Rethinking Romance Microvariation through sī

Sam Wolfe, University of Oxford

Much of this variation can be attributed to variation within the left periphery of standard and non-standard Romance varieties (cf. Manzini & Savoia 2003, 2010; Damonte 2005; Ledgeway 2010; Benincà & Munaro 2010; Haegeman 2012; Cruschina 2012; Corr 2016; Cruschina & Ledgeway 2016; §31.3).
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Emphasise both homogeneity of SVO syntax and overall continuity in core clausal syntax from early Romance to the present day (Lemieux & Dupuis 1995; Kaiser 2002; Rinke 2007; Sitaridou 2011, 2012)
A Different Approach

Homogeneity in V2 syntax but rich variation in other domains (Poletto 2013; Wolfe 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018)

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### General Romance Background

**A Different Approach**

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The microvariation found in the medieval period may correlate with a purported North/South split (Zamboni 1998, 2000) in Romance syntactic typology (Ledgeway 2012:312-319; Wolfe 2018, in press)
Continuity and Microvariation
Microvariation and SI
Continuity and Microvariation

V-to-C Movement
Germanic and Romance Inversion
Matrix/Embedded Asymmetries

Licensing of Pro
Availability of New Information Focus
Loci of Finite Verb Probe and EF
Continuity and Microvariation

V-to-C Movement

Germanic and Romance Inversion

Matrix/Embedded Asymmetries

Increasing consensus that this is a pan-Medieval Romance phenomenon (Benincà 2013; Ledgeway 2012; Poletto 2014; Wolfe 2018)
Both reported for French and Italian (Adams 1987b:4; Roberts 1993:$2.2; Vance 1997:78-79; Salvesen & Bech 2014:223; Poletto 2014) but found across Medieval Sicilian, Sardinian, Occitan, Spanish and Piedmontese (Wolfe 2016, 2018)
G-Inversion consistently correlates with discourse-linking and OLD information subjects, whereas R-inversion typically occurs with quantified, heavy and NEW information subject expressions (Wolfe 2018:Ch 3-7)
et en faciendo estos seguramientos, ha él ya pensado
and in make.PROG these assurances have.3SG he already think.ptcp

‘And in making these assurances, he has already thought . . . ’(OSp., Lucanor)

διαφορά

e ancora eranu vivi alcuni pirsuni
and still be.3PL.PST alive some people

‘And some people were still alive . . . ’(OSic., Gregoriu)
G-Inversion consistently correlates with discourse-linking and OLD information subjects, whereas R-inversion typically occurs with quantified, heavy and NEW information subject expressions (Wolfe 2018:Ch 3-7)
SVO dominant in embedded domain in all varieties except Sardinian (embedded VSO, see Virdis 1996; Lombardi 2007 and Wolfe 2015)
V-to-C Movement

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Microvariation and Si Continuity and Microvariation
Licensing of Pro

Availability of New Information Focus

Loci of Finite Verb Probe and EF

V1 clauses heavily restricted in French after 1200 and certain later Old Spanish varieties, but widespread in Occitan, SIDs and Early Old French
New Information Focus licensed across the earliest texts but seemingly lost by the 13th century in most Northern Romance varieties.
Poletto (2002) and Wolfe (2015, 2016, 2018) - The locus of V2 effects can vary within the left periphery. Minimally this concerns Fin or Force.
Continuity and Microvariation

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SI
Adont si atirent leurs messages
Then si take.3PL.PST their messages
‘Then they take their messages’ (Fleischman 1991:260)
Adont *sì* atirent leurs messages
Then *sì* take.3PL.PST their messages
‘Then they take their messages’ (Fleischman 1991:260)  

Old French

Spissi *culpi mortali sì le dava*
frequent blows mortal  *sì* CL gave
‘He struck him with many deadly blows’ (Ledgeway 2008:438)  

Old Neapolitan
**Old French**

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**Old Neapolitan**

*Spissi cuolpi mortali si le dava*
frequent blows mortal SI CL gave
‘He struck him with many deadly blows’ (Ledgeway 2008:438)

**Old Occitan**

*Guillem de la Tor si fon joglars*
Guillem de la Tor SI be.3SG.PST jongleur
‘Guillem de la Tor was a jongleur’ (Wolfe 2018:§2.2.4)
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Guillems de la Tor si fon joglars
Guillem de la Tor Si be.3SG.PST jongleur
‘Guillem de la Tor was a jongleur’ (Wolfe 2018:§2.2.4)

Après si li dist
After Si CL say.3SG.PST
‘Afterwards, he said to him’ (Sermoni Subalpini, 1, 140, 36)
Microvariation and SI
Continuity and Microvariation
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V-to-C Movement
Germanic and Romance Inversion
Matrix/Embedded Asymmetries

Licensing
Availability of New Information
Focus
Loci of Finite Verb Probe and EF

Continuity or microvariation?
The literature on the particle *sì* across Medieval Romance is truly vast is full of claims which are often in direct conflict with one another.
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**Points of Agreement:**

Derived from a temporal deictic adverbial sic, itself < VP adverb ‘like this’ (Salvi 2004:15 n. 66; Rosén 2005:228-230; Pinsker 2006:65, 107-108; Ledgeway in press a)

Abundance across the textual record (Foulet 1928:300; Marchello-Nizia 1985:2; Benincà 1995:333; Salvi 2002)

Si is located in the C-layer (Benincà 1995, 2004, 2006; Poletto 2006, 2013; Ledgeway 2008; Salvesen 2013)
Microvariation and Sì
Previous Research on Sì

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Different Analyses:


Sì is a Head which is an alternative (Ledgeway 2008:452-465) or complementary strategy (Ferraresi & Goldbach 2002:18-23) to V-to-C movement

Sì is a Fin (2013:143), Focus (Poletto 2005:218, Benincà 2006:64 or Force (Wolfe 2018) expletive
Microvariation and Si

Previous Research on Si

The Topic Continuity Account

Si does not occur at the beginning of a portion of text in either French or Sicilian (in line with Marchello-Nizia 1985:25; Ménard 1988:328; Lemieux & Dupuis 1995:96; Vance 1997:54; Van Reenen & Schøsler 2000:86; Buridant 2000:508; Bonnard & Régnier 2008:209)
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**Old French, Villehardouin1 86, 4**

> *ceste ville* *si est* *mult riche*
>
> this town si be.3SG very rich
>
> ‘and this town is very rich ...’

**Old Sicilian, Gregoriu 11, 18**

> *chisto monaco* *sì ricuntava* *multe cose...*
>
> this monk si tell.3SG.pst many things
>
> ‘this monk told him many things’
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**Givón's (1983) Topic Accessibility Hierarchy**

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Even more problematically Si also occurs with brand NEW information subjects (This has generally gone undiscussed)
E si i furente e Gerin e Gerers
and SI LOC.CL=be.3PL.PST and Gerin and Gerers
‘And Gerin and Gerer were there’
(Old French Roland 107)

in chilla vallij sì era unu homu de amirabilj virtuti
in that valley si be.3SG.PST a man of admirable virtues
(Old Sicilian Gregoru, 34, 18)
The Head Account

Sì occurs with both G- and R-Inversion in Old French and R-Inversion in Old Sicilian. This is the exact effect fronted XPs have but unexpected if sì is a Head (pace Ledgeway 2008:444-445)
'When they [the covenants] were completed, it was kept secret that we would go to Babylon' (Old French, Villehardouin1, 30, 3)

‘And there (where the altar of Apollo was), Saint Benedict gave an oration (Old Sicilian, Gregorii 51, 1)
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If Head Sì co-occurs with verb movement through Head adjunction the wrong order of V + sì is predicted (Ledgeway 2008:439, n.3)

We are also left with a conceptual problem of formulating a potentially ad-hoc account of why in a V2 language V-to-C movement obtains in all contexts except where sì is present

The Head Account
The Phrasal Expletive Account

Fits with the observation that **si** is difficult to define in semantic terms. Foulet 1928:§300; Skårup 1975:238-239; Jensen 1990:472-473; Roberts 1993:330; Vance 1995:185; 1997:53; Benincà 2006; Poletto 2005)
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Parallel distribution to V2-satisfying XPs: Near-total absence in the embedded domain in asymmetric later Old French Lemieux & Dupuis 1995:96; Ferraresi & Goldbach 2002:11, 2003:113) and more frequent in more symmetrical Old Sicilian (Wolfe 2018:Ch3)
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But is there more we can say?
Microvariation and Si

SI IN OLD SICILIAN
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Old Sicilian șı can be preceded by a range of constituents, but shows an overwhelming tendency to occur in third or more position or to be preceded by a clause.
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Chisto Pietro, vedendo sancto Gregorio afflicto, sì llo ademandao
This Pietro see.PROG Saint Gregory suffering si CL ASK.3SG.PST
‘This Pietro, seeing Saint Gregory suffering, asked him...’ (Gregoriu 5, 8)
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**Chisto Pietro, vedendo sancto Gregorio afflicto, sì llo ademandao**

This Pietro see. PROG Saint Gregory suffering SI CL ASK.3SG.PST

‘This Pietro, seeing Saint Gregory suffering, asked him...’ (Gregoriu 5, 8)

**Lu cumpagnuni di Eneas, audendu lu bonu parlari di la regina**

the companions of Eneas hear. PROG the good words of the queen

**et girandusi ad Eneas sì li dissì**

and turn. PROG.CL to Eneas SI CL say.3PL.PST

‘Eneas’s companions, hearing the positive words of the queen and turning to him said...’ (Eneas 20, 9)
Microvariation and S
SI IN OLD SICILIAN

- ET + SI
- SI + V
- Object DP
- Subject
- Adv
- PP
- Clause
- SI3*

Eneas (1316-1337)
Microvariation and Si
SI IN OLD SICILIAN

ET + SI
SI + V
Object DP
Subject
Adv
PP
Clause
SI3*

Gregoriu (c.1330)
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**Pietro sì adimanda ad sancto Gregorio**

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**Pietro sì adimanda ad sancto Gregorio**

Pietro si ask.3SG.PST to Saint Gregory

‘Pietro asked Saint Gregory...’ (Gregoriu, 8, 19)

**chisto monaco sì trovao uno grande serpente... Lo serpente sì llo secutao**

this monk SI find.3SG.PST a great serpent the serpent SI CL follow.3SG.PST

‘This monk found a great snake, the snake followed him....’ (Gregoriu 11, 27)
Microvariation and Si

SI IN OLD SICILIAN
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This observation also extends to the small number (n=5) of fronted direct objects found in Gregoriu, which are all discourse-active (cf. Prince 1981:243; Chafe 1987; Lambrecht 1994:165). The same applies to prepositional objects:
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\[
\begin{align*}
\text{et} & \quad \text{chesta tentacione sì lo fice} \\
\text{and this} & \quad \text{temptation SI CL do.3SG.PST} \\
\text{‘And this (type of) temptation happened...’} & \quad (\text{Gregoriu, 12, 22})
\end{align*}
\]

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\begin{align*}
\text{e} & \quad \text{kista parte sì tene} \quad \text{tuctu} \\
\text{and this} & \quad \text{part SI keep.3SG.PST} \quad \text{all} \\
\text{‘and all (...) keep this part...’} & \quad (\text{Gregoriu 77, 17})
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**et** *chesta tentacione sì lo fice*

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‘And this (type of) temptation happened...’ (Gregoriu, 12, 22)

**e** *kista parte sì tene tuctu*

and this part SI keep.3SG.PST all

‘and all (...) keep this part...’ (Gregoriu 77, 17)

**et** *de le cose che erano all'orto sì nde li donao...*

and of the things that were at=the=vegetable garden SI CL CL give.3SG.PST

‘And he gave... from all the things that were in the vegetable garden’ (Gregoriu 12, 6)
Microvariation and Si

SI IN OLD SICILIAN
Orders where Sī is the third, fourth or even fifth constituent are extensively attested (c.43% of attestations) in both texts. V3* orders are typical of Early Italo-Romance varieties (Benincà 2004, 2006; Ledgeway 2009; Poletto 2006, 2014; Wolfe 2015, 2016, 2018).
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Lo abbate, audendo ço, sì llo salutao
the abbot hear.PROG this SI CL greet.3SG.PST
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‘Hearing this, the abbot greeted him...’ (Gregoriu 15, 9)

Allura, Eneas, videndu fugiri li Latini, sì ordina di andari
then Eneas see.PROG leave.INF the Latini si order.3SG to go.INF
‘Then, Eneas seeing the Latini leave gave the order to go...’ (Eneas 214, 17)
Microvariation and Si

**SI IN OLD SICILIAN**

Frame > Force > Topic > Focus > Fin

Microvariation and Si

**SI IN OLD SICILIAN**


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**What is si’s function in Old Sicilian?**
Microvariation and Si

**SI IN OLD SICILIAN**

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What is si’s function in Old Sicilian?  Where should Old Sicilian si be located in an articulated left periphery of this type?
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Only 14/47 si clauses have an entirely unambiguous overt subject. Postverbal subjects also very rare (n=3) and are ACTIVE or ACCESSIBLE in Lambrecht’s (1994) terms.
What is si’s function in Old Sicilian?

In *Eneas* we see the strongest evidence for a Topic continuity analysis of the type advocated by Fleischman (1990) and others.

Nevertheless there is 'leakage' in this system, with CLAUSE + SI and SI-third cases still accounting for the majority of the data.
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Nevertheless there is 'leakage' in this system, with CLAUSE + SI and SI-third cases still accounting for the majority of the data.

Poi adunca ki Iuppiter appi audutu a Venus, sì li rispusi
Then therefore that Jupiter had heard to Venus si CL respond.3SG.PST
‘Then, once Jupiter had spoken to Venus, he responded...’ (*Eneas*, 12, 10)
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Microvariation and Si

**SI IN OLD SICILIAN**

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De chistu Bonifaciu sì recunta multi miraculi unu previte

of this Bonifaciu sì tell.3sg many miracles a priest

‘A priest told of many miracles performed by this Bonifaciu’ (Gregoriu 22, 22)
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This strongly supports the alternative V2 expletive account of Si.
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Si can readily be preceded by multiple XPs in both texts, suggesting it is relatively low with the CP.
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But *after the death of Eneas*

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Proposal: Si occupies Spec-FinP in both Old Sicilian texts, but for distinct formal syntactic and pragmatic reasons.
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Si merged in SpecFinP

Si is a last resort V2 satisfier
But what does ‘last resort’ mean?
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Holmberg (2015, forthcoming): V2 is only satisfied by internal merge.
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All constituents co-occurring with șî are Topics or Frame-setters. These are base-generated (Cinque 1990; Benincà & Poletto 2004; Frascarelli 2008) so cannot satisfy V2.
Microvariation and Si

SI IN OLD FRENCH
Old French șI can be preceded by multiple constituents but șI-third orders are never frequent within the corpus.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Si Third</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>% of Corpus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roland 1100</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charrette 1177-1181</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villehardouin 1199–1213</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clari 1205</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queste 1225–1230</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Microvariation and Si

SI IN OLD FRENCH
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SI IN OLD FRENCH
In terms of pragmatics, preverbal constituents are discourse old as in Sicilian after the 12th century. Prior to this, there are a small number of focal constituents occurring before *si* (New Information Focus being widely licensed preverbally in Early Medieval Romance, cf. Poletto 2014:Ch1 and Wolfe 2016:§3).
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Cunquerrantment si finereit li bers
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‘The Lord would end his life as a conquering hero’ (Roland 2867)
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\begin{align*}
\text{Cunquerrantment} & \quad \text{si finereit} \quad \text{li bers} \\
\text{conquering.ADV} & \quad \text{si} \quad \text{end.3SG.COND} \quad \text{the nobleman} \\
‘The Lord would end his life as a conquering hero’ \quad (\text{Roland 2867})
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{Reis Vivien si succuras} & \quad \text{en Imphe} \\
\text{King Vivien si help.2SG.FUT in Imphe} \\
‘\text{help King Vivien there in Imphe}’ \quad (\text{Roland 3995-3996})
\end{align*}
Microvariation and Si

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In a parallel fashion to Sicilian, Wolfe (2018:343-344) shows that the proportion of overt subjects co-occurring with Si increases diachronically:
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>\textit{Roland} 1100</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Charrette} 1177-1181</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Villehardouin} 1199–1213</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>12.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Clari} 1205</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>24.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Queste} 1225–1230</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12.67</td>
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Unlike Sicilian, si-initial clauses make up a much larger proportion of the corpus (c. 70% > 45% > 38% > 39% > 32%) although decline diachronically:
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\texttt{Si tеноit chacuns une hache}

\textit{si} have.3SG.PST each an axe

‘Each had an axe’ (Charrette 31b, 1091)
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Microvariation and Si

SI IN OLD SICILIAN

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In the late 12th century texts, *Charrette* and *Villehardouin*, the distribution is broadly similar to *Gregorius*, with initial Frame-Setters and Topics permitted. V3 is qualitatively similar but never as widespread.
What is si’s function in Old French?
Microvariation and Si

SI IN OLD SICILIAN

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Adverbials are all Speaker Oriented or Frame-Setting adverbials (Poletto 2000: 100; Beninca & Poletto 2004: 66; Öhl 2010: 62)
Microvariation and S1

CONCLUSIONS
The data on SI are more heterogeneous than typical accounts suggest.
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Holmberg’s ‘V2 only satisfied by MOVE’ hypothesis is yet to be fully tested for Medieval Romance. If it is subject to variation, the low occurrence of Subject + Si configurations in French vs. Sicilian could be accounted for in terms of topicalisation via movement as opposed to MERGE. We still do not understand the changes that Si causes on the syntax of the languages in question.
Thank You