBJV hundred.NOM knight.OBL.PL  
 ‘If I had one hundred knights’
- 25 a Et chevaucèrent **li** **chevaux** qui lor estoient appareilliez  
 and rode.3PL the.NOM horse.OBL.PL who DAT.3PL were prepared  
 ‘And they rode the horses which had been prepared for them’
- b Guaymarie li donna **molt** **preciouz** **donmps**<sup>75</sup>  
 Guaimar DAT.3SG= gave.3SG many.NOM.PL precious.NOM~OBL/SG~PL gift.OBL.PL  
 ‘Guaimar gave [the Church] precious gifts’

Overall, then, our discussion of the distribution of final *-s* in the oblique plural in (18)-(25) goes against the general claim in the literature in relation to more canonical Old French texts that inflectional marking of case proves more resilient in determiners than in nouns (and adjectives).<sup>76</sup> Rather, we have seen that in the *Ystoire* there is, on the one hand, a complementary distribution of overt marking on the noun (and any accompanying adjectives) and the presence of a determiner/quantifier, and variable marking, on the other, in the presence of a determiner/quantifier in accordance with the sigmatic or non-sigmatic form of the latter. This latter case shows that overt marking on the determiner/quantifier does not so much enable a corresponding inflectional weakening on the noun but, rather, more readily licenses overt marking on the noun.

In conclusion, the distribution of *-s* in the *Ystoire* reviewed here points to a now well-advanced formal reanalysis whereby final *-s* is not so much a case marker, witness its general absence with singular nominals in subject function, but has been reinterpreted, where it survives (*viz.* in the oblique plural), as a number marker. This is further confirmed by the distribution of the determiners where, for example, the definite article no longer robustly encodes a binary nominative-oblique opposition (e.g. *li* vs *le(s)*) but, rather, predominantly distinguishes between singular (*lo*) and plural (*li*) irrespective of syntactic function.

Finally, in the previous two texts we observed a correlation with the increasing extension of oblique marking to the subject function in accordance with an active-inactive alignment. In the *Ystoire*, by contrast, there is no such sensitivity to the underlying semantic role of the subject. For example, singular nouns in subject function occur with (some residual) marking for nominative in only 14 cases, of which 7 occur with transitive predicates and the remaining 7 with unaccusative predicates; if there were an active-inactive split, then it would be legitimate to expect all 14 examples to involve transitives or unergatives, but not unaccusatives. By the same token, of the 86 examples of oblique marking of a

74. 24a (3.X); 24b (2.XVIII); 24c (3.XXIII [sic]).

75. 25a (2.XXIII [sic]); 25b (3.XV).

76. See Schösler, *La déclinaison bicasuelle*, Chapters 8-9; Ead., *How useful is case morphology?*, p. 158; Ead., *Les catégories nominales*, p. 648; Raynaud de Lage, Hasenohr, *Introduction à l'ancien français*, pp. 27-28; Detges, “How useful is case morphology?”, p. 115.

singular subject in our sample we find not only 51 examples of unaccusatives, but also 28 examples of transitives and 7 examples of unergatives. A similar picture emerges from the plural where, although in our sample just 7 examples of nominals in subject function were found to display oblique marking in *-s* and all involved unaccusative predicates, the remaining 93 cases of nominative marking are divided among transitives (29), unergatives (6) and unaccusatives (58). In short, there is no evidence for differential marking of subjects according to an active-inactive alignment, inasmuch as the effects of loss of final *-s* and the generalization of oblique stems affects all subjects equally.

### 5. Comparative overview

When considered together, our individual examinations of the three texts allows us to draw out some general trends in the development of the case and nominal system in Franco-Italian. In some respects, the observed variation can be understood in terms of text type, inasmuch as the case system is best preserved in the *Histoire ancienne* which represents a copy, albeit substantially revised, of a French original,<sup>77</sup> whereas the *Devisement* and the *Ystoire* represent, respectively, an original composition and translation produced by Italians whose native language was not a *langue d'oïl* variety (viz. medieval French) but, rather, a medieval Italo-Romance dialect (Venetian and Pisan in the former case and a Campanian dialect in the latter). As a consequence, the French exemplified in these two texts represents an L2 variety, ultimately the *lingua franca* of the Mediterranean of the time,<sup>78</sup> characterized by varying degrees of competence and attrition with some often quite radical departures from established native practices. While there is some evidence of this in the case system witnessed in the *Devisement* where there are unmistakable signs of an advanced and ongoing reanalysis and redistribution of *-s* as a plural marker, this is most clearly seen in the nominal system of the *Ystoire* where there is very little by way of a recognizable case system. This is hardly surprising given that the language of the translator has been described as «un francese tutto suo personale: un gergo che non fu mai né parlato né scritto, né in Francia né altrove».<sup>79</sup>

These differences in text type and linguistic nativeness are not affected by chronological differences between the texts which are barely separated from one another by 40 years in the case of the *Devisement* and *Histoire ancienne* and, respectively, by 50 and 10 years with respect to the *Ystoire*. However, diatopic

77. See also A. Ledgeway, *V2 beyond borders: the Histoire Ancienne jusqu'à César*, in *Secrets of Success*, ed. by C. Meklenborg and S. Wolfe, special issue of «Journal of Historical Syntax», 5 (2021), pp. 1-65, where the sentential word order of the Paris, BnF, fr. 20125 manuscript of the *Histoire ancienne* is shown to display once again a textbook example of the Verb Second constraint.

78. Gaunt, *La "contaminazione" del testo medievale*, p. 19.

79. Bartholomaeis, *Storia de' Normanni*, p. c.

differences arguably do play a role. While the language of the *Histoire ancienne* is largely representative of 14<sup>th</sup>-century French, incorporating a number of generically northern features alongside some «palpable linguistic traces of its Italian origin»<sup>80</sup> typical of French manuscripts produced in Naples during the period of Angevin rule of the city and Kingdom, the same cannot be said of the other two texts where local linguistic habits are more conspicuous. For instance, Gaunt variously highlights how the language of the *Devisement* is «riddled with Italian forms and syntactic structures»<sup>81</sup> that are «estrane al francese giudicato più “puro”»,<sup>82</sup> but this is taken up a gear in the *Ystoire* where the language has «niente di comune né di analogo con la ragione di quel linguaggio franco-italiano cui da tempo avevan fatto l’orecchio gl’Italiani del Nord».<sup>83</sup> Rather, it constitutes an interlanguage that superficially attempts to pass itself off as French, whilst integrating a spectacularly large number of local Campanian dialectal features at all levels of linguistic analysis.<sup>84</sup> To be precise, the translator’s language is readily definable as «intermédiaire entre l’italien, langue d’origine de l’auteur, et le français, langue-cible dans laquelle il réalise sa traduction»,<sup>85</sup> comparable in many respects to outputs observed in situations of language contact<sup>86</sup> placing it firmly within Gaunt’s “translation zone”.<sup>87</sup>

Despite these differences in the case system across all three texts and the differing degrees of linguistic interference from the native Italo-Romance varieties of those involved in their production,<sup>88</sup> we are not dealing with unconstrained or less worthy varieties of Old French to be consigned to the margins of the linguistic history of the language.<sup>89</sup> Rather, if we wish to better understand and engage with the textual languages of the medieval period including Franco-Italian, then we need to fully acknowledge their linguistic heterogeneity and subject them to the serious meticulous study that we routinely devote to more canonical texts within the medieval French canon.<sup>90</sup> On this point, Gaunt insightfully notes how, although in the *Devisement* there is deviation from more conventionalized forms

80. Gaunt, *French literature abroad*, p. 42. See also *Le Roman de Troie en prose. Version du manuscrit Royal 20.D.I de la British Library de Londres (Prose 5)*, éd. L. Barbieri, Firenze, Edizioni del Galluzzo per la Fondazione Ezio Franceschini, 2023, p. 307.

81. Gaunt, *Marco Polo’s Le Devisement du Monde*, p. 79

82. Gaunt, *La “contaminazione” del testo medievale*, p. 19.

83. Bartholomaeis, *Storia de’ Normanni*, p. c.

84. Bartholomaeis, *Storia de’ Normanni*, pp. c-cii.; Bougy, *La langue improbable*, pp. 79-83; Lee, *Letteratura franco-italiana*, p. 97.

85. Bougy, *La langue improbable*, p. 85; see also Wunderli, Holtus, *La “renaissance”*, p. 11.

86. Lee, *Letteratura franco-italiana*, p. 97.

87. Gaunt, *Marco Polo’s Le Devisement du Monde*, p. 110.

88. See Wunderli, Holtus, *La “renaissance”*, p. 5.

89. See Gaunt, *Texte et/ou manuscrit?*, pp. 29-30.

90. See S. Fleischman, *Methodologies and ideologies in historical linguistics: on working with older languages*, in *Textual Parameters in Older Languages*, ed. by S.C. Herring, P. Th. van Reenen and L. Schøsler, Amsterdam, Benjamins, 2000, pp. 33-58, p. 45; Gaunt, *Texte et/ou manuscrit?*, p. 15.

of French, such deviations are so systematic throughout the text that they should not be summarily dismissed as inconsistencies born of disorder and confusion.<sup>91</sup> On the contrary, in such cases we must recognize that «chaque manuscrit présente un système linguistique cohérent qui peut être considéré à part entière».<sup>92</sup> This is precisely what we have seen in our three texts where, despite some substantial differences in the functionality and distribution of formal case distinctions in their respective nominal systems, we have highlighted an overall internal consistency in each of the nominal systems which we briefly recap and compare here.

The case system of the *Histoire ancienne* is summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: Case system in *Histoire ancienne*

	Class 1 WALL(S)		Class 2 FATHER(S)		Class 3 BARON(S)		Summary	
	Sg	Pl	Sg	Pl	Sg	Pl	Sg	Pl
Nom	<b><i>murs</i></b>	<i>mur</i>	<b><i>pere(s)</i></b>	<i>pere</i>	<b><i>ber(s)</i></b>	<i>baron</i>	<b>x</b>	
Obl	<i>mur</i>	<i>mur-s</i>	<i>pere</i>	<i>pere-s</i>	<i>baron</i>	<i>baron-s</i>		y(-s)

As a fully functioning case system, one possible analysis of Class 1 nouns is to treat them as exhibiting just two forms, a marked synchronically undecomposable nominative singular *murs* (namely, a single unanalysable unit and not a decomposable form *\*mur-s*) which contrasts with an unmarked elsewhere (viz. underspecified) form *mur*, subsuming all the remaining cells of the paradigm. This analysis is supported by Class 3 nouns where we find an identical contrast between a marked undecomposable nominative singular *ber(s)* and an elsewhere form *baron* where the relevant opposition does not hinge on the adjunction of a final *-s*, but on stem allomorphy. On this view, the oblique plural must be analysed as consisting of the unmarked form augmented by a plural morpheme *-s* (viz. *mur-s*, *baron-s*, and not *\*murs*, *\*barons*), an analysis which correctly captures the fact that, without exception, the oblique plural is always transparently built on the corresponding oblique singular through adjunction of final *-s*.<sup>93</sup> This analysis also naturally extends to Class 2 nouns where, by analogy with Class 1 (and optionally with Class 3), the nominative singular also typically develops a marked undecomposable form in *-s*, viz. *pere(s)*, contrasting in turn with the unmarked form *pere(-s)*. We can then summarize the case system of the *Histoire ancienne* by way of the non-iconic paradigmatic representation in the final section of Table 5.<sup>94</sup> Recall finally that the small number of aberrations from this paradigm, where

91. Gaunt, *Marco Polo's Le Devisement du Monde*, p. 84.

92. Gaunt, *Texte et/ou manuscrit?*, p. 6.

93. Price, *The French Language*, p. 97.

94. See also Detges, "How useful is case morphology?", p. 98.

12 examples of nominals in subject function were found to occur with oblique marking, also form an internally consistent class within the system picking out UNDERGOER subjects in accordance with a growing active-inactive alignment.

Moving on to the *Devisement*, the nominal system found in the grammar of this text can be summarized by way of Table 6.

Table 6: Case system in *Devisement dou monde*

	Class 1 WALL(S)		Class 2 FATHER(S)		Class 3 BARON(S)		Summary	
	Sg	Pl	Sg	Pl	Sg	Pl	Sg	Pl
Nom	<i>mur/murs</i>	<i>mur-s/mur</i>	<i>pere/pere(s)</i>	<i>pere-s/pere</i>	<i>baron</i>	<i>baron-s/baron</i>		
Obl	<i>mur</i>	<i>mur-s</i>	<i>pere</i>	<i>pere-s</i>	<i>baron</i>	<i>baron-s</i>	x	-s

We see that there has been a major restructuring in the nominative singular where the marked sigmatic form *murs/peres* has now been predominantly replaced by the unmarked undifferentiated form *mur/pere*, a process taken to its logical conclusion in Class 3 nouns where marked nominative singular forms (with or without final analogical -s) such as *ber(s)* ‘baron’, *lerre(s)* ‘thief’, *enfes* ‘child’, *abés* ‘abbot’, *niés* ‘nephew’, *emperere(s)* ‘emperor’ and *(h)om/uem* ‘man’ have now been entirely replaced by unmarked *baron*, *larron*, *enfant*, *abé*, *neveu/nevou*, *emperaor* and *home* (much more rarely displaying analogical -s).<sup>95</sup> With the reduced frequency of the marked nominative singular in Classes 1 and 2, and hence the increasing loss of final -s from the singular, the plural morpheme -s of the oblique plural has made significant inroads into plural nominals in subject function, such that it has come to be reanalysed as a generalized marker of plural number as part of an iconic opposition between an unmarked singular and a

95. In a small number of cases, e.g. *compains/conpa(i)(n)gnons* ‘fellow’ (see also discussion of *sir(s)/seignor(s)* ‘lord’ in footnote 43), both forms continue to co-occur, but are no longer functionally distributed according to the traditional paradigm of Class 3 nouns illustrated in Table 1, but now represent sigmatic allomorphs in free variation, e.g. nom.sg. *compains* vs nom.pl *compains/compagnons* vs obl.pl *compains/compagnons* (see Marco Polo, *Le Devisement dou monde*, a cura di Burgio, p. 81). More rarely we find generalization of the original nominative singular in all functions, e.g. *cuens/cuenz* ‘count’ (*ibidem*, p. 89), without trace of the original unmarked form *conte(-s)*. With the exception of the impersonal *l’en* ‘one’ (and variants *ibidem*, p. 184 f.) and *home(-s)* ‘man’ (< (ILLE) HOMO/HOMINEM), there appear not to be any cases of refunctionalization of the original nominative-oblique pairs attested in modern French (J.C. Smith, *Some refunctionalizations of the nominative-accusative opposition between Latin and Gallo-Romance*, in *A Companion in Linguistics: a Festschrift for Anders Ahlqvist on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. by B. Smelik, R. Hofman, C. Hamans and D. Cram, Nijmegen, De Keltische Draak, 2005, pp. 269-285; Id., *Change and continuity in form-function relationships*, in *The Cambridge History of the Romance Languages*, ed. by M. Maiden, J.C. Smith and A. Ledgeway, I, *Structures*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 268-317).

marked plural, as summarized in the final section of Table 6. This paradigmatic pattern is further replicated by the determiners where, for example, the masculine definite article, save very few exceptions and excluding articulated prepositional forms, formally distinguishes between a singular *le* (43 occ.) and a plural *le-s* (92 occ.), with just 4 residual examples of *li* (nom.sg: 1, nom.pl: 2, obl.pl: 1).

Further internal structural consistency within the system was highlighted in relation to the apparently free variation between residual marked and unmarked forms of the nominative singular (e.g. *murs* vs *mur*) and the apparently optional extension of final *-s* to plural nominals in subject function (e.g. *mur* vs *murs*). In both cases the adoption of a form corresponding to the original oblique was demonstrated to predominantly involve unaccusative clauses, though with a not insignificant number of extensions to transitive and unergative clauses. The overall distribution points to an original active-inactive alignment, robust evidence of which was observed in the more conservative *Histoire ancienne*, but which shows signs of attrition through the progressive extension of erstwhile oblique marking to transitive/unergative subjects that will eventually lead to the generalization of the oblique as part of a new innovative nominative-accusative alignment in the nominal domain.

Finally, we turn to the nominal system operative in the *Ystoire de li Normant* illustrated in Table 7.

Table 7: Case system in *Ystoire de li Normant*

	Class 1 WALL(S)		Class 2 FATHER(S)		Class 3 BARON(S)		Summary	
	Sg	Pl	Sg	Pl	Sg	Pl	Sg	Pl
Nom	<i>mur</i> (/murs)	<i>mur</i> (/mur-s)	<i>pere</i> (/pere(s))	<i>pere</i> (/pere-s)	<i>baron</i>	<i>baron</i> (/baron-s)	x(-s)	
Obl	<i>mur</i>	<i>mur/mur-s</i>	<i>pere</i>	<i>pere/pere-s</i>	<i>baron</i>	<i>baron/baron-s</i>		

In contrast to the other two texts, and no doubt due to the influence of the translator's native Campanian dialect<sup>96</sup> which, apart from some distinctions in the pronouns,<sup>97</sup> entirely lacks a case system, there is now at best only very residual fragmentary evidence of case distinctions in the nominal system. In particular, marked forms of the nominative singular, and hence retention of final *-s*, have all but disappeared, and even in the plural the expansion of the plural marker *-s*, which was seen to be well on the way to becoming generalized in the *Devisement*,

96. Bougy, *La langue improbable*, p. 80; Lee, *Letteratura franco-italiana*, p. 97.

97. See A. Ledgeway, *Grammatica diacronica del napoletano*, Tübingen, Niemeyer, 2009, Chapter 8; also V. Formentin, *Flessione bicasuale del pronome relativo in antichi testi italiani centro-meridionali*, in «Archivio glottologico italiano», 81 (1996), pp. 133-176.

has been largely reversed and is now restricted to occurring in object function and considerably less frequently as the object of a preposition. Undoubtedly, this gradual yet well-advanced process of eradication of *-s* is to be interpreted in the context of interference from the translator's native Campanian which lacks entirely final *-s* (see *NOS* > *nuj(e)* 'we', *CANES* > *cani* > *cane* [-ə] 'dogs') and which also provides a direct model for a simple singular-plural opposition in the definite article *lo* vs *li*.<sup>98</sup> However, the distribution of plural *-s* in object function in the text is not random, but has been shown to follow specific semantic and formal principles as part of an innovation by the translator. In particular, in the absence of a determiner/quantifier the bare nominal predominantly displays overt marking for number via *-s* as the sole marker of plural number, but shows phonological and/or orthographic variation in the presence of an overt determiner/quantifier in accordance with the sigmatic nature or otherwise of the latter. This situation is summarized in the final section of Table 7 where, in contrast to the regular opposition seen in the *Devisement* between an unmarked singular and marked plural, this iconic opposition is at best only partially present and predominantly overtaken by a simple undifferentiated form.

## 6. Conclusion

Contrary to a once common view that in the case of Franco-Italian texts we are a mere step away from a process of creolization in which the nature of the linguistic output is chaotic and unpredictable,<sup>99</sup> the three case studies examined in this article have highlighted how within this apparent chaos there are indisputable regularities manifested in the formal and structural patterns which are repeated throughout the texts.<sup>100</sup> As a consequence, descriptions and definitions of the language of Franco-Italian texts as instantiating a hybrid variety where French and Italian forms are mixed is misleading since, as emphasized by Gaunt, we are not dealing with forms or structures which can be judged to deviate more or less from a given French or Italo-Romance norm.<sup>101</sup> Rather, we are dealing with

98. See Ledgeway, *Grammatica diacronica*, § 5.1.1. In our sample, the singular form of the article is *lo* in 91 examples (subject: 21, direct object: 33, prepositional object: 37), with just 17 examples of *li* (subject: 11, direct object: 6) and 2 examples of *le* (subject: 1, prepositional object: 1). In the plural, the form of the article is predominantly *li* with 191 examples (subject: 72, direct object: 45, prepositional object: 74), in contrast to just 8 examples of *les* (subject: 1, direct object: 7).

99. See A. Varvaro, *Storia della lingua: passato e prospettive di una categoria controversa*, in A. Varvaro, *La parola nel tempo. Lingua, società e storia*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1984, pp. 9-77, p. 70 (originally published in 1972-1973); Ineichen, *La mescolanza delle forme linguistiche*, p. 69.

100. Wunderli, Holtus, *Zum Verhältnis von Oralität*, p. 77; E. Blasco Ferrer, review of *La versione franco-italiana della 'Bataille d'Aliscans': Codex Marcianus fr. VIII [=252]*, a cura di G. Holtus, Tübingen, Niemeyer, 1895, in «Medioevo Romanzo», 11 (1986), pp. 299-302, p. 301; Wunderli, "Interferenze" in franco-italiano, p. 126.

101. Gaunt, *French literature abroad*, pp. 54-55.

autonomous linguistic systems characterized by undeniable internal consistency and stability, as demonstrated by our comparative investigation of the individual developments and structural organizations of three case systems which, despite superficial appearances, each reveal a remarkable degree of structured regularity in the distribution of individual forms. This serves as a salutary lesson to those who too hastily dismiss as unstructured instability apparent cases of inconsistent or random distributions. For example, the apparent instability of final *-s* identified by Wunderli in the Franco-Italian *Aquilon de Bavière* leads him to conclude that the case system had effectively ceased to function, but the results of our investigation highlight how detailed analysis of the text along the lines of that carried out above may reveal a quite different picture.<sup>102</sup>

One persistent and unresolved question about Franco-Italian is the extent to which it may be considered to refer to a homogeneous linguistic variety and, in particular, what, if any, features Franco-Italian texts from different parts of Italy share.<sup>103</sup> A widely accepted view is that Franco-Italian is not a homogeneous or standardized variety, in that the language of each text presents its own individual and unmistakable physiognomy as an exponent of an otherwise variegated body of texts.<sup>104</sup> Wunderli, by contrast, argues for the recognition of a limited number of very general principles and phenomena recurrent across a large number of texts, although, admittedly, they fail to provide a truly exhaustive characterization of Franco-Italian.<sup>105</sup> In this context, the results of our investigation reinforce the heterogeneous nature of Franco-Italian, with each of the three nominal systems displaying significant differences in the distribution of, and formal oppositions between, markers of case and number. At the same time it should, however, be remembered that in the Middle Ages even “native” varieties of French produced within France, whether defined in medieval or modern terms, had not undergone any discernible process of homogenization but were still characterized by considerable linguistic variation.<sup>106</sup>

The linguistic testimonies, however diverse, offered to us through our three texts, and Franco-Italian in general, are not therefore to be interpreted as deviations from some idealized linguistic norm, but simply reflect one particular manifestation of what is conventionally termed medieval French. In this regard it should be recalled that, in contrast to the centrifugal model of textual transmission routinely assumed for medieval French,<sup>107</sup> some of the earliest and most significant works of French literature were composed outside France, sometimes

102. Wunderli, “*Interferenze*” in *franco-italiano*, p. 131.

103. Barbato, *Il franco-italiano*, p. 50.

104. L. Morlino, *Spunti per un riesame della costellazione letteraria franco-italiana*, in «Francigena», 1 (2015), pp. 5-81, p. 31.

105. Wunderli, “*Interferenze*” in *franco-italiano*, p. 126.

106. Zinelli, *Espaces franco-italiens*, p. 209.

107. For a recent critique of this view, see M. Glessgen, *La genèse d'une norme en français au Moyen Âge: mythe et réalité du “francien”*, in «Revue de Linguistique Romane», 81 (2017), pp. 312-397, p. 316 and Gaunt, *Texte et/ou manuscrit?*, pp. 1-2.

by scribes whose native language was not necessarily French, or, at the very least, come to us through manuscripts produced outside France, particularly England and Italy.<sup>108</sup> As Cornish reminds us, «there was a literature in French a good hundred and fifty years before there was one in Italian»<sup>109</sup> such that Italians «chose to write in French because for Italians of the time it was the only available legitimate vernacular alternative to Latin».<sup>110</sup> Franco-Italian is therefore not so much the product of a deliberate literary or stylistic choice, but arose out of necessity in those areas where high literary culture had not (yet) adopted the local vernacular.<sup>111</sup> Consequently, for a long time those that adopted French outside France, notably in Italy<sup>112</sup> but also more widely across the Mediterranean,<sup>113</sup> did so as if it were their own, since French represented a vehicle of vernacular literature, not a birth right.<sup>114</sup>

Within this context, the present contribution is to be seen as part of a more general endeavour to promote a less Franco-centric history of medieval French which has traditionally tended to dismiss the language of Franco-Italian texts as a combination of textual corruption and authorial linguistic incompetence. The evidence reviewed here, by contrast, supports Gaunt's position that the linguistic features of these texts deserve serious linguistic scrutiny since it has the potential to reveal internal consistency in the linguistic choices made by authors, copyists and translators operating in French outside of France.<sup>115</sup> In the Middle Ages, Gaunt hypothesizes, «the kind of distinctions and boundaries between different languages and dialects that philologists often impose on texts (French vs. Italian, Tuscan vs. Venetian etc.) may simply not pertain in the same way as in the cultivated and literate communities of modern Europe».<sup>116</sup> On this view, the types of formal and structural variation witnessed in the nominal system of our three texts should not be marginalized as corrupt or lesser examples of Old French, but fully integrated into a more inclusive definition of medieval French and its internal articulations.<sup>117</sup>

108. Gaunt, *Linguistic difference*, p. 43; Id., *French literature abroad*, p. 26; Id., *Texte et/ou manuscript?*, p. 15.

109. A. Cornish, *Translatio Galliae: Effects of early Franco-Italian exchange*, in «Romanic Review», 97 (2006), pp. 309-330, p. 310.

110. Gaunt, *Marco Polo's Le Devisement du Monde*, p. 173.

111. Lee, *Letteratura franco-italiana*, p. 93.

112. Gaunt, *French literature abroad*, p. 49.

113. Gaunt, *Linguistic difference*, p. 45.

114. Cornish, *Translatio Galliae*, p. 310.

115. Gaunt, *Linguistic difference*.

116. Gaunt, *Marco Polo's Le Devisement du Monde*, p. 93.

117. Gaunt, *La "contaminazione" del testo medievale*, p. 10.