

# Subjects and Stylistic Fronting in Old Italian

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## Abstract

In this presentation I provide an analysis of the syntactic phenomenon of Stylistic Fronting (henceforth SF) based on a comparison between Scandinavian, (1a), and (Old) Romance languages, (1b).

- (1) a. þetta er mál sem **rætt** hefur verið \_\_\_\_ (Icelandic)  
this is issue that discussed has been  
“This is an issue that has been discussed” [Thráinsson 2007]
- b. Fu lli contato come **nodrito** era stato \_\_\_\_ (Old Florentine)  
was 3s.CL.DAT told how nourished was been  
“It was told him how he had been nourished” [N, 5, 28]

SF is a spurious phenomenon involving fronting of diverse lexical categories to a position preceding (and adjacent to) the inflected verb. In contrast to topicalization, SF is productive also in embedded/non-root clauses and requires the absence of an overt subject in IP-peripheral position. Facts from a variety of Old Italian (i.e. Old Florentine/Tuscan) where SF is attested show that:

- SF in Old Florentine/Tuscan (a.o. Old Romance languages) is the same syntactic phenomenon found in Old Scandinavian and Modern Icelandic
- SF is derived as phrasal movement to the CP, rather than (head) movement to Spec,IP
- the productivity of SF depends on the combination of different syntactic properties: V-to-C; (object) scrambling yielding O V order; a specific pro-drop setting.

The latter property has been investigated in detail in other Old Italian varieties and in diachrony. It is shown that relevant microvariation in the pro-drop setting affects the productivity of SF.

The main proposal is that SF is reanalyzed as a strategy to drop/extract the subject (cf. Rizzi and Shlonsky 2007) and the feature checking mechanism involved in the fronting is illustrated. Time permitting, additional support to the theory, based on the distribution of complement clitics and impersonal *si*, is provided.