

# Residual Verb Second in French and Romance

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## Abstract

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This article revisits the classic definition of a Residual Verb Second language in light of evidence from the history of French, which is supplemented with synchronic evidence from the Romance languages. The core proposal is that following the loss of the Verb Second property French has successively lost multiple Verb Second correlates such that the grammar at different stages can be described as ‘more’ or ‘less’ Verb Second, according to the degree of left-peripheral phrasal or head movement permitted. Novel corpus data is presented for Renaissance and Classical French to show that the triggers for such movement become increasingly restricted along micro- and nanoparametric grounds. The gradient conception of Residual Verb Second which emerges from the data is also borne out in the Modern Romance languages, which are argued to instantiate multiple points on a typology of Verb Second residues according to the degree of left-peripheral phrasal movement or head movement that they license.

**Keywords:** Residual verb second, left periphery, verb movement, inversion, French.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. *Why Residual Verb Second?*

Studies of Verb Second (V2), which have had a central role in comparative syntax for the last half-century, have seen a resurgence in the past decade (Holmberg 2015; Meklenborg 2019; Lohnstein & Tsiknakis 2019; Woods & Wolfe 2020). The result is a broadened empirical scope for V2 studies within and outside of Indo-European,<sup>1</sup> and a refined understanding of how the empirical variation is modeled in formal terms. Despite these advances, relatively little recent research has revised or refined Rizzi's (1996) conception of a 'Residual Verb Second' language. The time is undoubtedly appropriate to revisit its original formulation; firstly, the number of languages now believed to have gone through a V2 stage is substantial, with the consequence that a refined understanding of the process of change a language goes through after having lost V2 is of broad crosslinguistic relevance. Secondly, our understanding of variation within and between V2 systems has improved considerably in recent years; this raises the possibility that the structure a particular V2 grammar has might be linked to the residues of the V2 property witnessed at later stages. Thirdly, as we will discuss further, the very conception of 'Residual Verb Second' as an explicitly diachronic label has recently been questioned by Sailor (2020) on the basis of English data. One can therefore ask if the conception is equally problematic when applied to other languages which have previously been granted Residual V2 status.

This article draws principally on novel post-medieval French data collected in Wolfe (2021a), though presents the data in their comparative Romance context. Its core finding is that Residual V2 can be used, with appropriate caution, as a diachronic label but – as with many other syntactic properties –<sup>2</sup> it should be understood in a more granular fashion than has been the case in the past; the consequence is that Residual V2 grammars can be described as having more or fewer V2 residues when compared to each other. This gradient understanding of Residual V2 applies in historical-diachronic terms to different stages of French and in synchronic terms to Modern Romance varieties.

### 1.2. *Background Assumptions*

In what follows, a cartographic approach to the left periphery is adopted, in line with work by Benincà (2001), Rizzi (1997, 2001, 2004, 2010), Benincà and Poletto (2004), Ledgeway (2010a) and many others. In summary, the highest portion of the left periphery is made up of projections which are associated with base-generated constituents modifying the entire speech act, encoding pragmatico-semantic features which may pertain to speaker attitude or be thought of as having a 'background' or 'scene-setting' function (Benincà & Poletto 2004; Haegeman 2006, 2012; Haegeman & Hill 2013; Borreguero Zuloaga 2014; Giorgi 2015), whereas the lower portions host

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<sup>1</sup> Away from the better studied Germanic varieties, see – amongst many others – Walkden (2014) on Early Germanic, Benincà (2004), Poletto (2014), and Wolfe (2018) on Medieval Romance, Meelen (2016) on Early Celtic, Manetta (2011) on Kashmiri, and van Urk (2015) on Dinka.

<sup>2</sup> Consider, for example, the very wide typology now acknowledged for null-subject systems, which show extensive microvariation (Roberts et al. 2010; Camacho 2013; Sheehan 2016; Cognola & Casalicchio 2018).

topics or foci, which in the former case may be either externally or internally merged, and are standardly assumed to be internally merged in the case of foci (Rizzi 1997, 2004b, 2010, 2017, 2018; Benincà 2001; Cruschina 2012). Following work by Cruschina (2006, 2012) in particular, I assume a layered set of focus projections hosting contrastive foci, quantified phrases, and new information foci in the lowest discourse-related projections of the left periphery. Finally, note that the Force and Fin heads ‘sandwich’ the topic-focus layers and in the canonical case are able to host complementizers in the Romance languages (Rizzi 1997; Paoli 2007; Villa-García 2012). As we will see in §2.1, these heads are also the target of finite verb movement in V2 systems.

- (1) Frame/HT > Force > Topic > Focus<sub>Contrastive</sub> > Quantifier > Focus<sub>Information</sub> > Fin

In this article the recent approach to parametric variation developed by Roberts (2019) and colleagues is adopted. Under this taxonomy of parametric variation, the presence of a relevant feature on a single functional head will yield microparametric variation, whilst the presence of this feature on a progressively larger class of heads will yield meso- and macroparametric variation; variation at the level of a particular lexical item – by contrast – would constitute nanoparametric variation. In our discussion of V2 residues, the relevant points of variation principally concern movement triggers. Consider in this regard the schema in (2) which will inform the analysis (Biberauer & Roberts 2012: 268):

- (2) For a given value  $v_i$  of a parametrically variant feature F:
- a. Macroparameters: all heads of the relevant type, e.g. all probes, all phase heads, etc., share  $v_i$ ;
  - b. Mesoparameters: all heads of a given natural class, e.g. [+V] or a core functional category, share  $v_i$ ;
  - c. Microparameters: a small, lexically definable subclass of functional heads, e.g. modal auxiliaries, subject clitics, share  $v_i$ ;
  - d. Nanoparameters: one or more individual lexical items is/are specified or share  $v_i$ .

In the discussion that follows we will see that this approach to parametric variation allows us to model the relevant ‘size’ of V2 residues which are left in a particular grammar after the loss of the V2 property.

## 2. Verb Second in French and Beyond

### 2.1. *Delimiting the V2 Property*

A necessary precursor to any discussion of Residual V2 is a satisfactory definition of a full V2 grammar. Although certain theoretical debates around the nature of the V2 property remain unresolved, our definition here is that a language has a V2 grammar when the following two properties are true of a language (cf. Holmberg 2015, 2020):

- (3) a. A functional head in the left periphery attracts the finite verb.  
 b. This head also bears a movement diacritic, triggering merger of a phrasal constituent.

This definition – a version of which is widely adopted in work on the V2 property (Cardinaletti & Roberts 2002; Roberts 2012; Salvesen 2013; Walkden 2014; Haegeman & Greco 2018; Wolfe 2019; Wolfe & Woods 2020) – moves away from a linear conception of the phenomenon based solely on the verb occupying second position of the clause, with the result that the typology of V2 systems has broadened considerably beyond the Modern Germanic systems upon which much seminal work originally focused. Identifying full V2 systems synchronically or historically therefore entails establishing the presence of syntactic indicators of the properties in (3). The literature in this area is vast but we should note that indicators of the verb-movement property (3a) include a preference for second position for the finite verb, save for structurally defined exceptions, and widespread ‘inversion’ structures when the subject in the extended inflectional and thematic domain appears lower in the functional structure than the moved verb in the left periphery (Diesing 1990; Holmberg & Platzack 1995; Vikner 1995; de Bakker 1997; Casalicchio & Cognola 2020):

- (4) a. I            går            møtte            Janne en        mann  
           in            yesterday        meet.3SG.PST Jane    a        man  
           ‘Yesterday, Jane met a man’ (Modern Norwegian, Salvesen 2013: 133)
- b. Ac    yn        diannoty        y        doeth            tan        o        r  
           and pred immediate        part        come.3SG.PST fire        from the  
           nef  
           heaven  
           ‘And without delay fire came from the sky’  
           (Middle Welsh, Dewi 86.218, Meelen 2020: 427)
- c. e            ancora            eranu            vivi        alcuni pirsuni  
           and            still            be.3PL.PST        alive        some people  
           ‘and some people were still alive’  
           (Old Sicilian, Gregoriu 162, Wolfe 2018: 28)

Moreover, the most prominent indicator that (3b) is a property of the grammar in question is a prefield hosting a wide variety of phrasal categories (Cardinaletti & Roberts 2002; Roberts 2012; Salvesen 2013; Wolfe & Woods 2020); as such, although surface SVO orders are found in all uncontroversial V2 systems observable today, XP<sub>Non-Subject</sub>-V(S)(O) orders are often viewed as hallmarks of a V2 grammar (Lightfoot 1995: 41; Westergaard 2008):

- (5) a. Johann            hat            das        Buch gekauft  
           Johann            have.3SG        the        book buy.PTCP
- b. das Buch hat            Johann            gekauft  
           the book have.3SG        Johann            buy.PTCP  
           ‘Johann has bought the book’ (Modern German)
- c. oft            hat            Johann            das        Buch gekauft  
           often            have.3SG        Johann            the        book buy.PTCP  
           ‘Johann has often bought the book’ (Modern German)

Simplifying slightly and subject to further revision below, a Residual V2 grammar is therefore likely to show residues of the properties in (3); these original properties in a full V2 grammar are systematic verb movement to a head in the left periphery and merger of a phrasal category in the specifier of that head.

## 2.2. *The V2 Syntax of Old and Middle French*

Since Thurneysen (1892) analyses of Old and Middle French have been advanced that suggest it had a form of V2 grammar. The core observations which led to this conclusion – unsurprising in light of our discussion in §2.1 – are that second position is the preferred position for the finite verb, that the prefield is not a specialized subject position but one that can host a range of grammatical categories with a variety of pragmatic roles (6) (Skårup 1975: 9–69; Roberts 1993: 85–87; Vance 1997: 43–47; Mathieu 2012: 327; Steiner 2014), and that the subject can appear postverbally in inversion structures; particularly significant in this regard are so-called Germanic-inversion structures such as (7), which unambiguously reveal the finite auxiliary to be occupying a C-related head position with the subject appearing in the T-layer (Adams 1987: 4; Roberts 1993: sec. 2.2; de Bakker 1997; Salvesen & Bech 2014; Wolfe 2020). We should note that these Germanic-inversion structures are attested alongside a less frequent Romance-inversion construction where the subject appears lower in the clausal hierarchy, likely at the *vP* periphery (8):<sup>3</sup>

- (6) a. Par Petit Pont sont en Paris entré  
       by Petit Pont be.3PL in Paris enter.PTCP  
       ‘They entered Paris by Petit Pont’ (Early Old French, Nîmes 11, 27)
- b. et ausi fist chascuns des autres  
    and also do.3SG.PST each of-the others  
    ‘And each of the others did the same’  
    (Later Old French, La Queste 344, 35–36)
- (7) Par tantes teres ad sun cors traveillet  
    over so-many lands have.3SG his body suffer.PTCP  
    ‘His body has suffered over so many lands’ (Early Old French, Roland 540)
- (8) Sur nus est venue male confusiun  
    upon us be.3SG come.PTCP bad disaster  
    ‘A great disaster has befallen us’ (Early Old French, Roland 2699)

There is an increasing consensus that although French was a V2 system from the time of its earliest textual attestations to approximately 1525, the nature of the system was subject to change during this time; this is an unsurprising finding if we consider the fine-grained variation between V2 systems spoken today (Jouitteau 2010; Lohnstein & Tsiknakis 2019; Woods & Wolfe 2020), and the fact that other V2 languages have undergone change during the period when a V2 constraint was operative in their

<sup>3</sup> For review and analysis of the relevant data, see De Bakker (1997), Salvesen & Bech (2014), and Wolfe (2020).

grammar.<sup>4</sup> In terms of the specific change that the system underwent in the case of French, two related issues are at stake: the height at which the V2 property was operative in the left periphery and the types of constituents which could appear in the prefield.

Since at least Hirschbühler (1990) it has been noted that there are significant distinctions between the Early Old French V2 constraint, its instantiation in Later Old French after approximately 1225, and the Middle French V2 system observable in 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century texts; this observation has since been developed by Roberts (1993), Vance (1993, 1995, 1997), Rouveret (2004), and Wolfe (2016a, 2018, 2021a) among others. The data are relatively complex, but the key points for our understanding of later developments are as follows: Early Old French presents clear evidence that the full range of left-peripheral projections can be lexicalised before the finite verb. As such, information foci (9), QPs, contrastive foci, topics – both null (10) and overt (11) –, and frame-setters can precede the verb.

(9) Un faldestoed i unt  
a chair LOC.CL have.3PL  
'They have a (folding) chair' (Early Old French, Roland 115)

(10) Vait s'en li pople  
go.3SG REFL.CL=PART.CL the people  
'The people go away' (Early Old French, Alexis 71, 1)

(11) Ço senefiet pais e humilitet  
this signify.3SG peace and humility  
'This signifies peace and humility' (Early Old French, Roland 73)

However, between 1180 and 1225 a notable change occurs whereby attestation of preverbal information foci declines considerably, and preverbal null topics are no longer licensed; it is therefore not atypical for Later Old French texts to feature no verb-initial sentences akin to those in (11). These observations, alongside the fact that verb-third sentences almost exclusively entail an initial frame-setter in Later Old French, have led Rouveret (2004), Wolfe (2016a), and Ledgeway (2021) to hypothesize that the locus of V2 changes from Early to Later Old French; while in Early Old French a low left-peripheral head, Fin, bears the Edge Feature (EF) and verb-movement trigger associated with V2, these features are also associated with a higher head in Later Old French, namely Force; this yields a descriptively stricter V2 system than what is found in early texts, with no verb-initial sentences, a highly restricted set of verb-third sentences, and a prefield which predominantly hosts topical constituents in V2 clauses (13):

(13) Ceste aventure veïstes vos aucune foiz  
this event see.2PL.PST you some time  
'You have sometimes seen this event' (Later Old French, La Queste 152.22)

<sup>4</sup> Consider in this regard English (Van Kemenade 1987; Kroch & Taylor 1997; Haeberli 2002; Walkden 2014), German (Axel 2004, 2007), Welsh (Willis 1998, 2007; Roberts 2004, 2005; Meelen 2016, 2020), Italian (Poletto 2014, 2019), and Portuguese (Ribeiro 1995; Galves & Paixão de Sousa 2013; Galves 2020), amongst many other languages.

Middle French shows a degree of continuity with the Later Old French system but also attests certain changes: the prefield predominantly hosts topical constituents, which is a point of continuity with Later Old French, and evidence for initial foci is scarce, although initial QPs are still attested. However, a point of variation when compared to Later Old French is the wider range of verb-third triggers which are found, not all of which can plausibly be analyzed as involving an initial frame-setter (cf. 14). Wolfe (2021b), on the basis of clauses like (14) and other pieces of evidence, suggests that the locus of Middle French V2 is Fin, as in (15).

- (14) a. A quoy le Roy fist response  
to which the King make.3SG.PST response  
'The king responded to this' (Middle French, Monstre 29)  
b. Pource je suis de vostre oppinion  
for this I be.1SG of your opinion  
'Because of this I agree with you' (Middle French, Jehpar 25)
- (15) a. Early Old French. Fin {+EF, *uV*}  
b. Later Old French. Fin {+EF, *uV*}, Force {+EF, *uV*}  
c. Middle French. Fin {+EF, *uV*}

### 2.3. Summary – The Fall of Full V2 and Rise of Residual V2

To summarize our discussion so far, we should note that Old and Middle French featured a V2 syntax throughout the medieval period until approximately 1525. This V2 syntax was not, however, a fully stable entity and underwent change during the five centuries in which it was attested. The most significant changes that we should note here are that the height of systematic V-to-C movement undergoes reanalysis from Fin to Force around 1225, and then again from Force to Fin around 1300. Furthermore, and linked to this change in the locus of verb movement, the range of constituents that can occur in the prefield undergoes change: whereas in Early Old French a full range of frame-setters, topics, and foci can precede the finite verb, in Later Old French and Middle French it is predominantly frame-setters and topics which may do so, alongside a small class of contrastive foci and QPs. A Middle French V2 grammar with V-to-Fin movement and a prefield predominantly hosting topics is therefore in operation in the period immediately before the loss of V2. As we will now see, this has an effect in conditioning the type of Residual V2 grammar we see in Renaissance French.

## 3. The Emergence of Residual Verb Second

### 3.1. What Counts as Residual Verb Second?

As noted at the beginning of this article, the Residual V2 label is originally used by Rizzi (1996) to describe inversion structures in Modern French and English, which – as we have established above in the case of French – are descended from the earlier full V2 systems attested in Old and Middle French and English.<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting

<sup>5</sup> See Fischer et al. (2000) for a review in the case of English.

from the outset, however, that although the notion that inversion structures in the modern languages are ‘derived’ from earlier full V2 structures is an intuitive one, Rizzi’s seminal analysis does not set out to make explicitly diachronic claims. In fact, showing direct derivation from a structure attested at one stage of a language to a subsequent stage is inherently problematic; if, as is standardly assumed in the generativist literature (Lightfoot 1991, 1999; Roberts 2021), syntactic acquisition involves abductive reanalysis of the Primary Linguistic Data (PLD), no structure is ever passed directly from one generation to the next and thus the concept of ‘residue’ should be taken as a shorthand for an overall more complex picture of reanalysis and change. Taking as our point of departure the bipartite definition of full V2 given in (3), in this article we consider Residual V2 as entailing structures where subsequent generations of acquirers reanalyze portions of the PLD as consistent with verb or XP movement into the left periphery. However, we will also see in the discussion that follows, that an understanding of subsequent reanalyses of these data towards structures that do not involve left-peripheral movement is also key to developing a robust account of syntactic change.

### 3.2. Left-Peripheral Phrasal Movement

The evidence is very clear that French loses the V2 system early in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Vance 1995; Roberts 1993; Kroch 2001; Steiner 2014; Wolfe 2021b). As we will see in §3.3, evidence for verb-subject inversion declines considerably from this point on, but we should also note here that – unlike Old and Middle French – constituent fronting to the left periphery is clearly no longer systematic either. Consider Table 1 in this regard, which shows a sample of matrix clauses from Wolfe (2021a: 72):

**Table 1.** Constituent Fronting in Renaissance and Classical French.

	<i>Rabelais (1532-34)</i>		<i>Montaigne (1580)</i>		<i>Phèdre (1677)</i>		<i>Candide (1759)</i>	
Total SVO	416	89.8%	382	91.4%	738	99.6%	802	99.1%
Total XP-V-(S)	47	10.2%	36	8.6%	3	0.4%	7	0.9%
Total O-V-S	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.13%	1	0.12%
Total Count	463	100.0%	418	100.0%	741	100.0%	809	100.0%

The data are systematic in showing that in upwards of c. 90% of matrix clauses the prefield hosts a subject, which is consistent with the notion that we are no longer dealing with a grammar where Fin bears a category-blind Edge Feature, as in Middle French but rather a grammar which is predominantly SVO, where EPP-effects are located in the T-*v* layer.

However, it is not the case that no non-subject constituents can be merged in the left periphery, as Table 1 attests; such cases are, however, extremely rare, with no focal DP objects, for example, found in initial position in any of the clauses in Table 1. One example of a focal PP-object is found in *Phèdre* (16), and the secondary literature includes cases of fronted QPs (17), which are found alongside contrastive foci:

(16) A nos amis communs portons nous justes cris  
 to our friends common bring.1PL we just cries  
 ‘We will bring our righteous complaints to our common friends’  
 (Classical French, Phèdre 5, 1, 1367)

(17) Autre chose ne me sceut il dire  
 other thing NEG me.CL know.3SG.PST he say.INF  
 ‘He couldn’t tell me anything else’  
 (Classical French, Biard 96, Combettes 2003: 180)

While fronted focal objects such as these are marginally attested in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, they are absent after this point (Marchello-Nizia 1995: 165). However, alongside QP-fronting of the type witnessed in (17), predicative adjectives and a wide class of adverbials can undergo focalization to the left periphery as in (18, 19). In both cases a large class of predicative adjectives and adverbials can originally be focalized in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but this class is later lexically defined and becomes increasingly restricted from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century onwards (Spillebout 1985: 405; Marchello-Nizia & Prévost 2020: 1905; Wolfe 2021a: 74-75).

(18) Possible n’est pour le present  
 possible NEG-be.1SG for the present  
 ‘It is not presently possible’ (Renaissance French, Rabelais 4, 35)

(19) a. Mais maintenant croit-elle fermement que  
 but now believe.3SG.PST-she resolutely that  
 ‘But now she believed resolutely that’  
 (Renaissance French, Heptaméron 3, 1, 44)  
 b. Lors commença le seigneur de Humevesne  
 then begin.3SG.PST the mister of Humevesne  
 ‘Then Mr Humevesne began...’ (Renaissance French, Rabelais 12, 6)

Looking ‘upwards’ to the topic layer, note that although left-dislocation with clitic resumption is extremely widespread from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards (Combettes 2003), a subclass of topical objects can reach the left periphery via internal merge, as in a full V2 grammar. Specifically, these objects are explicitly anchored to the preceding discourse, with many scholars commenting on their ‘anaphoric’ nature in the literature (Combettes 2003: 175-176; Lardon & Thomine 2009: 401; Marchello-Nizia & Prévost 2020: 1094):

(20) Ceste region dit Herodian estre feconde  
 this region say.3SG Herodian be.INF fertile  
 ‘Herodian says that this region is fertile’  
 (Renaissance French, Thevet f5, r, Combettes 2003: 175)

(21) A ceste destinée ne pouons nous contreuenir  
 to this destiny NEG can.1PL we contrevene.INF  
 ‘We cannot prevent this fate’  
 (Renaissance French, Rabelais 3, 51)

To summarize the empirical picture for Renaissance and Classical French, in terms of the half of the V2 constraint concerned with XP-fronting, the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries see increasing restrictions on its operation. In a striking contrast to a full V2 system, the movement-triggering EF is not feature-blind but rather targets explicitly anaphoric constituents in the case of topicalization. In the case of focalization, we see diachronic variation within this period between a less restricted system where a wide class of QPs, PPs, AdjPs and AdvPs can undergo focalization, to one where QP- and PP-focalization is infrequent and the class of AdjPs and AdvPs undergoing movement is a lexically defined class. In terms of the parametric schema set out in (2), we are therefore dealing with microparametric variation in the earlier system and nanoparametric variation in the later one.

Turning to Modern French, it is essential to note that any concept of a homogeneous ‘French left periphery’ is rendered problematic by the regional and sociolinguistic variation which affects the featural makeup of the C-domain.<sup>6</sup> Formal Standard French shows a degree of continuity with the system observable in Classical French: contrastive foci are licensed (22) (Belletti 2005), alongside a lexically restricted class of adjectives and adjectival phrases which can undergo focalization (23) (Marchello-Nizia & Prévost 2020: 1167; Lauwers & Tobback 2020),<sup>7</sup> PPs can also undergo fronting in formal varieties (24). A subclass of speaker-oriented adverbials is also well known to permit focalization in formal French varieties alongside pronominal inversion (on which cf. §3.3) (25) (Guimier 1997; Lahousse 2015).

(22) Pierre ils ont arrêté (pas Jean)  
 Pierre they have.3PL arrest.PTCP NEG Jean  
 ‘They have arrested Pierre, (not Jean)’ (Formal Standard French)

(23) Tel est mon avis  
 such be.3SG my view  
 ‘Such is my view’ (Formal Standard French)

(24) A ça vous n’avez pas pensé  
 to that you NEG-have.2PL NEG think.PTCP  
 ‘You haven’t thought of that’ (Formal Standard French)

(25) Peut-être viendra-t-il  
 perhaps come.3SG.FUT-he  
 ‘Perhaps he’ll come’ (Formal Standard French)

<sup>6</sup> For a review see Rowlett (2007) in particular.

<sup>7</sup> Lauwers and Tobback (2020: 496–497) show that the oft-cited ‘archaic’ nature of adjectival phrase-fronting should be taken with some caution, as certain adjectives such as *nombreux* ‘numerous’ and *rare* ‘rare, few’ can be productively fronted in certain texts such as newspapers. This finding is in keeping with the schema of parametric variation assumed in this article where lexical relics of previously productive macro-, meso-, or microparametric operations are predicted to persist in the grammar.

With the exception of contrastive focus, where its exact diachronic trajectory is challenging to establish from the textual records, we should note that the class of PPs, adjectives, and adverbials which can focalize is smaller than in Classical French; in the latter two cases an already lexically restricted class of focalizable APs is further restricted in formal French varieties. We should also note that the class of explicitly anaphoric objects which could be topicalized without clitic resumption in Classical French, cannot be in Formal Standard French. Instead, although not as widespread in formal varieties as colloquial ones, left dislocation with clitic resumption is employed, which we return to below.

The restricted range of focalization operations existing in Formal Standard French are not licit in all French varieties. Although some recent accounts have reported attested examples of focussed constituents in colloquial French varieties (Abeillé, Godard & Sabio 2008; Authier & Haegeman 2019; Cruschina 2021: 9–12), contrastive focalization as in (22) is absent in North American French varieties (Larrivée 2022), and dispreferred by some European French speakers, who instead employ a cleft as the preferred focalisation strategy (26) (Belletti 2005). Likewise, the nanoparametrically determined class of foci licit in formal varieties and outlined immediately above are not associated with colloquial French varieties, which therefore license no form of information focus nor QP-fronting.<sup>8</sup> Finally, note that *wh*-words, which we have not discussed diachronically for reasons of space, are frequently realized in-situ in interrogatives in colloquial French varieties (27) (Cheng & Rooryck 2000; Rowlett 2007: sec. 5.7.1). They thus show parallel evolution to other foci in showing decreasing movement possibilities over time.

(26) C'est            Jean    qu'ils            ont            arrêté  
 it-be.3SG    Jean    that-they    have.3PL    arrest.PTCP  
 'It's Jean that they have arrested' (Modern French)

(27) Tu        vas        où?  
 you    go.2SG    where  
 'Where are you going?' (Modern Colloquial French)

In colloquial French varieties, left dislocation is widely employed to encode topicality. Space constraints preclude a full discussion, but for our purposes we should note that speakers employ two different structures both without (28) and with clitic resumption (29), which have been analyzed as featuring base-generated XPs in a left-peripheral topic projection (Cinque 1990; Rowlett 2007: 103; Haegeman 2012: 104; De Cat 2009: 149–155)<sup>9</sup>:

<sup>8</sup> Though see Authier & Haegeman (2019) for the possibility that certain colloquial varieties do license mirative focus fronting. Detailed diachronic work – yet to be undertaken – is needed to establish whether this is a genuinely novel form of focus emerging or a sub-type of the more widespread focus-fronting operations which characterised earlier stages of French

<sup>9</sup> No stance is taken here on whether the derivation of left dislocation remains constant throughout the history of French; this is largely due to the difficulty of applying movement diagnostics to constructions which are sporadically attested in the earliest texts. See Salvesen (2013) and Van Kemenade & Meklenborg (2021) for some discussion of this issue.

- (28) 10F, ce truc m'a coûté  
 10F this thing me-have.3SG cost.PTCP  
 'This thing cost me 10F' (Modern Colloquial French, Rowlett 2007: 183)
- (29) Les voisins, ils ont mangé mon lapin  
 the neighbours they have.3PL eat.PTCP my rabbit  
 'They neighbours, they ate my rabbit' (Modern French)

The most 'advanced' Modern French varieties therefore license no focalization and license topicalization only when it entails base-generation. This is thus the exact inverse of a full V2 grammar where an XP systematically reaches the left periphery via internal merge and can target either the topic or focus layer.

Taking the data in this section together, we see that the ways in which the topic and focus layer can be lexicalized have become increasingly restricted diachronically along micro- and nanoparametric lines. Looking first at the focus system, in Early Old French contrastive foci, information foci, and QPs can move to the focus field, though in Later Old and Middle French information foci do so to a lesser extent than in Early Old French; from Renaissance French onwards contrastive foci and QPs can still move, but otherwise only specific categories of XP may do (Renaissance French) or lexically defined exceptions (Classical French). In the Formal Standard French spoken today contrastive foci can move, as can an even smaller lexically defined class of PPs and APs, but QPs cannot. Focalization of APs is not a feature of colloquial French and for certain European speakers and all Canadian speakers left-peripheral contrastive foci are also not licit:

**Table 2.** Left-Peripheral Focus in French Varieties Past and Present

	Early Old French	Later Old French	Middle French
<b>CFoc</b>	+	+	+
<b>QPs</b>	+	+	+
<b>IFoc</b>	+	±	±
	Renaissance French	Classical French	Formal Standard French
<b>CFoc</b>	+	+	+
<b>QPs</b>	+	+	-
<b>IFoc</b>	± APs, PPs	± Subclass of APs and PPs	± Subclass of APs and PPs
	Colloquial European French	Colloquial Canadian French	
<b>CFoc</b>	±	-	
<b>QPs</b>	-	-	
<b>IFoc</b>	-	-	

The situation concerning internally merged topics is a less complex one, though again we note that a transitional stage is attested where a subclass of 'anaphoric' moved topics are licensed in Renaissance and Classical French, before the possibility of internally merging topics is lost from the system (30):

- (30) **All Topics** > **Anaphoric Topics** > **LD Only**  
 Old and Middle French Renaissance and Classical French Modern French

Overall, an investigation into the ‘relics’ of one half of the V2 constraint, that requiring internal merge of an XP, shows that the notion of Residual V2 is insufficiently granular. What we instead observe is a mesoparametric property – full V2 – giving way to micro- and nano-parametric restrictions on the class of XP which can be internally merged in the C-domain. In the case of internally merged topics, we can differentiate between two stages after the loss of V2: the grammar of Renaissance and Classical French where only topics with a specific pragmatic value can be internally merged, and subsequent stages of French where only base-generated topics are licensed. In the case of left-peripheral focus, the picture is one of even greater variation with non-quantified, non-contrastive foci lost from the grammar in a stepwise fashion, firstly on the basis of their syntactic category (microparametric variation) and later based on whether they are members of an exceptional lexical class (nanoparametric variation). We will now see that the second component of a V2 grammar – head movement – shows a similarly complex array of variation.

### 3.3. Left-Peripheral Head Movement

Despite inversion – derived via V-to-Fin or V-to-Force movement – being a hallmark of Old and Middle French syntax, its attestation becomes increasingly sparse from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards (Foulet 1919; Harris 1978: 31–34; Combettes, Marchello-Nizia & Prévost 2020: 1223–1224), as the paucity of examples of XP<sub>Non-Subject</sub>-V-S orders in Table 1 shows. Nevertheless, cases like (19b, 20) above and (31) below, where nominal subjects occur lower in the functional hierarchy than the finite verb or auxiliary, suggest that residual V-to-Fin movement in declaratives may have formed part of the grammar of early Renaissance French in the presence of an initial focal constituent of the type discussed in §3.2:

- (31) Et bien malheureuse est la dame, qui ne  
 and well ill-fated be.3SG the woman who NEG  
 garde soigneusement le tresor...  
 guard.3SG carefully the wealth  
 ‘And the woman who does not carefully guard her wealth [...], is very  
 unfortunate’  
 (Renaissance French, Heptaméron 5, 100, Lardon & Thomine 2009: 401)

After 1600, however, nominal inversion with a subject in the inflectional layer, of the type which is widespread in a full V2 grammar and still licensed in residual V2 systems such as Modern English (Rizzi 1996; Sailor 2020), is near entirely absent in French

declaratives in all but the most formal styles.<sup>10, 11, 12</sup> This yields the system, still attested in Modern French, where pronominal inversion is considerably more productive than its nominal counterpart (32). There are reasons to doubt that this is ‘true’ relic V-to-Fin, however. Following recent proposals by Cardinaletti (2021) for Northern Italo-Romance varieties, Wolfe (2021a: 136) analyzes this split – attested since the 16<sup>th</sup> century – between semi-productive pronominal inversion and highly restricted nominal inversion, as the surface reflex of a grammar where a Subj head can probe the finite auxiliary and verb but where Fin is not typically endowed with the featural specification to do so. Such an account straightforwardly accounts for why in many contexts postverbal pronominal subjects are licensed but nominal subjects are not, if we assume in line with Cardinaletti (2021) and prior work that pronominal subjects occupy a lower position in the functional structure than their nominal counterparts (33):<sup>13</sup>

- (32) a. Peut-être vient-il  
 perhaps come.3SG-he  
 ‘Perhaps he’ll come’  
 b. \*Peut-être vient Jean  
 perhaps come.3SG Jean

(33) ... [FinP [SubjP (**SubjectDP**) [Subj **VFin**] [TP (**SubjectPronominal**) [ $\nu$ P [ $\nu$  **VFin**] ... ]]]]

However, this V-to-Subj movement has undoubtedly been most productive since the renaissance in non-declarative clause-types. While nominal inversion in interrogatives declines markedly in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, pronominal inversion is far more widely attested (cf. 34) (Foulet 1919: 249; Elsig 2009: sec. 5.2.7; Fournier 2007: 121):

- (34) a. Voulez-vous mon cousteau?  
 want.2PL-you my knife  
 ‘Do you want my knife?’ (Renaissance French, Rabelais 21, 235)  
 b. Veux-je la souffrir?

<sup>10</sup> Note in this regard the recent corpus study of Marchello-Nizia and Prévost (2020: 1098) who view the marginal attestation of nominal subjects from Classical French onwards as ‘sporadique’. Lahousse (2003, 2006) argues convincingly that such subjects either remain in their base-generated  $\nu$ P-internal position or target a left-peripheral focus projection. We therefore exclude them from our discussion of the postverbal subjects in the inflectional layer most relevant to residual V2.

<sup>11</sup> Wolfe (2021a: 127–131) presents independent evidence from adverbial placement that finite verb movement in Renaissance and Classical French declarative clauses targets a position within the T-layer, as in the modern language (Pollock 1989; Schifano 2018).

<sup>12</sup> I explicitly exclude from the discussion of verb movement cases where a postverbal subject occurs low in the functional structure and the verb does not move higher than its unmarked position.

<sup>13</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ Varieties of French with marked V-to-Subj movement in interrogatives would therefore be those where the relevant features of a C-related head (e.g. Q, Wh) are ‘donated’ in the terms of Ouali (2008) to a head lower in the structural hierarchy, in this case Subj (see also Miyagawa 2012; Jiménez-Fernández & Miyagawa 2014).

want.1SG-I her.CL suffer.INF  
 ‘Do I want to suffer her?’  
 (Classical French, Clèves 347, Fournier 2007: 120)

V-to-Subj movement, itself the outcome of reanalysis of V2-related V-to-Fin movement, is already subject to structural restrictions in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, however: Elsig (2009: 133, 212–213) shows on the basis of detailed quantitative analysis that while high-frequency auxiliaries and lexical verbs favour inversion, their lower frequency counterparts do not, and instead occur in in-situ constructions or those employing the interrogative particle *est-ce-que*. Subsequent reanalyses have also seen further microparametric restrictions become systematic, namely the non-acceptability of pronominal inversion with first-person-singular subjects (35), and a strong preference for auxiliary inversion over inversion of lexical verbs, which are however still attested (Coveney 1996: 106–110; Rowlett 2007: 205; Roberts 2010: 305).<sup>14</sup>

- (35) a. \*Chante-je?  
         sing-I  
         ‘Do I sing?’ (Modern French)  
       b. Chantez-vous?  
         sing.2PL-you  
         ‘Do you sing?’ (Modern French)

While V-to-Subj movement in pronominal inversion structures is relatively widespread in certain Canadian and Belgian varieties, for most speakers in France it is principally associated with formal registers and thus not a systematic feature of colloquial French grammar (De Cat 2009: 6; Elsig 2009). Furthermore, Zribi-Hertz (1994) notes that in North African French in particular, structures involving inversion and thus V-to-Subj movement are systematically avoided. In a parallel fashion to the most ‘advanced’ French varieties that disallow left-peripheral XP-movement of any kind, these varieties have thus diverged furthest from a V2 grammar in not permitting finite verb or auxiliary movement to either Fin or Subj. We can therefore schematize the variation attested diachronically and synchronically as follows:

- |  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| (36) <b>Systematic V-to-Fin</b>  | > | <b>Systematic V-to-Force</b>                    | > |
| Early Old French   |   | Later Old French                                |   |
| <b>Systematic V-to-Fin</b>   | > | <b>Marked V-to-Fin, Unmarked V-to-T</b>         | > |
| Middle French  |   | Renaissance French                              |   |
| <b>Marked V-to-Subj, Unmarked V-to-T</b>                                 | > | <b>Systematic V-to-T</b>                        |   |
| Classical French, Formal Standard French,<br>Canadian and Belgian French |   | Colloquial European<br>and North African French |   |

As with XP-movement, the residual-V2 status of French varieties is therefore a gradient notion. While marked V-to-Fin movement, permitting postverbal nominal subjects in Spec-SubjP, is licensed in Renaissance French, this grammar is rapidly reanalyzed as one where marked verb or auxiliary movement targets a lower head,

<sup>14</sup> See Biberauer & Roberts (2012) for a very similar trajectory for interrogative inversion in the history of English.

Subj, and is thus a more indirect V2 residue in structural terms. As early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century we have seen that the conditions under which the Subj head can attract verbs and auxiliaries is already subject to nanoparametric variation, with certain frequent lexical verbs and auxiliaries more readily attracted than others; in ‘permissive’ French varieties today where V-to-Subj movement is part of the grammar, such nanoparametric restrictions still exist and affect the grammatical person of the verb of auxiliary in question. Finally, the most ‘advanced’ colloquial French varieties have diverged furthest from the original full V2 grammar in licensing no inversion at all.

### 3.4. Summary

The data discussed above strongly suggest that a tripartite typology of ‘full’, ‘residual’ and ‘non-’ V2 systems is insufficiently granular to capture the full range of grammars attested in the history of French alone. Putting to one side the growing consensus that the ‘full’ V2 typology is itself subject to extensive internal variation (Biberauer 2002; Holmberg 2015; Wolfe 2016b; Haegeman & Greco 2018), we see that the Residual V2 label can be construed so as to encompass a grammar with a relatively large or extremely restricted range of residual V2 structures. The picture therefore mirrors that of partial-null-subject languages, where the term covers grammars where a large class of subjects can be realized as null or others where the class is highly constrained (Holmberg 2005; Holmberg, Nayudu & Sheehan 2009; Shlonsky 2009). An additional finding of our analysis is that it is not strictly correct to describe ‘Modern French’ as a Residual V2 system: although the standard formal language and certain colloquial varieties maintain specific V2 residues, other colloquial varieties of French have minimal or non-existent left-peripheral movement of heads or XPs; they are thus non-V2 systems.

**Table 3.** V2 Residues in Varieties of French.

	Variety	V2 Residues	
		XP-Movement	Head-Movement
Full V2	Early Old French	All Topics All Foci	Systematic V-to-Fin
	Later Old French	All Topics All Foci	Systematic V-to-Force
	Middle French	All Topics CFoc, QPs, IFoc (Declining)	Systematic V-to-Fin
Residual V2	Renaissance French	Anaphoric Topics CFoc, QPs, IFoc (APs, PPs)	Marked V-to-Fin Unmarked V-to-T
	Classical French	Anaphoric Topics CFoc, QPs, IFoc (Subclass of APs, PPs)	Marked V-to-Subj Unmarked V-to-T
	Formal Standard French	LD Only CFoc, IFoc (Subclass of APs, PPs)	Marked V-to-Subj Unmarked V-to-T

	Belgian French	LD Only CFoc	Marked V-to-Subj Unmarked V-to-T
	Canadian French	LD Only	Marked V-to-Subj Unmarked V-to-T
<b>Non-V2</b>	‘Advanced’ Colloquial European and North African French	LD Only	Systematic V-to-T

#### 4. French within a Romance Context

When our domain of enquiry is extended to a broader range of Romance data, it becomes clear that the conclusion that the Residual V2 typology is an internally rich one is not restricted to French.

Looking at the residues of the first component of a full V2 grammar, namely the requirement for XP-fronting, we see that the synchronic variation in Romance today evidences different degrees of continuity or divergence from the maximally active topic and focus layer that characterized the V2 syntax of Medieval Romance (Benincà 2004; Salvi 2012; Poletto 2014). Despite internally merged topics being highly restricted in all but the most formal French today, many Occitan (Sauzet 1989; Faure & Oliviéri 2013), Ibero-Romance (Rivero 1980; Zubizarreta 1998: 99–118; Zagana 2001: 215–217; Vallduví 2002; Kato & Raposo 2007; Leonetti 2017), Italo-Romance (Benincà 2001; Ledgeway 2010a, 2010b), Sardinian (Jones 1993: 114–115; Remberger 2010), and Romanian varieties (Zafiu 2013: 570) license widespread topicalization without clitic resumption. Looking at the focus layer, certain more permissive Modern Romance systems pattern with Early Old French in permitting fronting of information foci, QPs, and contrastive foci, such as Romanian (Motapanyane 1998; Cornilescu 2002; Zafiu 2013), Sardinian (Mensching & Remberger 2010; Cruschina 2012), certain Southern Italo-Romance varieties (Ledgeway 2009; Cruschina 2012; Cruschina & Remberger 2017), and some Ibero-Romance varieties (Jiménez-Fernández 2015):

- (37) a. Un libbru ci detti  
a book him.CL give.1SG.PST  
‘I gave him a book’ (Modern Sicilian, Cruschina 2012: 54)
- b. Albăe doar pe margini  
white be.3SG only on margins  
‘[The dress] is white only on the margins’  
(Modern Romanian, Zafiu 2013: 570)
- c. Pasta está comiendo  
pasta be.3SG eat.PROG  
‘He’s eating pasta’  
(Modern Southern Peninsular Spanish, Jiménez-Fernández 2015: 3)

Other varieties pattern with Renaissance or Classical French in permitting left-peripheral contrastive foci and QP-fronting, as is the case in certain Northern Italo-Romance varieties (Paoli 2007, 2010), Catalan (Vallduví 2002; Quer 2002), and many Occitan varieties (González i Planas 2009). Turinese is argued by Paoli (2003, 2007)

to disallow focus-fronting of any kind; it thus instantiates the most advanced point on the Residual V2 cline akin to Colloquial Canadian French:

- (38) \* IL GELATO a l'ha catà Gioann,  
 the ice-cream SCL SCL-have.3SG buy.PTCP John  
 nen la torta  
 NEG the cake  
 'It is the ice-cream that John has bought, not the cake'  
 (Turinese, Paoli 2003:163)

The crucial observation is that we can differentiate between a first class of modern varieties which have maintained widespread – though not systematic – argument fronting despite having lost V2 (e.g., Romanian, Sardinian, Sicilian, Cosentino, and Neapolitan), a second class showing rich internal variation where argument fronting still obtains but with greater microparametric restrictions than in the former class (Spanish, European Portuguese, Catalan, Occitan, and some Northern Italo-Romance varieties), and a third class where argument fronting is either nanoparametrically restricted or not licensed; Turinese is in this class, though further investigation may reveal that other Northern Italo-Romance and Northern Gallo-Romance varieties belong here also. With reference to the residues of the half of the V2 constraint concerned with argument fronting, only the first two classes are in a meaningful sense Residual V2 grammars and we see that some have considerably more V2 relics than others; these are represented in the middle two columns of Table 4 below.

A tripartite typology also emerges when considering left-peripheral verb or auxiliary movement. Aside from the full V2 Rhaeto-Romance languages which uniformly license V-to-Fin/Force movement (Poletto 2002), the majority of other Romance varieties show movement to a C-related head under specific structural conditions.

Although the exact height of the movement is subject to ongoing debate (Barbosa 2001; Pesetsky & Torrego 2001), Romanian (Giurgea & Remberger 2012), Sardinian (39) (Mensching & Remberger 2016: 286), many Southern and Central Italo-Romance varieties (Cruschina 2012: chap. 5), and Peninsular Spanish and Portuguese show robust attestation of inversion structures (Ambar 1999; Costa 2000; Zagona 2001: 50).

- (39) Telefonatu at Juanne  
 telephone.PTCP have.3SG Juanne  
 'Has Juanne called?' (Modern Sardinian, Jones 1993: 24)

- (40) Ha cantado Juan?  
 have.3SG sing.PTCP Juan  
 'Has Juan sung?' (Modern Peninsular Spanish)

Aside from these more 'permissive' systems sit a number of Northern Italo-Romance (Munaro 1999; Parry 2003; Cardinaletti 2021), Caribbean Spanish (Ordóñez & Olarrea 2006), Catalan (Planas-Morales & Villalba 2013), and Francoprovençal varieties (De Crousaz & Shlonsky 2003; Kristol 2010), which display complex restrictions – determined by clause type, verb-person, and the pragmatic status of the

postposed subject – on when V-to-Subj/C movement can obtain. Characteristic of these systems are alternative strategies for encoding interrogatives, such as grammaticalized clefts, the use of interrogative particles, and right dislocation (Munaro 2003; Poletto & Zanuttini 2010; Prieto & Rigau 2007; Planas-Morales & Villalba 2013; Miotto & Lobo 2016).

- (41) Que plou?  
that rain.3SG  
'Is it raining?' (Modern Peninsular Catalan, Prieto & Rigau 2007: 30)
- (42) O vindran a Ciutadella  
or come.3PL.FUT to Ciutadella  
'Are they coming to Ciutadella?'  
(Modern Balearic Catalan, Prieto & Rigau 2007: 30)

The most 'advanced' colloquial European and North African French varieties permitting no inversion form the third part of this typology, and pattern with a number of other under-investigated Northern Gallo-Romance varieties which are reported not to permit inversion of any kind; this class includes but is not limited to Lorrain (Aub-Buscher 1962) and certain Norman and Wallon varieties (Franz 1912; Dawson et al. 2021). The basic but important generalization holds once more, therefore, that modern Romance varieties which feature residues of inversion do so to greatly varying extents and that there exists a small class of grammars which are not residual V2 at all. Taking the data concerning left-peripheral XP-fronting and head-movement, we observe that the rich variation between French varieties today is mirrored in the synchronic variation observable elsewhere in Modern Romance. As Table 4 attempts to show, this includes variation internal to the class here termed 'Partial' V2, shown in its middle two columns:

**Table 4.** Residual V2 as a Gradient Notion in Romance.

	Full V2	Partial V2		Non-V2
Head Movement	Unmarked Movement to Fin or Force	Widespread Marked Movement to a C-related Head	Marked Movement to a C-related Head Subject to Micro- or Nanoparametric Restrictions (Subject Type, Verb Class, Person) <sup>15</sup>	Unmarked V-to-T Movement

<sup>15</sup> The pronominal inversion properties of certain French varieties as well as many Northern Italo-Romance, Francoprovençal, and Occitan varieties would fit into this category, where V-to-C or V-to-Subj movement is not licensed for all persons or verb types (Poletto 2000; Elsig 2009; Kristol 2010; Hinzelin & Kaiser 2012).

<b>XP-Fronting</b>	Systematic XP-Fronting to Spec-FinP/Spec-ForceP	Full Topic/Focus Layer Accessible to Internal Merge of XPs	Only Certain Topic/Focus Heads Accessible  Range of Possible Topics or Foci Subject to Micro- or Nanoparametric Restrictions	No XP Fronting
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## 5. Conclusions

This article has set out to propose that the notion of ‘Residual V2’ should be reconceptualized as encompassing a class of grammars, some of which may have a substantial number of V2 residues and others where V2 residues are no longer productive in the grammar or are restricted to specific registers. In the case of French, we are able to track variation internal to the considerable period during which it is a full V2 system, during which there are changes affecting the height of verb movement and the conditions under which XP-fronting is licensed. Against this backdrop, it is perhaps not surprising that the subtypes of high verb-movement and XP-fronting which feature in later Residual or ‘Partial’ V2 grammars also vary both diachronically and synchronically. In the simplest of terms, the diachronic and synchronic Francophone and Romance typologies constitute systems with large and small amounts, and – in certain cases – no XP-fronting or verb movement to high peripheral heads.

Significantly, the relevant changes in French and Romance show clear directionality in that the range of heads and phrases which can be internally merged in the left periphery decreases diachronically. More specifically, we observe grammars where particular featural properties of the goal for movement, such as [+Q, +A] give way to those where only specific lexical items can undergo such movement; this stands in sharp contrast to recent data Sailor (2020) presents for Germanic where the class of XPs which can target the left periphery appears to be widening in certain varieties. Reasons for this apparent split between the two language families should be explored in future research, though we should note for now that the Romance data appear to support the intuition in much literature on syntactic change that structures involving external merge are favoured in acquisition over their internally merged counterparts for reasons of economy (Roberts & Roussou 2002; Van Gelderen 2009).<sup>16</sup> Though this hypothesis has often been discussed with reference to grammaticalisation, the V2 data present a potentially revealing case-study where this preference on the part of the acquirer affects word-order change and the mapping between syntax and information structure.

If, as suggested, internally merged structures – though pervasive in the world’s languages – are in certain circumstances dispreferred in acquisition, this may account for the apparent instability in the focus layer in the history of French and the

<sup>16</sup> For some recent discussion of the child acquirer’s role in driving change, see Cournane (2017).

particularly intense microvariation observable in this domain between the Modern Romance languages; if foci – in contrast to topics – are always internally merged in the left periphery (e.g. Benincà & Poletto 2004) and acquirers have a bias towards external merge, we would predict – accurately in the case of Romance – that the topic layer will be subject to less variation and change than the focus layer.

Summarising, the basic contention of this article is that Residual V2 systems are not a homogeneous class and that the extent to which V2 residues form a core part of the grammar is subject to extensive crosslinguistic microvariation; the structure of this microvariation may reveal insights about the direction of word-order change and the acquisitional factors which drive it.

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