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THE OLD FRENCH CASE SYSTEM: A FUNCTIONAL STUDY

by

ERNESTINE R. DANIELS

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Linguistics in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

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ABSTRACT

A syntactic analysis of Chrétien de Troyes' Le Chevalier de la Charrette has shown unequivocally that the two-case system of Old French was semantically as well as syntactically functional.

At least 55 passages in which semantic interpretation depends on case form alone have been found, in addition to several in which the case system receives support from other morphological devices. These 55 examples correspond to a functionality coefficient of 1.03% based on the total number of noun phrases (NP's) in the text, or 1.42%, based on total declinable NP's, if both NP's are counted as functional in passages where the form of either of two NP's determines meaning; the corresponding figures are 0.74% and 1.03%, respectively, if only one of the two NP's is considered functional in such examples. Throughout the study, the concepts of declinability and functionality have been applied to entire NP's rather than to individual words.

Each of the primary examples has been discussed individually, as have several supporting examples and instances of ambiguities which are not resolved by case forms, and the relatively few deviant case forms found have been classified and analyzed. The morphology of the case system has been summarized, the problems involved in text selection and the advantages of the chosen text have been explained, and the methodology adopted has been set forth in complete detail.

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INTRODUCTION

The Old French (OF) language, generally defined as that spoken from the appearance of the Oaths of Strasbourg in 842 A.D. until ca. 1300 A.D., differed most strikingly from the modern language in the possession of a two-case system for nouns, adjectives, determiners, and many now-indeclinable pronouns, as well as in the great freedom of its word order, a freedom which presumably would not have been possible without the declensional system. The present study has been undertaken to clarify whether, and to what extent, the case system was truly functional in the sense that case forms determined semantic interpretations as well as purely syntactic relationships*. This aim obviously requires a fairly early

*The difference between semantic and syntactic functionality may be illustrated by the lines:

Lors a le chevalier veü
and
 De son col oste son escu
li chevaliers

The first of these passages would most probably be interpreted to mean, "Then the knight saw," if not for the oblique form of le chevalier, which excludes this nominal expression, the only one in the clause, as the subject. Actually, the line means, "Then he saw the knight," the underlying subject (another knight) not appearing at all in the surface structure. The oblique case of the article + noun combination is semantically functional, since it is needed to establish the meaning of the clause.

The second passage obviously means, "The knight takes off his shield from around his neck." Even if son escu were not oblique and li chevaliers were not nominative in form, clearly a shield could not take off a knight. However, if this were some obscure language, for which linguists had established the complete morphology but not the meanings of most lexical items, we might not know that escu is inanimate and chevaliers animate, and that the verb requires an ani-

text, composed before the case system began to break down, and preferably preserved in a manuscript which also dates from this early period.

The text on which the study has been based is Le Chevalier de la Charrette, a 7112-line romance in verse by the twelfth century poet Chrétien de Troyes. Texts earlier than the twelfth century were deemed unsuitable because the manuscript tradition is too unreliable, and many other works which are contemporary with or earlier than the one eventually selected proved unsuitable for the same reason and/or because they have come down to us in dialects in which use of the case system became chaotic at a very early date. The problem of text selection will be discussed in detail before the results of the analysis are presented.

mate subject. The case forms are syntactically functional, in that they would establish the subject-object relationship in the situation just described, but they are not semantically functional, in that they are not necessary to establish the meaning of the clause once the meanings of the individual lexical items are known.

THE OLD FRENCH CASE SYSTEM

The declensional system of Classical Latin was reduced in OF to two cases: the nominative (cas-sujet), which was generally also found in vocative function, and the oblique (cas-régime), which had assumed the functions of all the other Latin cases and was used both with and without prepositions. The two cases, however, were by no means morphologically distinguishable in all nouns and adjectives. The following summary of the system as generally used ca. 1100 A.D. is aimed at giving a concise overview of the occurrence of distinctive case forms. It ignores as far as possible the origin of these forms, with which M. K. Pope's* treatment is largely concerned.

The only case-marking morpheme in OF was the ending -s or -z [ts], which also served to distinguish plural from singular number (the affricate -z was a case marker as such in some words, but in most it was an orthographic device showing the addition of -s to stem-final -t or -d, e.g., L. grandis > OF granz). Except for certain nouns and adjectives which were invariant with respect to both case and number because their stems already terminated in -s or -z, this ending was universally present in the oblique plural and absent in the oblique singular. It was also regularly

*From Latin to Modern French, Manchester Univ. Press, 1934. Reprinted 1966. Most of the discussion of the case system is contained in Chapter 2 of the section on morphology, pp. 302-319.

present in the nominative plural for feminine nouns and adjectives but was regularly lacking for masculines.

In the nominative singular, the ending was absent for all feminines whose stems ended in -e, but was shown by most masculines, except:

1) the already mentioned indeclinables with stems in -s or -z

2) those with stems ending in -re

3) those showing a distinctive stem form in the nominative singular (imparisyllabics).

It may be noted that, for most feminines, the modern French system, in which number is marked (at least orthographically) but not case, thus prevailed in OF.

As for parisyllabic feminine nouns and adjectives not ending in -e, there was a good deal of variation in OF generally in the use, or failure to use, final -s in the nominative singular; however, in the text chosen for this study, this -s is used consistently. In the plural these words were, of course, indeclinable, like all feminine plurals.

The following paradigms may serve to illustrate the above statements:

'the good king': modern 'le bon roi'

	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
<u>Nominative</u>	li bons reis	li bon rei
<u>Oblique</u>	le bon rei	les bons reis

'the good father', 'le bon père'

	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
<u>Nominative</u>	li bons pere	li bon pere
<u>Oblique</u>	le bon pere	les bons peres

'the good woman', 'la bonne femme'

	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
<u>Nominative</u>	la bone feme	les bones femes
<u>Oblique</u>	la bone feme	les bones femes

'the strong hand', 'la main forte'

	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
<u>Nominative</u>	la fort mains <u>or</u> la forz mains <u>or</u> la fort main	les forz mains
<u>Oblique</u>	la fort main	les forz mains

It should also be noted that OF adjectives derived from Latin adjectives such as grandis and fortis, which had a common set of case forms for masculine and feminine, also lacked distinctive masculine and feminine forms, in contrast to adjectives such as bon(s) - bone, derived from the Latin bonus-bona-bonum type. However, analogical forms such as grande and forte began to appear before the end of the OF period, and even earlier there was much confusion in the use of grant vs. granz or grans to modify feminine nouns in the nominative singular.

The third group mentioned under masculines which do not take -s in the nominative singular requires further comment.

The only adjectives here included are comparative forms (in OF, as in modern French, only a few adjectives had distinctive comparatives, the rest making use of the adverb plus); the difference in stem between the nominative singular and the other forms existed for the feminine as well as for the masculine. Morphological distinction between the masculine and feminine forms of these adjectives occurred only in the nominative plural, where the feminines added -g and the masculine did not. In addition to these adjectives and to masculine nouns, a very few feminine nouns were of this type. These remarks may be illustrated by the following paradigms:

'the greater (greatest) baron (warrior)',
'le plus grand baron'

	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
<u>Nominative</u>	li graindre ber	li graignour baron
<u>Oblique</u>	le graignour baron	les graignours barons

'the better (best) aunt', 'la meilleure tante'

	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
<u>Nominative</u>	la mieildre ante	les meillours antains
<u>Oblique</u>	la meillour antain	les meillours antains

'the good sister', 'la bonne soeur'

	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
<u>Nominative</u>	la bone suer	les bones serors (sorours)
<u>Oblique</u>	la bone seror (sorour)	les bones serors (sorours)

In most actual texts, however, analogical forms such as li peres, li bers, li empereres, etc., in which -s is added to a masculine nominative singular which would not be expected to take the ending, occur along with the expected forms. In the present text, masculine nominatives in -res were the only analogical forms found, and these have been treated in general as if they were regular. Usually they are accompanied by an article and/or other modifier (e.g., li peres), which marks the entire noun phrase (NP) as declinable, but when such analogical nominative forms occur alone, they have been treated as declinable NP's, even though the "regular" form would be indeclinable.

Adjectives and participles regularly occurred in a neuter form, which was identical with the masculine singular oblique, when used as predicate adjectives in agreement with the neuter pronoun ce and impersonal il, or when used impersonally without an overt subject, e.g., in the expression "molt li est grief" ('he is very sorry').

One special construction involving use of the nominative where the oblique might be expected on syntactic grounds is worthy of mention. When a person or physical object is named by use of the phrase "a non" ('has the name'), the name itself is always nominative, so that it cannot be analyzed as in apposition with the oblique noun non. An example from the present text is: "Li uns a non: LI PONZ EVAGES" ('One of them has the name: THE WATERY BRIDGE'), l. 656. The nominative was used even with the slightly different construction "a a

non" ('has for a name', the second a corresponding to modern à), although here the name itself would normally appear to be the only direct object. Thus, in l. 3660-1, we find "Lanceloz del Lac a a non li chevaliers.." ('the knight is named Lancelot of the Lake...').

For the purposes of this study, the following procedures, both of which are explained in more detail in the section on methodology, have been adopted:

(1) Nouns, adjectives, and articles have not been treated individually, but rather a complete nominal expression (NP) or an adjectival expression modifying an understood noun (also counted as an NP) has been classified as declinable or indeclinable depending on whether or not it contains at least one word whose form differs in the nominative and the oblique.

(2) In addition to nouns, adjectives, and articles, the case system has been interpreted to include certain pronouns, namely those which were declinable in OF but are no longer so in the modern language. These pronouns are: cil/cel/celui (m.sg.), cele/celi (f.sg.), cil/ceus (m. pl.); cist/cest/cestui (m.sg.), ceste/cesti (f.sg.), cist/ces (m.pl.); uns/un/un/uns; aucuns/aucun/aucun/aucuns; autres/autre/autrui; nuls (nus)/nul/nelui; chascuns/chascun; tel (tex)/tel/tex; plusior/plusiors; mainz/maint; toz/tot/tuit/toz (pl.); all indeclinable feminines corresponding to the above, where distinctive feminine forms existed; and all possessive pronouns except the invariant lor (third person plural). The demonstrative, indefinite, and possessive adjectives corresponding to the

above have also been considered as part of the OF case system. However, all pronouns which are distinguished for case in both the old and modern languages, or which are indeclinable in both, have been arbitrarily excluded, since the term "case system" is taken to refer to a feature of the medieval language which has completely disappeared.

SELECTION OF A TEXT

Preliminary Study of the "Chanson de Roland"

It was at first considered that the Chanson de Roland, which in the Oxford manuscript runs to 4002 lines and appears to be the work of a single scribe, might serve as the exclusive corpus, since this is the oldest of the French chansons de geste, having probably been composed about 1100 A.D., although tradition tells us that a Norman jongleur recited it at Hastings in 1066. The Oxford Ms. (Digby 23) is believed to be the oldest as well as the best of the extant copies, and to date from 1125-1150 A.D.* The epic might therefore be expected to give a good picture of the case system while it was still in full vigor. However, inspection of Moignet's edition, which follows the Oxford Ms. very closely, immediately showed that the situation is not so simple.

For one thing, the Oxford Ms. is Anglo-Norman, and in this dialect, as well as in western French generally (Pope p. 314), the case system had already begun to break down in the twelfth century, and as Pope (p. 462) points out, in England it was "early shaken by contact with the English declensional system." For example, the names of two of the chief protagonists, Roland and Olivier, never appear

*These dates are cited by G. Moignet (1969) in his edition of the poem (p. 19). However, a date of 1170 A.D. for the manuscript is cited by Studer and Waters (1924) (p. 43).

in the nominative forms Rollanz and Oliviers, respectively, regardless of their syntactic function, and Moignet tells us that Roland is frequently denoted by the abbreviation R., although he does not specify, for individual occurrences of the name, whether the initial only or the oblique form Rollant appears. In addition, many other nouns, both proper and common, appear frequently, but not consistently, in the oblique when the nominative is called for syntactically, and there are also instances of the use of a nominative for an oblique.

Although no attempt has been made at a comparative count of the case system "errors" and the instances of correct case form use, the errors are so frequent that it would not be possible to place any confidence in a semantic interpretation based solely on the occurrence of a case form or forms, even though interpretation is facilitated by the evaluation of complete NP's rather than individual words.

P. Guiraud (1962) has analyzed the use in the Roland of oblique case forms of common nouns functioning as nominatives, and has suggested that such forms are used only when the subject is "virtuel," i.e., unaccompanied by determiners, as in "soleill ni luist..." ('neither does the sun shine...'), but that the expected nominative form is found for nouns which are "actuel," i.e., accompanied by an article or other determiner, e.g., "Li soleilz fut cler..." ('The sun was bright...'). B. Woledge, J. Beard

et al. (1967) have, however, effectively demolished this theory by making a statistical count of all oblique common noun forms used as subjects or predicate nominatives, and finding that such nouns without determiners are used in the nominative more often than in the oblique form (226 vs. 118), whereas, on the other hand, the oblique is found for 176 of 788 nouns with determiners.

Be that as it may, these authors' studies so not have nearly the scope of the present study, since they excluded from all consideration not only nouns in oblique function, but also proper names, feminines in -e, pronouns, predicate adjectives, indeclinable nouns, and infinitives used as nouns. Woledge et al. do not make clear whether or not they included vocatives in their count, or whether the parts of a compound subject are counted separately or together. In other words, even if Guiraud's thesis could be sustained, this would still not bring nearly enough order into the chaotic state of the case system as used in the Roland to make this a suitable text for the present study.

Crestien de Troyes and "Li Chevaliers de la Charrete"

Since what was needed was obviously a text in which case errors would be extremely rare if not totally absent, it was decided to investigate some work of Chrétien de Troyes (henceforth referred to as Crestien, as he was called in his own dialect), since he wrote in the second half of the twelfth century in the dialect of Champagne, a region where,

according to Pope (p. 314), the case system was maintained intact until late in the thirteenth century. Preliminary inspection of Li Chevaliers de la Charrete, selected not because of any inherent superiority to Crestien's other works, but largely because it happened to be available, showed that here was a text which indeed met the requirements.

The edition used, that of Mario Roques, which has been published as part of the series Les Classiques Français du Moyen Age, follows the manuscript of the scribe Guiot (Bibl. nat. fr. 794), which is by far the most complete, careful, and reliable of the six extant copies (Roques, introduction to the text, p. iii). Although apparent scribal errors are few, all of these, as well as the original punctuation and all features of the manuscript rejected for any reason are cited in the critical apparatus.

Lancelot ou Li Chevaliers de la Charrete was apparently composed between 1177 and 1181 A.D., during a period when Crestien was also at work on his Yvain. Cogent reasons for assigning these dates are presented by Roques (Introduction p. vii-ix). The work was undertaken at the behest of Crestien's patroness, the Countess Marie of Champagne, as the poet himself explains in the opening lines of the work. Crestien did not personally complete the work, apparently because he found it more expedient to finish his Yvain first (Roques, p. viii-ix). However, he turned the Chevalier de la Charrete over to a collaborator, the clerk

Godefroi de Leigni, whose work he continued to supervise, as Godefroi makes a point of telling his listeners toward the close of the poem. In his epilogue (l. 7098-7112), Godefroi also tells us that he took over at that point in the tale where Lancelot is imprisoned in a tower, on the basis of which statement Roques (p. ix) has assigned l. 6150 for the commencement of Godefroi's section.

The manuscript Fr. 794 of the Bibliothèque Nationale is itself an extensive volume which also includes four other romances by Crestien, as well as works of other authorship. Mario Roques (1952) has given a very complete description of the manuscript, which he establishes as the work of a single copyist and ascribes to the early part of the thirteenth century. The scribe Guiot gives not only his name but also his address ("devant Notre Dame del Val ses ostex"), although without a town or city name, at a point in the manuscript considerably beyond the sections comprising Li Chevaliers de la Charrete. Roques argues that this address was not, as earlier editors have believed, in Paris, but in Provins, the capital of the Comté de Brie; since this was close to the court of Champagne, it explains, as Roques points out, the fact that the linguistic usage and graphic conventions of the scribe are in accord with those of Champagne. Furthermore, Roques believes that Guiot was not an itinerant copyist but an established tradesman, the operator of a permanent copyists' shop, and that the name and address as given in the manuscript were in the

nature of an advertisement.

Thus, the manuscript copy was, in all probability, written not more than 50 years later than the original poem, by a single scribe, whose native dialect was the same as that of the poet. Further, the case system was still intact in this area at the time the copy was made. A more favorable manuscript tradition than this for the purpose of the present study could not be hoped for.

METHODOLOGY

The statistical study is based throughout on a count of complete nominal expressions or noun phrases (NP) rather than of individual words belonging to the categories (nouns, pronouns, articles, and adjectives, including possessive adjectives and participles) to which the case system applies. In many instances an NP consists merely of a single noun, pronoun, or adjective, but very often the NP is an article + adjective + noun combination, and not infrequently it is a series of conjoined nouns and/or pronouns or adjectives and/or of nominal phrases in apposition. Examples will be given below.

The method chosen obviously results in a percentage of case-marked NP's which is far higher than the percentage of individual words in the declinable word classes which are in fact formally distinguished for case. It is believed to be the most logical as well as the most practical approach, since, in actual usage, the presence of even one distinctive case form served to distinguish the function of the entire NP, additional case markings being redundant. To take a very simple example,

"Sire, fet il, molt grant anfanee
avez feite..." (1.226-27)

["Sire," he said, "you have done a very foolish
thing."]

Here the noun anfanee 'childish act' is case-invariant (as is of course molt, here functioning as an adverb), but the adjective grant is distinctively oblique, the corre-

sponding nominative being granz regardless of gender. In this example, of course, the case system is not even syntactically functional, since the verb form avez establishes the deleted pronominal subject as vos, the -e ending of the past participle feite, which agrees in gender with anfance, establishes the latter as the direct object, and semantically an abstract noun such as anfance could obviously not be the subject in a construction such as this.

An NP which shows a high degree of redundancy is mes sire Gauvains (nom.)/mon seignor Gauvain (obl.), which is used throughout the text in referring to Gawain, and in which all three words are distinguished for case.

The expressions counted as NP's in this analysis do not necessarily include a noun, but may consist only of pronouns and/or adjectives. Since the aim of the study is to investigate the OF case system, a feature not present in the modern language, pronouns such as je/me/moi, tu/te/toi, il/le/li/lui, ele/la/li, il/les/lor/eus, and the reflexives se and soi are not included in the NP count, as they are distinguished for case in the modern as well as the old language, and nos and vos, which were invariant in OF and still are, are likewise excluded. The distinction among pronominal forms in OF was more complicated than one based on case alone, since it involved strong vs. weak forms, as does the modern language to an even greater extent, but this is not relevant to the problem at hand. When, however, such pronouns are modified by an adjective or adjectives, the latter, being

subject to the declensional system, are considered to constitute an NP with the pronoun. Illustrations of this point will be given below.

The following pronouns, which were declinable in OF but, to the extent that they survive in modern French are no longer so, are included in the NP count:

All possessive pronouns except the invariant third person plural form lor.

Demonstratives: cil/cel/celui (m.sg.), cele/ceci (f.sg.), cil/ceus (m.pl.), celes (f.pl.); cist/cest/cestui (m.sg.), ceste/cesti (f.sg.), cist/ces (m.pl.), cestes or ces (f.pl.).

Indefinite pronouns: uns/un, aucuns/aucun, autres/autre/autrui, nuls (nus)/nul/nelui; chascuns/chascun; tels (tex)/tel, plusior/plusiors; mainz/maint; toz/tot (sg.), tuit/toz (pl.); and the corresponding feminine forms, where distinctive feminines existed.

Interrogatives and relatives: quels(quex)/quel, lequels/lequel.

The feminine forms of these pronouns are in general not declinable, but it would be no more reasonable to omit them from a count which includes the corresponding masculines than to omit feminine nouns in -e. Cele is found both as nominative and oblique when used as a demonstrative adjective, but Crestien used the special oblique form ceci for the pronoun. The demonstrative and indefinite pronouns listed above were in general also used as adjectives. Riens/rien, which is of course also included in the NP count, was

in OF a true noun of feminine gender, which frequently occurs in positive clauses with its original meaning of 'thing.'

The interrogatives and relatives qui/que/cui (the last a special oblique form used mainly for human referents and as indirect object, with or without a preposition) are not included in the NP count, since modern French makes the qui/que case distinction. It is true that in OF qui sometimes functioned as direct object and que was sometimes used as the subject in relative clauses, but such was not the usage of Crestien. Pronouns such as ce and quant (quan), which were consistently used as neuters in the oblique form (quanz/quant was declinable when used as an adjective), are also excluded from the NP count.

As already mentioned, adjectives, usually predicate adjectives, which modify a pronoun that in itself would be omitted from the NP count, are included, even when such adjectives are indeclinable (feminines in -e or masculines in -s). When a predicate adjective modifies a noun (or a pronoun included in the NP count), it is not counted separately but is considered to form part of the same NP as its head.

The following may be cited as examples:

armé furent... (1.252)

[they were armed...]

Here armé, which modifies the deleted subject pronoun il 'they', is counted as an NP. However in

Mes sire Gauvains fu armez (1.254)

[My lord Gawain was armed]

the predicate adjective armez is considered to form part of the same NP as its head, Gauvains.

Adjectives other than predicate adjectives are counted when they modify object or subject pronouns which would not by themselves be included in the NP count. Thus, in

car je la ramanrai molt bien
tote heitiee et tote saine (1.194-5)

[for I shall bring her back very well, completely healthy and in good condition] ,

the adjectives, which modify the pronoun la (referring to la reïne 'the queen') are considered to constitute an NP, even though they and the underlying noun are case-invariant. Since the subject pronoun je has a masculine referent (the seneschal Kay), the -e and -ne endings of the adjectives show that they refer to la reïne, but this is gender rather than case marking. If the object pronoun were masculine, the oblique form tot heitié et tot sain would show this relationship, whereas toz heitiez et toz sains would indicate that the adjectives modify the subject pronoun je.

In the following line,

mes iriez et dolanz le fist (1.182)

[but, angry and unhappy, he did it],

the distinctively nominative form of the two adjectives (counted as a single NP) shows that they modify the deleted subject pronoun il, referring to li rois 'the king',

rather than the pronominal object le, which refers to the granting of Kay's request by the king. The adjective form is here both syntactically and semantically functional, since "irié et dolant le fist" would mean only that the request (which, according to this interpretation, would be represented by a deleted subject pronoun) made the king (represented by the object pronoun le) angry and unhappy, but not that the king granted the request. This line will be mentioned again in the discussion of functionality.

A predicate noun, in contrast to a predicate adjective, is considered in all instances to form an NP distinct from that which constitutes the subject of the clause.

Compound subjects or objects are considered to constitute single NP's, even when they include one or more prepositional phrases; however, the object of each preposition is counted as a separate NP.

As examples consider the following:

einz le huiant petit et grant
et li veillart et li anfant. (1.404-5)

[but short and tall and old people and children
jeer at him.]

The four nouns (two of them adjectives used as nouns) which comprise the subject of huiant are considered to form a single NP.

n'ala pas querant le meillor
ni le plus bel ni le graignor (1.291-2)

[he did not look for the best or the most beautiful or the biggest (horse)]

The three adjectives which form the direct object of the participle querant and modify the unexpressed noun cheval are counted as a single NP.

et vit molt grant desfoleiz
de chevax et grant froisseiz
d'escuz et de lances en tor. (1.307-9)

[and he saw a great confusion of horses and great wreckage of shields and lances all around.]

Here, grant desfoleiz...et grant froisseiz together comprise the direct object of vit, and this compound direct object is considered a single NP, but chevax, escuz, and lances, each of which is the object of a separate preposition, are counted separately, so that the three lines are considered to contain a total of four NP's. If the de before the noun lances had been omitted, this noun would have been taken together with escuz to give a total NP count of three.

There are, however, instances of NP-verb-NP constructions in which both NP's are subjects of the intervening verb and yet cannot be considered as a single nominal expression, because the verb appears in a singular form.

Thus, in

Et la reine ancor l'an prie
et tuit li chevalier a masse... (1.144-5)

[And the queen begs him again and [so do] all the knights as a group]

the second line is considered equivalent to a complete clause "et tuit li chevalier a masse l'an prient", since only la reine can be the subject of the singular verb prie. This example is an interesting one, since only the distinctive case form of the second NP marks it as a subject rather than as part of a compound object including the pronoun l'. These lines will be mentioned again in the discussion of functionality test cases.

Two or more nouns (or equivalent pronouns) in apposition are counted as a single NP. Thus, we have only two NP's in

..mes sire Gauvains dist
au roi son oncle... (1.224-5)

[my lord Gawain said to his uncle the king..]

and only one NP in

..car me di
 se tu as veü par ici,
 passer ma dame la reine. (1.351-3)

[but tell me, if you have seen my lady the queen
 pass by here]

In vocatives, two nouns in apposition may be separated, as in

—Dame, fet il, vostre merci... (1.142)

["My lady," he said "your grace..."]

but are nevertheless counted together.

The same principle is applied even when fairly complicated expressions are involved, e.g.,

et sus estoient aporté
li mes et les chandoiles mises
es chandeliers totes esprises
et li henap d'argent doré
et dui pot, l'uns plains de moré
et li autres de fort vin blanc. (1.986-91)

[.and on the table were brought the food and the candles, placed, all lighted, in the chandeliers, and the gilded silver cups and two pots, one full of mulberry wine and the other of strong white wine.]

The compound subject of the passive verb estoient aporté consists of a series of four items: li mes, les chandoiles (mises...esprises), li henap, and dui pot; l'uns and li autres are both in apposition with dui pot, and, together with this term and the other three terms of the compound subject, are considered to form a single NP. The four prepositional objects (les) chandeliers, argent doré, moré, and fort vin blanc, are here, as throughout the study, counted individually, giving a total of only five NP's in the six lines.

Sentences containing compound predicates, i.e., series of two or more verbs, with or without objects or adverbial modifiers, are, with very few exceptions, considered to constitute series of independent complete clauses with deleted subjects (except that the subject of the first clause is optionally present in the surface structure). This procedure, which obviously simplifies the functional classification of NP's, seems especially practical in view of the frequency with which underlying subject pronouns were deleted in OF, even in the first of a series of clauses or in simple sentences. Of course, even in modern English or French the pronominal subject of the second verb of a compound predicate is

commonly omitted when it has the same referent as the subject of the first verb. Long sentences with compound predicates are by far the most common type of sentence encountered in the present corpus, so that the procedure adopted has considerable effect on the statistical distribution of NP's between the two categories set up for verbal objects. This point will be mentioned again in connection with the definitions of the various functional categories of NP's.

Exceptions to this treatment of compound predicates have been made only when two transitive verbs of similar meaning are separated only by a conjunction (usually et) and have the same NP, pronoun, or clause as their direct object. Thus in

et chascuns li requiert et prie,
s'ele le set, qu'ele lor die... (1.609-10)

[and each one requests and begs her, if she knows
it, that she tell them...]

the expression requiert et prie is considered to comprise a single verb, with chascuns as its subject, li as its indirect object, and the indirect quotation qu'ele lor die... s'ele le set as its direct object.

Some preposition + noun constructions have been omitted from the count of total NP's because the nouns have largely lost their original nominal meaning and the entire expressions are best construed as adverbs or prepositions. Examples include par mi and en mi (both equivalent to modern French parmi), in which the masculine noun mi 'middle' has in fact become part of the preposition or adverb (the ex-

pressions could be used in either function, the distinction between adverbs and prepositions in OF being in general not sharp). Similar examples are provided by a mont 'above,' a val 'below,' and the adverbs en tor 'around,' par tot 'everywhere,' and a estros 'immediately.' Furthermore, certain NP's used adverbially without prepositions (see definition of adverbial oblique, below), which had become so hackneyed even in OF as to lose all nominal force, are construed as pure adverbs and omitted from the NP count. Examples are le pas 'rapidly' and tote voie (also occurring as totes voies and tote voies), originally an adverbial NP which is generally used as a simple adverb with the meaning of modern French toutefois. Miscellaneous idioms omitted from the NP count are maleoit gré mien 'against my will' (literally, 'cursed pleasure mine') and le quel que soit 'whichever (it may be)', in which the usually inflected pronoun le quel is apparently construed as a neuter, the entire clause being a set phrase (e.g., 1.287). The dividing line between such fixed expressions and true NP's is anything but clear, and the decision as to which expressions should be excluded has been of necessity somewhat arbitrary.

All NP's, as defined in the foregoing paragraphs, have been classified formally as declinable (D) or indeclinable (ID). In addition, all NP's occurring in 1.1-1003 have been classified functionally into 14 categories, to be discussed below. As already explained, NP's have been classified as declinable if they contain even one case dependent form.

Predicate adjectives modifying neuter impersonal (explicit or omitted) pronouns are included in the NP count as ID; e.g., bel et buen in

Au chevalier fu bel et buen
quant ele.... (1. 1006-7)

[It was just fine with the knight when she...]

The syntactic categories are as follows:

STN: Subject of a transitive verb having a noun (or a pronoun included in the NP count) as its direct object.

STP: Subject of a transitive verb having as its direct object a pronoun not included in the NP count.

STC: Subject of a transitive verb whose direct object is a clause, generally a direct or indirect quotation, or a quotation consisting of more than one clause. This category is obviously limited to the subjects of a semantically restricted class of verbs.

DON: Direct object of a transitive verb having as its subject a noun or a pronoun which is included in the NP count. Obviously, the number of NP's in this category must equal the number in the STN category.

DOP: Direct object of a transitive verb having as its subject a pronoun not counted as an NP, or whose subject is not overtly expressed. Included here are oblique NP's which follow the construction ez vos, equivalent to modern French vous voilà, or which are direct objects of infinitives preceded by prepositions. This definition obviously includes the direct object of any verb in the second or subsequent clause of a

compound predicate, since the separate treatment of compound predicates requires that the subjects of such verbs be considered as deleted. If the overt subject of the first clause were considered as also forming part of subsequent clauses, the percentage of NP's in the DOP group would be lower and that in the DON and STN groups correspondingly higher, but the procedure would be extremely involved.

For the purpose of NP classification, a verb + infinitive construction has been treated as if it were an individual verb, and both the direct object and, where present, the subject of the infinitive, have been classified in the DON or DOP category, although in a strict syntactic analysis, the clause consisting of the infinitive with its subject (whether or not present in surface structure) and object must be taken as the direct object of the finite verb. Thus, in

Li nains...
ne l'en vost noveles conter (1.354-5)

[The dwarf did not want to relate news thereof],

vost conter is treated as a simple verb with li nains as subject and noveles as direct object, although the latter is properly the object only of the infinitive.

OP: Object of a preposition. This category, which has proved to be the most numerous, is not particularly interesting, since such nouns are always oblique and distinctive case form, where present, is completely redundant. The omission of a few idiomatic prepositional constructions from the NP count has already been discussed.

SI: Subject of intransitive verb. The term "intransitive verb" as used here includes not only true intransitive and copulative verbs but also reflexives and passive forms of active verbs, the last because of their surface similarity to copula + predicate adjective constructions. Reflexives are included because, when such verbs are used in the perfect tenses, they too are analogous to copula + predicate adjective constructions, i.e., the auxiliary is estre and the past participle appears in the nominative case. This applies even when estre has been deleted and the participle functions as an ordinary adjective, as illustrated by the nominative plural form anfermé instead of the oblique plural anfermez in:

Et cil an furent molt dolant
quant dedanz anfermé se voient... (1.2332-3)

[And they were very unhappy when they saw themselves trapped inside...]

PA: Predicate adjective. This category applies only when the subject of the copulative, passive, or perfect intransitive or reflexive verb is not present in the surface structure or is a pronoun not counted as an NP. When the subject is so counted, the predicate adjective or participle is considered as part of the same NP.

PN: Predicate nouns. These are always counted separately from the subject NP.

V: Vocative. Crestien was fairly consistent in using the nominative case form, except for the expression vostre merci, although when he used this noun in nominative function other

than as a form of address, he used the nominative form merciz. In some instances he used the oblique for a proper name, as discussed later in connection with case system "errors."

G: Genitive used without a preposition. An example encountered more than once is le roi in li filz le roi.

IO: Indirect object. This category includes only NP's used as indirect object without a preposition, a construction which is extremely infrequent in the work here analyzed.

AO: Adverbial oblique. This includes only NP's used in adverbial function without prepositions, e.g., grant aleüre in "Il chevalchent grant aleüre" 'They ride at a fast pace', where modern French would require "à grande allure." Expressions such as voiant toz 'with all of them watching' are considered to belong to this category (cf. Foulet p.97-8); actually, the oblique pronoun (oblique plural in the expression cited) is the logical subject of the invariant present participle.

com/que: NP's including adjectives, introduced by either of these conjunctions have been assigned to a separate functional category, although they might, at least in some instances, have been assigned to the various other categories by reconstructing deep structure clauses from which they might be derived. Their case depends on the context. An example is the nominative form charretons in:

et voit un nain sur les limons
qui tenoit come charretons
une longue verge... (1. 347-9)

[and [he] sees on the shaft [of the wagon] a
dwarf, who, in his capacity as driver, was
holding a long switch....]

STATISTICAL RESULTS

In the entire text of 7113 lines, a total of 7391 NP's, i.e., an average of just over 1 NP/line, has been counted by the method explained in the foregoing section. Of these, 5358, or 72.5%, are distinguished for case, and 2033, or 27.5%, are case-invariant.

In these lines, 55 passages are deemed to constitute "primary examples" of the functionality of the case system, because they would be ambiguous, at least within the immediate context, if not for morphological case. In 34 of these examples, the ambiguity is resolved by the form of a single NP, although more than one word within the NP may be declinable. Most of these passages involve, in addition to the case-marked NP, a deleted, pronominal, or case-invariant subject or object, although, as may be seen from the analysis of individual examples, some defy precise classification.

In the remaining 21 examples, either of two case-marked NP's would serve to prevent ambiguity, so that the other must be considered redundant, although there is no way to establish which is which. In 20 of the 21 passages, the redundancy is occasioned by the case forms of both the subject and the direct (or indirect) object, whereas in the remaining example (1.2396-7), it is clear that both NP's are parallel in function, and it is their interpretation as objects of two separate occurrences of the preposition après, rather

than as subjects of clauses containing après as an adverb, which is clearly established by their oblique form.

All 55 examples will be discussed individually in the next section, as will selected "supporting" examples.

Thus, if we use only these 55 "primary" illustrations, neglecting all purely syntactic or semantically trivial examples (as defined in the next section), as well as those in which the case system receives even flimsy support from gender agreement, or in which alternate interpretations would require a word order strained even for OF, we find that only 76 of 7391 NP's, or approximately 1.03%, have case forms which are completely functional. This, of course, includes both of the functional NP's in each of the 21 examples discussed above. For the reasons already cited, it is, however, probably more logical to consider only one rather than both of the NP's in these examples as being truly functional. We would then have a total of only 55 functional NP's out of 7391, or a functionality coefficient of 0.74%.

Alternatively, a better functionality index might be obtained by considering only those 5358 NP's which are formally distinguished for case. This would give us a functionality coefficient of 1.42% if we count both NP's for each of the doubly functional examples, or 1.03% if we count only one.

Syntactic Analysis of the First 1003 Lines

In addition to the count of declinable vs. indeclinable NP's, the first 1003 lines have been subjected to an analysis of the syntactic function of each NP in terms of the

categories set forth in the methodology section. The results are as follows:

<u>Form</u>		<u>Function</u>		
<u>Class</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% based on total NP's</u>
Declinable (D)	753	STN	44	4.1
Indeclinable (ID)	309	STP	38	3.6
		STC	50	4.7
		DON	44	4.1
		DOP	210	19.8
		OP	404	38.0
		SI	130	12.2
		PA	46	4.3
		PN	13	1.2
		V	39	3.7
		G	8	0.8
		IO	1	0.1
		OA	21	2.0
		com/que	14	1.3
	<hr/> 1062		<hr/> 1062	

The above table shows clearly that objects of prepositions (OP's), which are generally not of interest in establishing the functionality of the case system, constitute by far the most numerous syntactic category, with 404, or 38.0%, of the 1062 NP's. The qualifying adverb "generally" is used here, because the fact that some words could function as either adverbs or prepositions occasionally made a distinctively oblique prepositional object crucial in establishing the interpretation. Only one such instance has been found in the present text.

The next most numerous category, accounting for 210 NP's or 19.8% of the total, is comprised by NP's functioning as direct objects of impersonal verbs or verbs whose subjects are not overtly expressed or are pronouns not considered as

part of the OF case system. This is followed by subjects of intransitive or reflexive verbs, with 130 NP's, or 12.2%, and then by subjects of verbs with object clauses (50 NP's, or 4.7%) and predicate adjectives (46 NP's = 4.3%). The next two categories, subjects of verbs with NP objects and direct objects of verbs with NP subjects, each have 44 NP's equal to 4.1%; these categories obviously must be in a 1:1 relationship.

The 39 vocatives, accounting for 3.7% of the NP's, which comprise the next most frequent category, are of no particular syntactic or semantic interest, since their function is always clear from the context. It is interesting, in the light of this fact, that use of an oblique form for the vocative instead of the expected nominative accounts for a large proportion of the case-system "errors." These will be discussed later. The remaining categories, i.e., subjects of verbs with pronominal objects, adverbial oblique, NP's introduced by the conjunctions com or que, predicate nouns, genitives used without a preposition, and indirect objects used without a preposition, contain, respectively, 38, 21, 14, 13, 8, and 1 NP, representing 3.6, 2.0, 1.3, 1.2, 0.8, and 0.1%, respectively, of the total number of NP's.

The one occurrence of an indirect object construction cannot give even a rough idea of the frequency of this category. The total number of such constructions in the entire text has therefore been counted, and 31 have been

found, as against 53 genitives, representing the category of next lowest frequency. The fact that the functionality coefficient for the genitives, based on the full text, comes out to 0.75%, as against 0.8% for the first 1003 lines, confirms the validity (except for the indirect object) of extrapolating the distribution of categories in these lines over the entire text. The functionality coefficient for the indirect objects calculated on the basis of the full text is 0.44%. It is interesting that, of the 53 genitives, only 5 are indeclinable, whereas 10 of the 31 indirect objects are indeclinable, even though lack of case distinction here would be expected to involve more risk of semantic confusion than it would in a genitive construction.

PRIMARY EXAMPLES

The following passages provide instances in which the OF case system is clearly functional, semantically as well as syntactically. The examples are generally cited in the order in which they occur in the text, except for a few which logically belong together and are so grouped.

- (1) Li rois la reïne i anvoie (1.128)

[The king sends the queen there]

The direct object, la reïne, is case-invariant, but the subject, li rois, is marked as nominative by both the article and the noun. If it were not so marked, the line could just as well mean that the queen sends the king, since the word order object-subject-verb also occurs in this and other OF texts.

- (2) Et la reïne ancor l'an prie
et tuit li chevalier a masse... (1.144-5)

[And the queen begs him again and [so do] all the knights as a group..]

The above lines have already been discussed in the explanation of methodology. As pointed out there, only the clearly nominative form of tuit li chevalier indicates that the knights, like the queen, are pleading with the seneschal Kay (the referent of the object pronoun l'), rather than the queen pleading with all the knights in a group as well as with Kay individually.

- (3) mes iriez et dolanz le fist (1.182)
 [but, angry and unhappy, he did it]

As has already been pointed out in the methodology section, if the adjectives iriez and dolanz were not marked as nominative, the line could have the quite different meaning, "It made him angry and unhappy."

- (4) Li chevaliers a salué
mon seignor Gauvain primerains,
 (5) et puis lui mes sire Gauvains. (1.274-6)

[The knight greeted my lord Gauvain first, and then my lord Gawain [greeted] him.]

The above three lines contain two illustrations of the functioning of the case system. The first example (1.274-5) contains redundancy, since the subject, li chevaliers, is a distinctive nominative form and the object, mon seignor Gauvain, is a distinctive oblique, and either of these alone would make clear that it was the unnamed knight who was the first to give the greeting. In the absence of both case markings, however, the lines would be ambiguous, since the object-verb-subject word order is nearly as frequent in OF verse as the modern order.

The third line, "et puis lui mes sire Gauvains," would in modern French tell us clearly that he (the knight referred to by lui) greeted Gawain, because the word order is absolutely rigid and because the usually oblique pronoun lui is also used as an emphatic nominative (the unstressed il which normally follows such a use of lui would not occur in an elliptical clause such as 1.276). In OF, on the

other hand, the nominative forms je, tu, and il often occurred under stress, so that the oblique form lui may well have alerted Crestien's listeners to expect a following nominative. Nevertheless, use of an emphatic oblique pronoun for a nominative is found occasionally from the twelfth century on (Foulet p. 150-3), so that the line would be somewhat ambiguous if not for the unmistakably nominative form mes sire Gauvains. Once the interpretation of the two preceding lines has been established, however, the fact that Gawain greeted the other knight would be obvious without morphological indication of case.

(6) einz le huient petit et grant,
et li veillart et li anfant, (1.404-5)

[But short and tall people and old people and
 children [all] jeer at him]

This passage was cited in the discussion of compound NP's in the methodological section, but the functionality of the case forms was not considered. If, however, the four terms of the compound subject, and particularly the two article + noun constructions in 1.405, were not clearly marked as nominative, these last two nouns could be interpreted as forming a compound object with the pronoun le, referring to the as yet unnamed knight who eventually turns out to be Lancelot. Since they, unlike the adjectives petit and grant which here function as nouns, are accompanied by articles, the articles might be taken as anaphoric, and the passage might mean that the people, short and tall, jeered not only at Lancelot but at some previously mentioned old people and

children. In a sense, this passage provides a counterexample to 1.144-5, in which the second NP (tuit li chevalier) represents an additional subject. In the larger context of the story plot, the ambiguities of both these passages would be resolved, as would most other ambiguities which are prevented by morphological case.

- (7) Le chevalier mainne a l'ostel (1.420)
 [The knight is escorted to the lodging]

Le chevalier, occurring at the beginning of the sentence, would normally be taken as the subject if not for its oblique form. The actual subject (deleted) is the impersonal pronoun on (an in the dialect of Champagne). It is true that the absence of another NP or pronoun which could serve as direct object would in itself favor the interpretation of le chevalier in this function, since intransitive use of men-er, which would be quite normal with a subject such as la voie 'the road,' would be unusual with an animate subject. That it is not completely out of the question is, however, suggested by 1. 1294, in which the direct object of amener has been deleted (no such deletion has been noted for mener in this text):

La pucele amener li fet
 et dit:... (1.1294-5)

[The maiden has [it] brought to him and says:...]]

Out of context, this line would normally be taken to mean that someone has the maiden brought to him, deletion of

the subject being assumed. This would roughly parallel the passive translation required for 1.420 by the oblique form le chevalier. La pucele is case-invariant, so that, in 1.1294, only the larger context tells us that this NP is the subject of fet amener (as well as of dit in the next line), and that the direct object, son cheval, or a pronoun le or l' referring to the horse, has been deleted. The pronoun li cannot be other than an indirect object, here referring to Lancelot, since the emphatic feminine oblique li is found only as a prepositional object, at least in this text. Line 1294 will be mentioned again in connection with ambiguities not resolved by the case system.

(8) at Gauvain siut adés le nain... (1.421)

[and Gawain immediately follows the dwarf...]

Here again we have redundancy in that subject and object both show distinctive case form. If either one were case-invariant, the other would be sufficient to determine who followed whom, but if both were invariant, there would be no way to tell within the immediate context, given the frequency of object-verb-subject constructions.

(9) Lors a le chevalier veü (1.772)

[Then he saw the knight]

In the above line, the verb veoir is transitive, with le chevalier (the knight defending a ford, who had just thrown Lancelot from his horse into the water) as its direct object and the deleted pronoun il (referring to Lancelot) as

its subject. If le chevalier were not clearly oblique, the verb might just as well be taken as intransitive, with the underlying meaning something like "when the knight saw what was going on," and furthermore, le chevalier might be taken to refer to Lancelot, who has not yet been named at this point in the story.

- (10) Et cil qui le gué dut deffandre
l'autre premieremant requiert... (1.846-7)

[And he who had to defend the ford first attacks
the other]

Here we are dealing with two pronouns which were distinguished for case in the old but not the modern language (cil has been replaced by celui-là). Again, there is redundancy in the fact that both subject and object are declinable, but if both were invariant, it would not be possible to tell whether the guard stationed at the ford or the "other" (actually Lancelot, who is not named until much later in the poem) struck the first blow. In combat scenes such as this, the over-all context is of no particular help.

- (11)et fier~~t~~ del cote (1.1138-9)
un sergent at un autre après

[and with his elbow he strikes a man-at-arms
and then another]

Here there is no surface subject, the underlying subject being Lancelot. The direct object un sergent et un autre has, for purposes of the NP count, been considered together as a compound NP, although the adverb après emphasizes that successive actions are involved. If both un sergent and un autre were not clearly oblique in form, the

line might be interpreted to mean that first one and then the other man-at-arms struck, there being, at least in the surface structure, no direct object. Since the verb is singular, this interpretation would of course require reconstruction of the line as two conjoined independent clauses: "et fiert del cote uns sergenz et [fiert del cote] uns autres [sergenz] après."

- (12) et li quarz qui l'a assailli
fiert si que le mantel li tranche... (1.1144-5)

[and the fourth, who had attacked him, strikes
so that he cuts his cloak...]

Here we have no surface direct object, although the subsequent lines make it abundantly clear that the axe-blow struck by the man-at-arms did find its mark. However, if li quarz were not a marked nominative form, again it would not be possible to tell who struck whom. In 1.1138-9 and 1144-5, as in 1.846-7, we are confronted with combat scenes, in which the over-all context would be of little help in following the action in the absence of case forms.

It is interesting to note that the subordinate clause, "qui l'a assailli," of 1.1144 is ambiguous in the spoken, although not in the written language, since "qui l'a" sounds exactly like "qu'il a" in both Old and modern French.

- (13) et cil qui bien s'an sot deffandre
li tant le chevalier ancontre: (1.1162-3)

[and he, who well knew how to defend himself,
holds the knight out towards him]

In the above passage, Lancelot, who is fighting several

opponents simultaneously, has grabbed one knight and is pushing him toward another, who is raising his axe to strike Lancelot; the blow falls instead on the man Lancelot is holding. Both subject and direct object are distinguished for case (ancontre being an adverb), and in the absence of both declinable forms it would not be possible to ascertain definitely whether cil held out le chevalier or vice versa, although the subordinate clause supports the assumption that cil is the subject. However, relative clauses did not always immediately follow their antecedents, cf. 1.738-9, "Li chevax voit et bel et cler le gué, qui molt grant soif avoit" ('and the horse, which was very thirsty, saw the ford, beautiful and clear').

(14) Amors le cuer celui prisoit (1.1237)
 [Love highly valued the heart of that man]

The above example is relatively trivial. Crestien here, as in many other passages of the poem, is referring to a personification of the abstract quality love. It appears that both the subject Amors and the direct object le cuer are clearly marked for case; however, as will be pointed out in a later section, Crestien consistently uses the nominative form Amors, regardless of syntactic function, for the proper noun referring to Love personified, although, when dealing with the common noun, he uses whichever case form is called for by the context. If neither subject nor object were Case-marked, however, the line could have the somewhat

different meaning, "His heart prized love."

- (15) ..li chevaliers le moinne apele (1.1874)
[the knight calls the monk]

This example is quite straightforward since, without case forms, the line could also mean that the monk calls the knight. This is another instance of redundancy, since both subject and object are clearly case-marked.

- (16) Tantost la pucelle le leisse
après le chevalier s'esleisse. (1.1955-6)
[The maiden immediately leaves him [the monk]
and gallops off after the knight.]

The importance of the oblique form is le chevalier lies the fact that après, here a preposition, can also function as an adverb. The underlying subject of 1.1956 is la pucelle but, le chevalier could be interpreted as the subject if this NP were not case-marked and if après were taken as an adverb, so that the meaning of the line would be "the knight gallops off after (i.e., in pursuit)" or "afterwards the knight gallops off."

- (17) et la pucele tote voie
le chevalier de prés costoie, (1.1997-8)
[and the maiden keeps close beside the knight
all the way]

Here of course it is only the direct object, le chevalier, of the verb costoier which has a distinctive case form. The semantic difference is not as great as it would be with many other verbs, since the end result is that the girl and the knight are riding along side by side, but it is signifi-

cant that it is she who makes the effort to keep close to him, since, as subsequent lines tell us, she is trying to find out his name, which he refuses to reveal.

(18) si com il son chemin tenoit
vit un chevalier qui venoit
del bois... (1.2015-7)

[and as he was going along, he saw a knight who was coming from the woods...]

If we consider the second main clause and the immediately following relative clause ("vit...bois") out of context, only the oblique form of un chevalier tells us that this NP is the direct object rather than the subject of vit. Actually, the subject here also is il (deleted), referring to Lancelot, and the presence of this pronoun in the preceding line 2015 would favor, but not require, this interpretation, even in the absence of morphological case. If un chevalier could be construed as the subject, it would be most natural to take the relative clause introduced by qui, not as a relative, but as an indirect question serving as the direct object, so that the meaning would be "a knight saw who was coming from the woods." It is worth noting that the oblique case form does not completely eliminate ambiguity, since the relative clause could be taken as the subject, so that the passage would mean "whoever was coming from the woods saw a knight." The larger context makes clear, however, that the clause in fact modifies un chevalier.

(19) Avant en anvoie son fil
li vavasors tot maintenant (1.2034-5)

[The vavassor* sends his son on ahead right now]

Here we find the order verb-object-subject, which certainly demonstrates that word order is no criterion of case in OF. Both subject and object are marked for case, but if neither were so marked, there would be no indication within the immediate context of who sent whom.

- (20) Li vavasors a amené
le chevalier dedans sa cort (1.2056-7)

[The vavassor has brought the knight
into his court]

Here both subject and object are clearly case-marked, and, if neither were so marked, the knight could just as well have brought the vavassor home, within the immediate context.

- (21) Premieremant li vavasors
comança son oste a enquerre
qui il estoit.... (1.2076-8)

[First the vavassor began to ask his guest who
he was....]

Here li vavasors is the subject and son oste the indirect object, and both are distinguished for case. Without case forms, we could not tell from these lines whether it was the host or the guest who began to inquire.

- (22) An l'estor est après son frere
et après son seignor venuz (1.2396-7)

[He came into the battle after his brother
and after his lord]

*A vavassor was a vassal holding his land from another vassal.

The underlying subject, with which the nominative singular participle venuz agrees, is li vaslez 'the young man, squire.' If not for the oblique form of son frere and son seignor, après could be interpreted as an adverb, so that the lines would mean something like "afterward his brother and his lord came into the battle." It is true that the copula est is singular, but the second line could well be an elliptical clause with omitted copula. According to such an interpretation, venuz would be considered deleted from the first line; its nominative form does not contribute to resolution of the semantic ambiguity.

(23) quant son oste voit qui l'esgarde. (1.2719)

[when he sees his host, who is looking at him.]

The oblique form of son oste (here meaning 'host', although the same word can also mean 'guest') is crucial, since otherwise the line could also mean "when his host (or guest) sees who is looking at him," i.e., the entire relative clause "qui l'esgarde" would be the direct object of voit, and the pronoun l' would refer to the subject, son oste, of the main clause. Actually, there is no surface subject; l' in the subordinate clause refers back to the underlying subject, li chevaliers a la charrete, which appears back in 1.2717, and the relative clause is nonrestrictive.

(24) Ce fet le roi joiant et lié (1.3168)

[This makes the king joyous and happy]

The subject here is the neuter pronoun ce, and we have as object a clearly oblique noun modified by two clearly oblique adjectives. The same line with nominative forms, "Ce fet li rois joianz et liez" would mean "Happy and joyous, the king does this." In a sense, this line provides a counter-example to 1.182, "mes iriez et dolanz le fist."

(25) car voirs est, n'an dotez de rien
qu'an puet plus feire mal que bien. (1.3179-80)

[for the truth is, don't doubt it at all, that
one can do evil more [readily] than good.]

These lines occur at the end of a passage in which Crestien refers to the personified moral quality malvestiez 'wickedness, cowardice,' and if the adjectives mal and bien, here used as nouns (and counted together as a single NP) were not in the oblique case, they might be interpreted as subjects (an = modern French on being homonymous with an = modern French en in Crestien's dialect), so that the meaning of 1.3180 would be something like "evil can make more of it than good."

(26) s'orroiz comant tient a escole
li rois son fil qu'il aparole (1.3185-6)

[and you will hear how the king reprimands his
son, whome he addresses [as follows]]

Here again the syntactic relationship is indicated by the distinctive case forms of both subject and object. Semantically it is of course more likely that a king would scold his son than the other way around, but without the case system the alternate interpretation could not be

excluded, especially since the son is Meleagant, a thorough villain.

- (27) Le chevalier estrange mande
li rois molt tost... (1.3514-15)

[The king sends for the strange knight right away...]

This example is a particularly clear one, since the object-verb-subject order is the reverse of the word order which is obligatory in the modern language. It is worth noting that both subject and object are case-marked; although the form li rois would in itself be sufficient to establish the syntactic and semantic relationship, the oblique NP at the very beginning of the sentence undoubtedly facilitated comprehension for Crestien's listeners by alerting them to the fact that the knight was to be the recipient, not the performer, of the action. It is of course, in terms of practical considerations, far more likely that a king would send for a knight than vice versa, but this alone would be inadequate to establish the meaning of the passage in the absence of formal case.

- (28) Et cil font lors sanz demorance
arriere treire les genz totes (1.3584-5)

[And then they have all the people pulled back without delay]

In the above lines cil, the subject, refers to Lancelot and Meleagant, who are about to engage in single combat; the pronoun is distinct from the oblique plural cels or ceus, but is identical with the nominative singular, so that the indication of plurality depends entirely on the verb font.

The object, les genz totes (referring to the spectators), is feminine plural and hence case-invariant, so that, within the immediate context, only the nominative form cil makes clear that it was not all the people who had somebody pulled back. If cil could serve as the object, it would be impossible to distinguish between singular and plural; it is worth noting that the language did make the distinction (cel singular vs. cels(ceus) plural) in the oblique, for which it was semantically necessary, but not in the nominative, for which the number distinction is already present in the verb.

- (29) Li rois voit si ataint son fil
qu'il ne s'aide ne desfant (1.3758-9)

[The king sees his son so exhausted that he does not help or defend himself]

This is a fairly straightforward example, in which we know that it is not the king's son who sees his father stricken only because of the case forms of the subject and object, however, case marking of either one alone would have been sufficient to convey the information. The opposite information could have been conveyed by morphological changes only, with retention of the same word order, since "Le roi voit si ataint ses filz..." would be a perfectly natural OF sentence.

- (30) La peç est tex que cil li rant
la reine ... (1.3877-8)

[Peace is made on the terms that he [Melegant]
will turn over the queen to him [Lancelot...]

Here it is only the pronoun cil (in this instance singular) which identifies the subject; if it were not clearly

nominative, it could, within the immediate context, be taken to refer to some man who is the queen's prisoner and whom she will hand over to someone else. We know, however, from the story as it has developed up to this point, that it is the queen who is a prisoner.

- (31) Quant la reïne voit le roi.... (1.3937)
 [When the queen sees the king...]

This straightforward example, in which the case form of the object NP alone tells us who sees whom, requires no particular comment.

- (32) A si grant enor la demainne
 et a demené jusque ci
li frans rois la soe merci (1.4059-61)
 [The noble king treats, and has up to now treated,
 her grace with very great honor]

All three words of the subject NP li frans rois are distinguished as nominative, but the direct object, la soe merci (referring to queen Guinevere, who is a prisoner of the king's son) is invariant, and, out of context, the lines could be a description of how some person (not necessarily female) referred to by the honorific title la soe merci treated the noble king, if the latter were not case marked. It must be pointed out that, in Crestien's usage, merci is declinable (nominative: merciz) when used as common noun, but not when used as a title. Two possible interpretations may be given for la in 1.4059: if it is taken as an adverb (modern là), meaning, in the context of the preceding lines, in

the presence of the king and others, then li frans rois is the only morphological indicator of the subject-object roles. (Of course, if we resort to the preceding context to establish the reference of the adverb, there will be no semantic confusion.) Alternatively, la may be a direct object pronoun referring to the queen. If we adopt this interpretation, instead of considering both verb forms to constitute a single verb, so that the three lines form a single clause, it is preferable to consider 1.4059 and 1.4060-1 as separate clauses, with the subject (a pronoun referring to the king) deleted from the first and adverbial phrase a si grant enor deleted from the second.

It is important to note that the role of the feminine NP la soe merci as direct object would normally be shown by gender agreement of the past participle, i.e., we would expect demenee instead of demené. This omission of the final unstressed -e, presumably for the sake of meter, suggests that in those instances (to be discussed later) where the interpretation is indicated both by this gender agreement and by morphological case, it is the case form which is the more important indicator.

(33)lors l'en mainne
li rois la reine veoir (1.4458-9)

[Then the king takes him off to see the queen.]

The nominative form li rois is needed to establish that the king is the subject only because l'en, which consists of the accusative pronoun l' (referring to Lancelot)

+ the adverbial particle en, was in Crestien's dialect, homonymous with the indefinite pronoun l'an (equivalent to l'on in modern French and in other OF dialects). In fact, Crestien spelled the adverb and also the preposition en as an more often than not, although he did not do so in 1.4458. If we were in fact confronted with the indefinite pronoun and li rois were not unambiguously nominative, the meaning would be that the king is taken to see the queen.

The word order, however, would prevent any possibility of interpreting la reïne as subject, with li rois as object. Actually, la reïne is the object only of the infinitive veoir, li rois the subject only of the finite verb mainne, and l' both the object of the finite verb and the (obligatorily deleted) subject of the infinitive. Since the object of an infinitive could not be separated from it by the subject of the finite verb governing the infinitive, li rois, even if not case-inflected, could not be the object of veoir.

(34) Quant Lanceloz voit la reïne (1.4583)

[When Lancelot sees the queen]

Here it is the nominative form of the proper name which tells us who sees whom. Although, as will be discussed later, some instances of "case errors" involving this name occur in the poem, they always involve substitution of the oblique for the nominative, and in no such instance is there the slightest chance of ambiguity.

Let us consider the following passages, in which the

oblique form of the direct object identifies the pronoun ele unambiguously as the subject.

- (35) et ele un autre tost li rant (1.4587)
 [and she quickly gives him one back]

Un autre refers to un salu, and the line tells us that the queen returns Lancelot's greeting. The nominative form uns autres would indicate an interpretation on the lines of "another man gives her to him."

- (36) et dit au roi que ele avra
un chevalier... (1.4903-4)
 [and she says to the king that she will have a knight...]

The intended meaning, made clear by the context, is that she (the queen) will have brought to the scene a knight who will be able to defend Kay of the false charge made against him. Out of context, the meaning could be "a knight will have her," if un chevalier were not an oblique form.

- (37) tant qu'ele vit le chevalier (1.5851)
 [so that she saw the knight]

Here the oblique form le chevalier excludes the interpretation "the knight saw her."

The functionality of the case system in the above examples might well be disputed on the ground that this pronoun could only be nominative in OF, at least in a twelfth century text such as this, since ele began to replace the emphatic feminine oblique li only toward the end of the

thirteenth century, according to Foulet (p.109) or only in Middle French, i.e., in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, according to Pope (p.324). Furthermore, in the above examples there would be no reason to expect an emphatic form rather than the normal accusative la.

Use of the ele as an object pronoun by Crestien, however, is indicated by the context of the following passage, which, when taken alone, would require an entirely different interpretation:

Mes, se ele conduit eüst (1.1311-12)
uns autres....

[but, if another had abducted her...]

The form uns autres can be either nominative singular or oblique plural, and, since ele is normally a subject pronoun only, the latter interpretation of the case form is indicated, leading to the translation, "but, if she had led some others...." However, this passage occurs during a digression, in which Crestien tells us that custom required a knight who found a girl alone to treat her with respect, but that, if another man had already carried her off, any knight who bested the abductor in combat could do with the girl as he pleased. Hence, only interpretation of ele as direct object and uns autres as subject makes sense in context. This passage will be cited again in the discussion of ambiguities not prevented by the case system.

One more example might be cited in which an oblique case form precludes interpretation of ele as object:

que, quant ele ot asez gabé
le chevalier et ranponé (1.587-8)'

[that, when she had mocked and insulted the knight
 enough]

It is mainly the oblique form of le chevalier which tells us that it was not the knight who had ridiculed the girl, but here the case system has support from gender agreement, since ele as direct object would require the feminine participial forms gabée et ranponée. However, as we have seen in 1.4059-61, where the masculine participle is used with a feminine object, the support rendered by the unstressed feminine ending -e is feeble. Even when uttered, this weak final syllable was often likely to be unheard.

(38) Le roi Artus a Kex traï (1.4854-5)
son seignor....

[Kay has betrayed King Arthur, his lord..]

Here both subject and direct object are case-marked, the case form of the object being particularly important because of its position at the beginning of the sentence, the subject is inserted between the auxiliary verb and past participle, and the participle is followed by the oblique case form son seignor in apposition with le roi Artus (and considered to form a single NP with it). Practical considerations would suggest that son seignor refers to the king rather than to Kay even if this expression were case-invariant. It may be noted that Artus is actually a nominative form, here used for the oblique Artu, but this causes no confusion because both

the article and the common noun are unambiguously oblique. Although the subject, Kex, here appears in its proper nominative form, this proper name carries much less of the semantic content than le roi, since the form Kex appears in oblique function several times throughout the poem.

(39) Quex le seneschal ne conut
qui de tel chose le mescrut. (1.4955-6)

[Whoever wrongly believed Kay the seneschal to
have done such a thing did not know him.]

Even though Quex is a nominative form used for the direct object, the clearly oblique words le seneschal (vs. li seneschax, nominative) identify the entire NP as the object; the subject is the entire clause qui...mescrut. If Quex le seneschal could be taken as the subject, the underlying structure of the sentence would be entirely different: "Kay the seneschal did not know who could have believed him guilty of such a thing," qui being in this reading an interrogative pronoun introducing an indirect question, rather than a relative pronoun corresponding to "he who" or "whoever."

(40) Cil qui de nul mal ne se dote
a fet remenoir sa gent tote (1.5079-80)

[He, who does not suspect any evil, has ordered
all his people to wait]

The relative clause may be ignored for the purpose of this analysis. Cil, the here singular subject, is a distinctive case form, and so is the oblique sa gent tote (the object of fet = fait and subject of the infinitive remenoir), here used in the singular. In Crestien's dialect, feminine

nouns not ending in unstressed -e regularly took -s in the nominative singular. However, presumably because there is often no semantic difference between the singular and plural of this particular noun, Crestien on occasion used the singular with a plural verb and in the oblique form gent (the nominative genz being of course identical with the plural). This will be pointed out again in the discussion of "case errors." The subject case form is thus a more reliable guide to semantic interpretation than the object form; without any morphological indication of case, the passage could well mean that his people ordered him to remain.

(41) et siust le nain qui traï l'a (1.5081)

[and he follows the dwarf, who has betrayed him]

The deleted subject of this line is cil, present in the surface structure of 1.5079 and referring to Lancelot. However, siust (the third person singular indicative of sivre = modern French sivre) could be taken as intransitive, so that the line would mean "and the dwarf, who has betrayed him, follows," if not for the fact that le nain is an oblique case form.

(42) et la reine le semont
 et prie qu'a val et a mont
 par sa terre querre le face
 tot sanz demore et sanz espace
 et mes sire Gauvains et Qués: (1.5211-15)

[and the queen calls upon him [the king] and begs that he have him [Lancelot] searched for, up hill and down dale throughout his lands without hesitation or delay, and my lord Gawain and Kay [also beg the king for this]]

Mes sire Gauvains and Qués are nominative in form; the case form Qués (a variant of Kex) is not particularly significant, since Crestien often uses the nominative of this name in oblique function, but he is very careful with the name Gauvains, and the appellation mes sire is quite different from the corresponding oblique mon seignor. Without morphological case distinction, the sentence could be interpreted to mean that the queen personally begs Gawain and Kay, as well as the king, to send out a search party for Lancelot.

(43) Et li vaslez l'a salüee,
 et le roi qui de li fu pres,
 et puis les autres toz après,
 et Queus et mon seignor Gauvain. (1.5248-51)

[And the squire greeted her and the king, who was near her, and then all the others afterward, [including] Kay and my lord Gawain.]

In the first of the above lines, there would be no question, even if li vaslez were not distinctively nominative, that this is the subject and that the pronoun l' for la, referring to la reïne, is the direct object. The past participle salüee agrees in gender with this pronominal object, even though the following nouns, which are also objects of the verb, are masculine. The crucial point is that if le roi, les autres, and mon seignor Gauvain were not oblique in form, the meaning might be that they, as well as the squire, greeted the queen, instead of themselves being greeted by her. This passage may be contrasted with 1.144-5, "Et la reïne ancor l'an prie et tuit li chevalier a masse," in which tuit li chevalier, being nominative, are additional

agents rather than recipients of the action. It must further be noted that the name Queus is a nominative form functioning as oblique. If the passage consisted only of "Et li vaslez l'a salúee, et le roi qui de li fu pres et puis Queus," there might be some question as to whether Kay was a greeter or received a greeting, but since this proper noun comes between two oblique constructions to which it is joined by the conjunction et, there is no possibility of confusion.

(44) ..et dit que Lanceloz salue
le roi come son boen seignor (1.5258-9)

[and says that Lancelot greets the king as his
 good lord]

(45) Cil avoit Lancelot an garde (1.5428)

[This man had Lancelot in his custody]

The two examples above may conveniently be considered together, and require little comment. In both of them, we find the modern subject-verb-object word order, the subject and object both have distinctive case forms, and, without case distinction, an interpretation in which subject and object are reversed would be possible. The oblique form of the NP introduced by the conjunction come indicates that the elliptical clause is to be reconstructed as "come il salue son boen seignor," whereas a nominative form would mean that Lancelot was acting in the role of the good lord. Given the meaning of the word roi the interpretation required by the morphology is of course by far the more likely on semantic grounds alone.

(46) Dolant et pansif Lancelot
 vit la dame de la meison (1.5436-7)

[The lady of the house saw Lancelot sorrowful
 and pensive]

The above passage is far more interesting than the two preceding examples. We not only have the order object-verb-subject, but the object is preceded by its two modifiers, and the subject la dame is case-invariant. A gender distinction, which, is the absence of morphological case, would serve to identify the adjectives as modifying Lancelot rather than la dame, is present in that the feminine of pansif would be pansive. Powerful support, however, is provided by the oblique form of the masculine pansif and of the gender-invariant dolant. Identification of the adjectives with Lancelot, which could be based on gender alone, would not suffice, however, to identify Lancelot as object rather than subject in the absence of case distinction, since the passage could then mean "Lancelot, sad and pensive, saw the lady of the house" (the nominative would be "Dolanz et pensi(f)s Lanceloz..")

(47) et or est si coarde chose
 que chevalier atandre n'ose. (1.5687-8)

[And now [he] is such a cowardly thing that he
 doesn't dare to wait for a knight [to engage him
 in combat in the tournament]]

If chevalier were not in its oblique form, it would be possible to take this noun as the subject of the subordinate clause, so that the lines would be interpreted to mean something like "it is indeed a cowardly thing, that a knight

does not dare to wait."

(48) Li un lor seignors eidier cuident (1.5949)

[Some knights (literally, "the ones") think to aid their lords]

In this line, which occurs in the description of a tournament, we again have distinctive case forms for subject and object, both of which are here plural, and, in the absence of case, an also reasonable interpretation would be that the lords wanted to help their knights.

(49) ..que por biauté ne por avoir
deignast nule d'eles avoir
cil chevaliers... (1.5999-6001)

[that not for their beauty or their wealth would that knight deign to have any of them [the maidens at the tournament]]

Here we have the subject cil chevaliers, occurring only at the end of a syntactically complicated clause, and if it were not nominative in form, it would not be clear whether the knight was not interested in any of the girls or if none of the girls was interested in the knight; the latter interpretation would, in fact, correspond to the more likely word order. The external context of Lancelot's love for the queen does, of course, support the interpretation which is made precise by the case system.

(50) et Lancelot venu trova
qui prison tenoit an sa cort (1.6106-7)

[and he found that Lancelot had come and was a prisoner in his court]

Here the unexpressed subject is the seneschal whom Meleagant had assigned to guard Lancelot; the past participle

venu functions as an adjective modifying the direct object Lancelot and, like the proper name, is clearly oblique in form, and the nonrestrictive relative clause also modifies the direct object. Without morphological case, however, the passage could be interpreted to mean that Lancelot, having come back, found the man who was a prisoner in his court, i.e., Lancelot could be taken as the subject and the clause "qui....cort" as the direct object. As in so many other passages, however, the alternate interpretation is semantically tenable only within the immediate context.

(51) Lancelot amener i fist (1.6131)

[He had Lancelot brought there]

Lancelot would probably be taken as the direct object, even if it were not case-marked, because of the absence of another NP or pronoun which could function in this role. However, 1.1294 shows us that deletion of the direct object of faire amener is possible, so that interpretation of Lancelot as the subject could not be excluded if not for its oblique form.

(52) apeler voloit Lancelot (1.6457)

[she wanted to call Lancelot]

Here, the underlying subject is ele, referring to the sister of Meleagant, who had set out to search for Lancelot. Out of context, it is reasonable, without the distinctively oblique form Lancelot, to take Lancelot as the subject, with

the meaning, "Lancelot wanted to call out."

(53) et Lanceloz molt tost cort sus
Meleagant de grant air (1.7002-3)

[and Lancelot very quickly attacks Meleagant
with great fury]

Both subject and object are case-marked proper names; the proper case forms of Meleagant are used consistently both by Crestien and by Godefroi (who wrote the above lines), and, although the oblique form Lancelot is occasionally used for the nominative (only in vocatives, with one exception in Godefroi's part of the text), Lanceloz occurs only in nominative function.. This being a combat scene, the general context would not tell us who attacked whom if neither name were a case form. Sus can be either an adverb or a preposition, but is here best taken as an adverb, corre sus being an idiom meaning 'to attack.'

(54) Joie depiece et si efface
la dolor..... (1.6816-7)

[Joy breaks up and thus effaces sorrow..]

The subject joie is of course case-invariant, and if this were also true of dolor, it would not be possible to tell, except in the larger context, whether sorrow is being replaced by joy or vice versa. Since Crestien (the above lines were actually written by Godefroi de Leigni) was careful to use distinctive nominative singular forms for feminine nouns not ending in unstressed -e, we may however consider the oblique form la dolor (vs. the nominative la dolors) as functional.

(55) Li rois Lancelot molt enore (1.6852)

[The king bestows great honors on Lancelot]

The above line provides a straightforward example in which both subject and direct object are distinguished for case, and in which, without either of these distinctions, it would not be clear, even within a broader context, who was honoring whom.

SUPPORTING EXAMPLES

In a few passages, the interpretation indicated by the case forms could be established also by the unstressed -e feminine ending of a past participle. In oral recitation, however, this ending might easily not be heard, and in 1.4060-1 (a demené...la soe merci), we have seen an instance of its omission from the written text. In the following two passages, the subject is a masculine NP distinguished for case, and the direct object with which the past participle agrees is case-invariant, so that the redundancy occasioned by the case + gender distinction is essentially equivalent to that which exists in clauses whose subject and direct object are both case-marked.

Et li rois a par la main prise
la reine.... (1.188-9)

[And the king has taken the queen by the hand...]

Li rois....
en a la reine apelee (1.5010-11)

[The king has called the queen thence]

The significance of the case and the gender form is somewhat different in the following line:

qui molt iriez vos a randue. (1.3956)

[who has surrendered you very grudgingly.]

Here the relative pronoun qui, which constitutes the subject, refers to Meleagant, and the case-invariant pronoun vos refers to Queen Guinevere, who had been his prisoner.

The ending of the past participle identifies the antecedent of vos, the direct object, as feminine, and the masculine singular nominative ending -z shows that iriez 'angry' modifies the subject rather than the subject rather than the object. If iriez were case-invariant, the clause might be translated as "who has made you very angry," except that the feminine gender of the object would require irise vs. masculine irié.

Another example in which the semantic interpretation provided by a case form is supported by a gender form is:

que, quant ele ot asez gabé
le chevalier et ranponé (1.587-8)

[that, when she had mocked and insulted the knight
enough]

These lines have already been cited in connection with the point that ele could on occasion be a direct object as well as a subject pronoun. The fact that it is a subject here is indicated both by the oblique form of le chevalier and by the masculine form of the two past participles, which agree with the masculine direct object. That the support provided by gender agreement is, at best, flimsy, is however well illustrated by 1.4060-1 (Example 32), "et a demené jusque ci li frans rois la soe merci" ('the noble king has up to now treated her grace'), where a masculine participle is used with a feminine object.

There are a few other passages in which, if not for the case system, the interpretation would depend entirely on the distinction between the qui and que forms of the relative

pronoun (this is in itself a case distinction, but, since it still exists in the modern language, has not been considered as part of the now obsolete OF system). In many OF texts, particularly those of the East, the form of the relative pronoun would have been unreliable as a guide, because que was often used as the subject form (Foulet p.176), but Crestien generally distinguished qui nominative from que and cui oblique (in 1.1697, however, qui is used for que as subject of an infinitive, and in 1.5187 que appears to have been used as the subject. In the following two lines, the interpretation of qui as the subject is supported by a distinctive oblique case form which accompanies it.

qui mon signor Gauvain conut (1.278)

[who knew my lord Gawain]

qui Lancelot mis i avoit (1.6429)

[who had put Lancelot there]

In 1.278, the relative pronoun refers to the as yet unnamed knight who later turns out to be Lancelot, and the subject-object distinction, which is so forcefully made by the triply case-marked NP mon signor Gauvain, happens to be unimportant in relation to the over-all context, since Gawain also knew Lancelot. In 1.6429, qui refers to Meleagant, who had imprisoned Lancelot in a tower.

With the above lines may be contrasted the following, in which the direct object of the subordinate clause is a

case-invariant NP, and the interpretation of this clause entirely on the nominative form qui:

...et devant venoit
 uns granz chevaliers qui menoit
une bele dame a senestre. (1.557-9)

[and in front [of the procession] came a tall knight, who was leading a beautiful lady on his left.]

There are numerous passages, aside from those cited above, in which case forms, while not uniquely indicating the interpretation within the immediate context, certainly play an important supporting role and must have greatly facilitated comprehension for Crestien's listeners. To cite a random example:

Li chevaliers a pié, sanz lance,
 après la charrete s'avance
 et voit un nain sor les limons, (1.345-7)

[The knight, on foot and without a lance, runs after the chariot and sees a dwarf on the shafts]

If 1.346 did not intervene, so that we were dealing essentially with a single independent clause "li chevaliers... voit un nain," we would have a good example of functionality in which the case forms of both subject and object tell us that the knight sees the dwarf rather than the other way around. As it stands however, with the intervening intransitive (actually reflexive) verb and its modifying adverbial phrase, the word order alone would make it very difficult to interpret un nain as the subject of both verbs, but the nominative form of the initial NP certainly must have alerted the hearer to interpret this as the agent, an interpretation

aided by the oblique form of the NP which immediately follows the second verb. For simplicity in the functional analysis of NP's, li chevaliers has been taken as the overt subject of the first verb only and considered to have been deleted from the second independent clause (containing the transitive verb), in accordance with the methodology which has already been described.

Et la dame tantost li baille
les armes son seignor....

[And the lady quickly gives him her husband's
arms....]

Here the oblique NP son seignor is used without a preposition as a genitive. If not for the indirect object pronoun li, the case form would be necessary to prevent interpretation of the line as "her husband gives the lady the arms." With the pronoun, and when the lines are taken out of context, there would still be a possibility of interpreting la dame as an emphatic indirect object, with which li is in apposition, if not for the oblique form of son seignor; however, such a construction would have been unusual in OF.

Many other examples in which case forms substantially facilitate interpretation could be cited, but, since it is difficult to specify the exact extent of functionality in such instances, the tabulation and individual discussion have been limited to passages which provide clear functionality tests.

TRIVIAL AND PURELY SYNTACTIC EXAMPLES

In addition to the foregoing, there are many examples in which the case forms of the subject and/or object (direct or indirect) uniquely determine the syntactic relationship, but which are semantically trivial because a reciprocal relationship is indicated. Most of these examples involve the construction li uns...li autre ('each...the other' or 'they... one another'), but the following also occurs:

qu'amie ami, n'amis amie
doient parjurer a nul fuer (1.1402-3)

[that a sweetheart should break her word to her lover, or a lover to his sweetheart, at any price]

Here we see the contrast between the declinable masculine noun and the corresponding case-invariant feminine in -e. If the above lines contained only the expression "amie ami," or only "amis amie," we would have another functionality test case, but, since both possible subject-object relationships are expressed, the distinction is semantically trivial. Note also the plural verb, despite the conjunction n' (for ni = nor).

The expressions "prodom....prodome" (1.3212) and hom... autre (1.3380-1), both with declinable subjects and objects, are equivalent to li uns....l'autre, except, of course, with the more restricted lexical meanings "a hero....a hero" and "a man....another," respectively.

There are also several passages in which the only indication of whether a verb is transitive is provided by a declinable NP, but in which this makes almost no difference

to the over-all meaning. For example, in

..Lors recomancent
lor jeus, si querolent et dancent. (1.1827-8)

[Then they begin their games again, and they play rounds and dance.],

the oblique form jeus shows that this word is the direct object and that an animate plural subject, presumably the third person pronoun il, has been deleted. Otherwise, jeus might be taken as the subject, so that the line would mean "then their games began again," but since games cannot have a true agent role, the difference is scarcely more than stylistic. In this example, additional evidence for the transitivity of line 1828, "...et querolent et dancent;" since these verbs are intransitive and require a deleted pronominal subject, they tend to support the assumption of the same subject for recomancent.

Another example of this type is

Sovent si aspremant se reent
les hiaumes.... (1.3612-3)

[Often they scrape each other's helmets so sharply...]

The oblique les hiaumes (vs. nominative li hiaume) here indicates a deleted pronominal subject (referring to the combatants, Lancelot and Meleagant) and a transitive verb. If not for the case form of the direct object, it would be natural to interpret les hiaumes as the subject, so that the meaning would be that the helmets scrape sharply against each other, presumably as an unintentional side effect of the of the movement of the combatants. The larger context

indicates that the scraping was the result of sword blows and was severe enough to cause bleeding even though the helmets were not pierced. The transitivity of the verb, as indicated by the case, does therefore result in some difference in meaning, although not a very dramatic one.

As a somewhat similar example involving a direct object clearly marked as oblique, in which, however, transitivity is not the question, we may cite 1.1134 (the preceding line is also cited, to clarify the reference):

an terre les espees fierent
si qu'anbedeus les peçoierent. (1.1133-4)

[They] strike their swords against the ground
so that they break both of them to pieces.]

The referent of the direct object is the case-invariant les espees, but its modifier anbedeus 'both' is distinctively oblique. The nominative anbedui would mean that both (the knights) break them (the swords) to pieces, and this might well be the interpretation adopted if anbedeus were case-invariant. However, the semantic difference is one of emphasis rather than underlying meaning.

Finally, there are numerous examples in which the case system is completely redundant in that syntactic relationships are inherent in the lexical meanings of the words, but still might be considered functional on a purely syntactic plane, i.e., if OF were not only a dead language but a "lost" one in the sense that Etruscan is lost, and scholars had been able to discover its morphology but not its lexicon, the case forms would serve to establish syntactic relation-

ships. The case-marked NP's of all clauses having an overt subject and an overt direct object (or indirect object used without a preposition) which are classified as NP's, fall into this category if the NP's and verb are third person, the subject and object are either both singular or both plural, and no support is rendered by gender agreement of a participle or adjective, unless, of course, the clause provides a proof of true semantic functionality because the meanings of the NP's are such that ambiguity would result in the absence of at least one case form. Examples of this type require no special discussion, but the following are cited at random:

Li chevax voit et bel et cler
le gué... (1.738-9)

[The horse sees the ford, beautiful and clear...]

In this example, the adjective bel, if not marked, could apply to the horse, but cler can only apply to the water.

De son col oste son escu
li chevaliers.... (1.1000-1)

[The knight takes off his shield from around his neck...]

Si tenoit chascuns une hache (1.1091)

[And each was holding an axe]

La novele de l'anhatine
sot Lanceloz.... (1.5432-3)

[Lancelot knew the news of the tournament]

The semantic superfluity of case forms in the above examples is pointed up by clauses such as the following, in which no difficulty arises despite the absence of case forms

in both subject and object:

Quant la dameisele parçoit
la fontaine.... (1.1357-8)

[When the damsel catches sight of the fountain...]

As will be pointed out later, however, there are a few instances in which clauses containing only indeclinable NP's are actually ambiguous, although the ambiguity is resolved in the broader context.

No attempt has been made to obtain an exact count of those instances in which the case system functions on the syntactic level only, or in which the semantic distinction is a trivial one, except to the extent that such a count is a by-product of the close functional analysis which has been carried out for the NP's of the first 1003 lines.

RESIDUAL AMBIGUITIES

Although many examples have been cited in which the distinctive case form of an NP, or of either of two declinable NP's, is semantically functional, the case system is sometimes inadequate to resolve ambiguities, usually because the only NP's involved contain no declinable words, or because of confusion between a nominative singular masculine and an oblique plural masculine of identical form. The following ambiguous passages have been found in the present text.

La teste vialt que il li doint
la pucele qui li demande (1.2848-9)

[The maiden, who is making a request of him, wants him to give her the head.]

The reference here is to the head of the arrogant knight whom Lancelot has just defeated in combat; the girl wants the victor to cut off the man's head and give it to her as a trophy. However, it is easy to interpret the head as the subject, referring figuratively to Lancelot's head, which tells him to do something other than what his heart tells him. According to this interpretation, the clause introduced by que would still be the direct object of vialt, but la pucele would be the direct object of doint within this clause; the relative clause introduced by qui could then refer to la pucele, as in fact it does in the correct interpretation, or possibly to the person to whom Lancelot was to give the girl (although qui would be more likely than qui in the latter construction). The involved word order and absence of noun case

forms makes the passage rather difficult; if le chief, a clearly oblique form, had been used instead of the synonymous la teste, interpretation would have been greatly facilitated.

Et la reïne une fenestre li mostre (1.4506)

[And the queen shows him a window]

This line occasions no difficulty in context, but out of context it could mean "a window shows him the queen," i.e., he sees the queen through a window. The ambiguity arises, of course, from the fact that neither the subject la reïne nor the object une fenestre is distinguished for case.

Another example, also involving a case-invariant subject and object, is

Et la reïne a consoil tret
une pucele cointe et sage (1.5636-7)

[And the queen draws a clever and sensible maiden
aside]

Out of context, the subject-object relationship could not be definitely established, although the inference that it is the queen rather than her handmaiden who takes the initiative would be logical. The ambiguity is quickly resolved, however, by the following lines (5638-45), in which the queen asks the girl to take a message to Lancelot.

Two further examples of ambiguities, both occasioned by somewhat unusual grammatical usages, have already been considered, namely

La pucele amener li fet (1.1294),

in which the direct object of fet amener has been deleted, and

se ele conduit eüst uns autres... (1.1311-12), which involves the use of ele as an object pronoun. However, 1.1294 is ambiguous only because of the case-invariance of its subject, la pucele, and 1.1311-12 could not be ambiguous if the masculine singular subject, uns autres, were not identical in form with the masculine oblique plural.

A further instance of ambiguity due to a case-invariant NP is provided by

la dame fet les chevax prendre (1.2524)
[the lady has the horses taken [charge of]].

Here the form les chevax, which is unambiguously oblique plural thanks to the oblique form of the definite article, is the object of the infinitive prendre; the object of fet and subject of the infinitive, which would presumably be an NP denoting the lady's servants, has been deleted, and la dame is the subject. An alternate, although semantically less reasonable interpretation, would be to assume that the subject has been deleted, and that la dame is the object of fet and subject of the infinitive (this NP would actually be an indirect object, as shown by the use elsewhere of the preposition a when an overt NP has this function, e.g., "et si fist a deux escuiers mener an destre deus destriers" = "and he also had two squires lead two chargers on his right," 1.255-6).

Finally, the following is a marginal example of ambiguity caused by identity of the nominative singular and oblique plural in the masculine:

Chevaliers boens et esleüz
ot molt el chastel amassez (1.5512-13)

[There were many good and select knights assembled
in the castle]

The verb ot is impersonal and has the NP comprising 1.5512 as its direct object. The only form which precludes a totally different interpretation, however, is the oblique plural form of amassez, a past participle here functioning as an adjective. If not for this, chevaliers boens et esleüz could be taken as the nominative singular subject, with the neuter form molt as the pronominal object, so that the meaning would be "a good and select knight had amassed much wealth in the castle." The construction might well have been confusing to a listener, since the word amassez occurs only at the end of the second line. It is true, however, that omission of the indefinite article would be somewhat unusual under the second interpretation.

CASE SYSTEM ERRORS

Deviations from the expected case forms, as outlined in the brief survey of the system, may be classed as follows: proper names, principally Kex/Keu, Lanceloz/Lancelot, and Artus/Artu; the word Amors, which is case-invariant when used to denote a personification of the abstract noun; the word riens/rien; deviations related to the exigencies of rhyme; and miscellaneous errors.

It is interesting that deviant use of name forms always involves substitution of the nominative Kex or Queus for the expected oblique Keu and of the nominative Artus for oblique Artu, but it is always the oblique Lancelot which is substituted for the nominative Lanceloz. In five of the eight anomalous occurrences of Kex and one of Queus, the name is functioning as a genitive (without preposition), while in the other four it is the direct object. In three of the latter instances, the form is part of the NP Kex le seneschal, the last two words of which are clearly oblique. In none of the six instances in which such support is lacking is there the slightest ambiguity.

As for the irregular use of Artus, this form occurs three times as a genitive, once as a direct object, and once as a prepositional object. Only once, in one of the genitive constructions, does it fail to receive support from properly marked oblique words, i.e., it forms part of the NP le roi Artus, au roi Artus, or Artus mon seignor.

The form Lancelot (this name is first introduced half-way through the poem) is used seven times in place of the nominative Lanceloz, but in six of the seven instances it functions as a vocative, for which there can be no possibility of confusion. There is also no ambiguity in the one instance in which the oblique form is used for the subject.

Crestien is always very careful to use the proper forms Gauvains/Gauvain, in fact usually referring to this character as mes sire Gauvains/mon seignor Gauvain. Godefroi, however, twice uses the oblique Gauvain as a vocative.

The nominative form Amors, with a capital letter and presumably referring to the god or goddess of Love, appears six times as the object of a preposition and once in genitive function. As a matter of fact, Amors as a proper noun is case-invariant, since the oblique Amor never appears. Crestien scrupulously observes the regular use of the case system when amors/amor is a common noun, but Godefroi uses amors as a prepositional object in one instance.

There are five instances in which the oblique form of the feminine noun rien has been used in place of the nominative riens. (This word was a true noun in OF, often preserving its original meaning of 'thing' and occasionally used in reference to persons.) In one of these instances, 1.2814 "que c'est la plus desleax rien" ('because he is the most disloyal creature'), the word is a predicate noun occurring at the end of a line, and since the modifying adjective is nominative in form and the preceding line ends in

"bien," we probably have here an instance in which case form has been sacrificed to rhyme. However, there is not the slightest possibility of semantic confusion resulting from the irregularity. In the four remaining examples of oblique rien for nominative riens, the word occurs without modifiers and with the particle ne and has the force of a negative indefinite pronoun, just as in modern French. There is thus reason to believe that, for Crestien least, the word was felt to be a neuter when so used, although even in such contexts Crestien preserved the nominative form more often than not. In addition to these instances of rien for riens, the nominative riens is used as direct object in l. 4356-7, "qu'an ne porroit dire...riens" ('one could not say anything...'). This oblique use of riens apparently occurred elsewhere in OF texts, since it is noted by Foulet (p.272), who remarks that it is harder to explain than the reverse substitution. Foulet states that, in general, the declension of riens/rien was subject to numerous irregularities, and also mentions (p.274-5) that the word began to take on its modern sense first in constructions where no adjective was present to preserve its nominal force and hence its declension.

In addition to the already mentioned irregular use of rien to rhyme with "bien," there are at least three other instances, involving an unexpected form at the end of a line, in which there is reason to suspect that the form was used deliberately for the sake of rhyme. These are "en mi uns prez in l. 1347, which is followed by a line ending in

"delez"; "qui a fet tel esforz" in 1.1983, esforz 'effort' rhyming with "li torz" in the next line; and, in Godefroi's section, "forssené" 'mad' in 1.6335, rhyming with "de mere né." Thus we have two examples of a nominative being used for an oblique, and one of the reverse usage. It must be noted, however, that, in the first of these examples, the entire NP and not just the rhyming word is nominative instead of oblique in form.

Two further passages in which rhyme was apparently the main consideration are 1.1467, "...molt s'an fet riche" ('he feels [literally, makes] himself very rich') and 1.4547 "si se fet las et traveillié" ('and he makes himself tired and weary'), in which the adjectives rhyme respectively with "fiche" and "veillié." It was usual for an adjective to agree with the subject rather than with a reflexive object pronoun (Foulet p.8), and Crestien has in general followed this practice, but, since agreement with the object is syntactically logical, these passages cannot be considered to involve any real "errors" in case use.

A further instance in which unexpected forms may be ascribable to rhyme is provided by 1.4714-5, "ne pert qu'an eüst osté nus des fers ne tret ne ploié ('it does not appear that anyone had removed nor pulled nor bent any of the iron bars'), in which osté rhymes with "costé" and ploié with "soploié." Since nus (= nuls) is oblique plural, the plural oblique participles ostez and ploiez would be expected; as it stands, it is reasonable to assume that Cres-

~~tion~~ intended the forms he used as oblique singulars rather than nominative plurals, and he could have avoided the difficulty by using the singular nul. Since, however, past participles in perfect tenses of verbs conjugated with avoir have not been counted as NP's, it is probably more logical to exclude this passage from the list of errors.

Twice, in 1.5082 and again in 1.5086, what appears to be the oblique singular form sa gent 'his people, followers' is used as a subject, but in both instances the verb is plural. Crestien apparently treated the noun as if it were masculine plural, which is semantically logical, although he retained the feminine singular article. If the noun were in fact masculine, its nominative plural would of course be identical with the oblique singular. This explanation is supported by the fact that Godefroi in 1.6238-9 used natural rather than grammatical gender by modifying the oblique feminine gent with the oblique masculine venu.

Anomalous article forms are found in 1.1954, "tant convantent les quatre vant" ('as long as the four winds blow'), where the noun of the subject NP has the proper masculine nominative plural form and li would be expected in place of les, and also in Godefroi's "le rois dit..." for "li rois.." in 1.6224.

There is another instance of an unusual article form in 1.843 "sor lo fautre" ('on the saddle-bow padding') and one of an incorrect partitive contraction in 1.4977-8 "...un autre an ferai del seiremanz" (I'll take another oath [lit-

erally, another of the oaths] on it') but neither of these examples can be considered an error in case use, since both aberrant forms are unquestionably oblique. The first passage involves merely the old oblique form lo, unusual for Crestien but fairly common in some other OF dialects (Foulet p.48) and the second involves use of the singular del for the plural des.

In l. 2, "vialt que romans a feire anpraigne" ('wants me to undertake the composition of a romance'), it is not possible to state clearly whether the irregularity is one of case or number use, since the nominative singular of this and all other declinable parisyllabic nouns is the same as the oblique plural; however, the oblique singular roman would fit the context much better than the plural, so this is probably a case error.

The oblique form convert in l.1218-9, "ne ne dit mot ne c'uns convert cui li parlens est desfanduz" ('nor does he say a word more than a novice, to whom speech is forbidden') is difficult to explain. The word occurs at the end of a line, but since it is intended to rhyme with anvers at the end of l.1217, the usual nominative form convers would be preferable as far as the exigencies of rhyme are concerned. It is to be noted that the noun occurs with an article in the proper nominative form.

Finally, to the list of case errors must be added Godefroi's glaring "ce fu del chevalier conquis le chief" ('this was the head of the conquered knight') in l.6576-7, where the

predicate nominal construction obviously demands li chiés, and Crestien's "tant m'aïst Dex et neant plus" ('so help me God and nothing more') in 1.4982, which is hardly glaring, since, although Crestien almost always used the nominative form neanz, the word (more comonly nient) was usually invariant in OF generally.

DISCUSSION

The 55 clear-cut primary examples and numerous supporting examples demonstrate, beyond any possible doubt, that the OF case system was indeed functional on the semantic as well as on the purely syntactic level. The functionality coefficient of 0.74-1.42% (the exact figure depending on how the term functional is defined, as already discussed) is more than high enough to provide a basis for this conclusion, given the high degree of redundancy in all natural languages.

The syntactic functions of the crucial NP's in the passages cited as functionality test cases are worthy of further comment. It has already been observed that, in all but one of the 21 examples in which the form of either of two NP's is critical, the two NP's are in a subject-object relationship to each other; furthermore, in only one of these passages (1.2076-7, "...li vavasors comança son hoste a enquerre..."), is an indirect rather than a direct object involved, a result which is not surprising in view of the relative rarity of indirect objects without prepositions. Thus, 19 examples involve the STN-DON combination (in terms of the functional categories established for the analysis of the first 1003 lines), one involves the STN-IO combination, and one, 1.2396, involves two prepositional objects (OP's), where the form of the noun establishes each "après + NP" as a prepositional phrase rather than an adverb followed by the subject of an intransitive verb.

Of the numerous examples involving only one crucial NP,

the NP in question in five of them is the subject of a transitive verb whose direct object is a case-invariant NP, and in five others it is the direct object of such a verb with a case-invariant subject. The critical NP's in ten examples are direct objects of verbs with deleted subjects and could, if not case-marked, be interpreted as the subjects of intransitive verbs and/or, where a relative clause is present, of verbs with clauses as their direct objects. In one further example (1.4955-6, "Quex le sene-schal ne conut qui de tel chose le mescrut") the crucial NP is the direct object of the verb whose subject is the following clause introduced by qui in the sense of 'whoever'; here, as has been already pointed out, the oblique form prevents interpretation of the NP as subject and the clause as object, so that this example in a sense parallels those involving the STN-DON combination.

In two of the remaining examples, the case form is crucial only because of the homonymy in the dialect of ~~the~~ text of the words corresponding to modern French "en" and "on," and these examples would thus not be completely valid for OF generally.

Finally, the examples include one instance of a compound subject and one of a compound object, part of which, if not case-marked, could be construed as belonging to the object or subject, respectively, as well as two subjects of elliptical clauses, which are counted as separate NP's from the subjects of the preceding clauses, but the func-

tion of which is analogous to that of the parts of a compound subject.

It had originally been anticipated that virtually all the functionality test cases would involve transitive verbs with overt NP's for both subject and object, but in fact such constructions account for only 31, or about 56%, of the examples. It is interesting that the object precedes the subject in only 5 of the 31 examples, a lower frequency than that for the text generally.

The seven examples of residual ambiguities which have been discussed demonstrate that the case system was not "air-tight" in its functioning. This is, of course, not surprising, when it is considered that all feminine nouns and adjectives were indeclinable in the plural, and many of these, as well as some masculines, were also indeclinable in the singular. The total number of such ambiguous passages is, in fact, remarkably low. The frequency of NP's which were not distinguished for case is, of course, smaller than that of individual nouns, adjectives, and pronouns, but even so, indeclinables accounted for 27.5% of all NP's. In view of this, the seven ambiguous passages, when compared with the 55 functionality test cases, represent a far smaller number than might have been expected. Failure of morphological and syntactic devices to resolve all ambiguities is, of course, a widespread characteristic of natural languages, and is certainly more common in modern English than in OF. Further, as has already been pointed

out, all ambiguities in a continuous text such as the one analyzed here are resolved by the over-all context, with very few exceptions.

The text selected lends itself particularly well to the purpose of the present study, for reasons already presented; however, it is probable that functionality coefficients in the same range would be obtained for any OF text written in a dialect in which the case system is well preserved. Any attempt to carry out such a study for a text like the Roland, which shows extensive deviations from expected case forms, would presumably yield a substantially lower degree of functionality, since many passages in which "correct" case forms could resolve ambiguities would remain ambiguous for want of such "correct" forms. It must be noted that none of the case system "errors" found in the present text occurred in a passage where the "correct" forms were needed to resolve ambiguities. Determination of just how much lower the functionality would be in a text in which the case system is not well preserved would, of course, require an exact study of such a text by the same techniques used here. To the best of the author's knowledge, no such study has ever been carried out for any other OF text or, for that matter, for a text written in any other language.

It is, of course, theoretically possible to carry out such a study of case form functionality for any language which employs case distinctions, e.g., for Latin, ancient

Greek, or Sanskrit, for the medieval or modern forms of German, Greek, Slavic languages, etc., or, for that matter, for many non-Indo-European languages. Such a study for a multi-case language could involve merely an analysis of the use of the nominative vs. all oblique cases, or, better, other case distinctions could be considered, so that instances in which the resolution of an ambiguity might depend on, for example, the use of an accusative vs. an instrumental could be accounted for. In general, the results of such functionality analyses of different languages would not permit meaningful intercomparisons, since each analysis would require the adoption of highly arbitrary procedures which are peculiarly suited to the structure of the particular language or even dialect under study. The procedures adopted for OF in the present study have been set forth in detail and, as already mentioned, they could not be applied without some modification even to all OF dialects, specifically those which do not preserve the case system as well as does that of twelfth century Champagne.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The semantic functionality of the OF case system is clearly demonstrated by 55 passages in which the form of at least one case-marked NP is crucial for interpretation.
2. The functionality coefficients established for this text on the basis of carefully defined criteria are 0.74-1.42%.
3. Analogous studies could in principle be made for other case-inflected languages, but, since a specialized methodology would have to be developed for each, inter-language comparisons could have no quantitative validity.

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