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# French negation and restrictive focus

Johan Rooryck

## Abstract

In the standard or *bon usage* variety of French, the clitic *ne* combines with *n*-words such as *pas* ‘not’, *rien* ‘nothing/something’ or *personne* ‘nobody/somebody’ to yield negation. Clitic *ne* can also be used to express restriction in combination with *que*. In this paper, I provide a novel analysis of the restrictive focus provided by *ne... que...*, adopting the analysis of negation in Rooryck (2017). I argue that restrictive *que* should be viewed as an NPI-like quantifier, on a par with exclamative *que*. I propose a syntactic configuration for *ne... que...* that features a small clause RP in which both the subject and the predicate are negated. This double negation compositionally derives the restrictive reading of *ne... que...*

**Keywords:** Negation, NPI, French, minifier, restriction, choice function, *n*-word, quantifier, scalar.

## 1 Introduction

Negation<sup>1</sup> in the standard or *bon usage* variety of French is expressed by the combination of two words: clitic *ne* is paired with *n*-words such as *pas* ‘not’, *rien* ‘nothing/something’ or *personne* ‘nobody/somebody’.

- (1) a. Jean ne vient pas.  
Jean NEG.CL comes not  
‘Jean isn’t coming.’

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<sup>1</sup>This article is dedicated to my friend Dany Jaspers. Most of us dabble in figuring out linguistic puzzles and data within established and well beaten theoretical paths. But Dany has a gift that only a very few people possess: he can summon up a staggeringly original perspective on things linguistic. He thinks out of the box until you forget that there ever was a box. For that I thank him: it is truly inspiring. I would like to thank Guido Vanden Wyngaerd and Karen De Clercq for comments on a first version of this article. The usual disclaimers apply.

- b. Personne n' a réussi à résoudre le problème.  
 Nobody NEG.CL has managed to solve the problem  
 'Nobody managed to solve the problem.'

Clitic *ne* can also be found in the context of restrictive focus. In (2), *ne* combines with a constituent introduced by *que*, a morpheme that at first sight resembles the complementizer *que* 'that'.

- (2) Jean ne voit que Marie (restrictive focus)  
 Jean NEG.CL sees COMP Marie  
 'Jean only sees Marie.'

In combination, *ne* and *que* receive the restrictive interpretation corresponding to English 'only'. The question arises how exactly this interpretation is compositionally achieved. This will be the topic of this modest contribution. In section 2, I provide a brief synopsis of Rooryck's (2017) analysis of French negation that will constitute the backdrop of the analysis. In section 3, I will briefly introduce previous analyses and their problems. In section 4, an alternative will be proposed.

## 2 An alternative analysis of French negation

Rooryck (2017) argues that clitic *ne* actually means 'not even (one)', and defines *ne* as a *minifier*: its function is to negate the smallest or lowest element in the ordered domain defined by the n-word. As a minifier, *ne* combines in slightly different ways with two sets of French n-words. The first set contains 'minimizer' n-words like *pas* 'step/not', *plus* 'no longer', and *guère* 'scarcely'. In Rooryck's (2017) analysis, *pas* 'not' refers to the smallest possible interval of an eventuality. Minifier *ne* negates that smallest interval, deriving the negative interpretation of (3)a. This analysis is formally represented in (3)c, with *ne* as a choice function *CH* that selects *pas* to negate it.

- (3) a. Jean ne vient pas.  
 Jean NEG.CL comes not  
 'Jean isn't coming.'  
 b. 'There is not (even) (*ne*) the smallest interval (*pas*) of the eventuality of Jean coming.'  
 c.  $\llbracket \text{pas} \rrbracket$  (i.e. the smallest interval of an eventuality)  
 $\exists f [ CH(f) \wedge \text{come}'(f \llbracket \text{pas} \rrbracket) = \neg \llbracket \text{pas} \rrbracket ]$

Under this analysis, n-words such as *pas* 'step', *plus* 'no longer' and *guère* 'scarcely' semantically denote the smallest units of larger wholes, sequences, or scales<sup>2</sup>. This allows such n-words to function as denoting ordered domains that the choice function *ne* can operate over.

A second set of n-words in French includes words like *rien* 'nothing/something', *jamais* '(n)ever/no (single) moment', and *personne* 'nobody/somebody'. Unlike the previous set, these n-words can be used in both negative and non-negative contexts where NPIs are licensed, as shown in (4) and (5).

- (4) a. Jean ne vient pas/jamais.  
 Jean NEG.CL comes not/never  
 'Jean isn't coming/Jean never comes.'  
 b. Jean ne voit rien/personne.  
 Jean NEG.CL sees anything/anybody  
 'Jean doesn't see anything/ anybody.'
- (5) a. Avez- vous jamais vu rien de pareil?  
 Have you ever seen anything of similar  
 'Did you ever see anything like it?'  
 b. Il le sait mieux que personne.  
 He it.CL knows better than anyone  
 'He knows it better than anyone.'

Rooryck (2017) takes these n-words to semantically denote partially ordered sets of indefinite entities for which the *infimum* is defined as the empty set. The ordering of this partially ordered set functions as the domain for choice functions  $CH(f)$ , including negative *ne* and other NPI-licensing operators. This perspective allows to derive both the negative and the non-negative meaning of these n-words. Let us briefly see how this works for *personne* 'nobody/somebody'. The indefinite, non-negative meaning of *personne* 'nobody/ somebody' surfaces in an NPI licensing context such as (6)a. The informally stated compositional meaning is presented in (6)b, and its formal implementation in (6)c:

- (6) a. Je doute que personne réussisse à résoudre ce problème.  
 I doubt that anyone succeed.SUBJ to solve that problem  
 'I doubt that anyone will manage to solve that problem.'

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<sup>2</sup>The informal representation of the formalization includes reference to *not even* rather than to *not*. This is of course due to the fact that negation of the smallest element on a scale allows a pragmatic inference of negation of the entire scale in the sense of Fauconnier (1975).

- b. 'I doubt that any choice or combination of individual(s) will manage to solve the problem.'
- c.  $\llbracket \text{personne} \rrbracket = P$ , a partially ordered set  
 $A \subset P$  and  $P = \{\{a\}, \{b\}, \{c\}, \{a,b\}, \{b,c\}, \{a,c\}, \{a,b,c\} \dots\}$   
 (i.e.  $A$  can be any subset of  $P$ )  
 $\exists f [ CH(f) \wedge \text{solve}'(f(P) = A) ]$

When *personne* 'nobody/ somebody' is combined with minifier *ne*, as in (7)a, the ordering required by *ne* 'not even one' selects the smallest subsets of the partially ordered set and negates these subsets. Informally, this interpretation means that not even a single individual managed to solve the problem, as in (7)b. More formally, the choice function *ne* negates the singletons contained in the partially ordered set. Since the larger subsets are made up of the negated singletons, they are also negated. As a result, the interpretation of the partially ordered set is restricted to the empty set, deriving the negative interpretation of 'nobody'. This is formally represented in (7)c.

- (7) a. *Personne n' a réussi à résoudre le problème.*  
 Nobody NEG.CL has managed to solve the problem  
 'Nobody managed to solve the problem.'
- b. 'Not even a single individual managed to solve the problem.'
- c.  $\llbracket \text{personne} \rrbracket = P$ , a partially ordered set  
 $B \subset P$  and  $B = \{\{a\}, \{b\}, \{c\}, \dots\}$  (i.e. singletons)  
 $\exists f [ CH(f) \wedge \text{solve}'(f(B) = \neg B) ]$

In addition to its combination with the sets of n-words discussed above, French *ne* also occurs in a number of contexts where it does not combine with an overt n-word. These cases are known as instances of so-called 'expletive' *ne*. For reasons of space, I only illustrate a few here, and refer the reader to Muller (1991) and Rooryck (2018) for a fuller discussion.

- (8) a. *Il a barricadé la porte de peur/ crainte qu'on n' entre chez lui.*  
 He has blocked the door of fear that they NEG.CL enter with him  
 'He blocked the door for fear that people might come in.' (fear)
- b. *Je viendrai à moins que Jean ne soit là.*  
 I will-come to less that Jean NEG.CL is.SUBJ there  
 'I will come unless Jean is there.' (conditional)

- c. Il faut avant tout observer plutôt que de ne tirer  
 It is-necessary before all observe rather than of NEG.CL draw  
 des conclusions hasardeuses.  
 of.the conclusions rash  
 'More than anything else, it is necessary to observe rather than to  
 draw rash conclusions.' (comparative)
- d. Il est parti avant que nous n' ayons mangé.  
 He is left before that we NEG.CL have eaten  
 'He left before we ate.' (temporal *before*)

### 3 Previous accounts

The syntactic and semantic nature of restrictive negation in French has been extensively discussed before (Baciu, 1978; Barbaud, 1985; Azoulay-Vicente, 1985, 1988; Dekydtspotter, 1993; Gaatone, 1999; von Stechow & Iatridou, 2007; O'Neill, 2011). As observed by O'Neill (2011), the *que* phrase behaves as an NPI for *ne*, since it must be in its c-command domain. However, no other phrases introduced by *que* otherwise display NPI-like properties: for instance, subordinate and relative clauses introduced by *que* do not require an NPI licenser. This suggests that while *ne* is unexceptional, the nature of the restrictive *que* phrase represents a bit of a puzzle. Most authors analyse *que* as a complementizer, and view the *ne... que...* construction in terms of a reduced comparative because *que* also occurs in comparative constructions such as (9) (Martinon 1926, 545; Gross 1977, 89; Baciu 1978, 136; Pierrard 1985, 48; Muller 1991, 297; O'Neill 2011).

- (9) Marie est plus intelligente que Jean.  
 Marie is more intelligent COMP Jean  
 'Marie is more intelligent than Jean.'

The underlying structure of the sentence in (2) is therefore claimed to involve a comparative element that is subject to ellipsis as in (10):

- (10) Jean ne voit personne d' autre que Marie.  
 Jean NEG.CL sees anyone of else COMP Marie  
 'Jean doesn't see anyone else than Marie.'

However, Gaatone (1999, 110-112) already expressed some well-founded reservations against such an analysis. For one thing, a hidden comparative analysis

of *ne... que...* runs into problems when the restricted element is a preposition: the overt counterpart of the comparative appears before the preposition, as in (11)b; but ellipsis of this overt comparative yields an ungrammatical sentence, as in (11)c:

- (11) a. Max ne compte que sur Luc.  
 Max NEG.CL counts COMP on Luc  
 'Max only counts on Luc.'
- b. Max ne compte sur (personne d'autre) que Luc.  
 Max NEG.CL counts on anyone else COMP Luc  
 'Max doesn't count on anyone else but Luc.' (Gaatone, 1999)
- c. \*Max ne compte sur personne d'autre que Luc.  
 Max NEG.CL counts on anyone else COMP Luc  
 'Max only counts on Luc.'

For another, the comparative analysis runs into problems when the entire sentence is negated, as in (12). In this case, it is unclear what the elided comparative should be, since a silent counterpart of *autre chose* 'something else', as in (12)b, would have a very different meaning from that of (12)a:

- (12) a. Félix ne boit pas que de l' eau.  
 Felix NEG.CL drinks not COMP of the water  
 'Felix doesn't only drink water.' (? , 112)
- b. Félix ne boit pas autre chose que de l' eau  
 Felix NEG.CL drinks not other thing COMP of the water  
 'Felix doesn't drink anything else than water.'

Gaatone (1999) goes on to observe many other problems for a hidden comparative analysis, all illustrating that the elided element fails to obey conditions on the recoverability of the elided element<sup>3</sup>. Even under current assumptions about ellipsis, it is unclear how the sentence in (2) should be derived from (10) via ellipsis. Merchant (2001) assumes that ellipsis is syntactically represented by an [E]-feature, which semantically corresponds to an e-GIVENNESS requirement. An expression is e-GIVEN, i.e. can be subject to ellipsis, if it has an appropriate salient antecedent. Such an antecedent must allow the content of the e-GIVEN expression to be recovered. In (10), the content of *personne d'autre* 'nobody else'

<sup>3</sup>The recoverability issues noted by Gaatone (1999, 110-112) also apply to the analysis of O'Neill (2011, 182) in terms of a comparative syntactic structure that includes a full sentence under *que*, as well as a silent *personne d'autre* 'anyone else'.

is not recoverable from an antecedent with that specific meaning. It therefore cannot be e-GIVEN, and therefore does not conform to Merchant's (2001) conditions on recoverability of ellipsis.

## 4 Towards an alternative analysis

### 4.1 The nature of restrictive *que*

As I have mentioned before, most scholars view *que* in *ne... que...* as a complementizer. Such an analysis does not explain how the restrictive meaning is obtained, since complementizers do not in and by themselves carry such a meaning. von Stechow & Trudou (2007, 57), for instance, derive the restrictive meaning by brute force: they simply stipulate that the *que* phrase is interpreted as 'other than' in *ne... que...* restrictive contexts. Azoulay-Vicente (1985, 1988) adopts a different approach, and suggests that *que* should be analysed as a preposition similar to *sauf* 'except', *excepté* 'except', and *hormis* 'aside from'. However, as pointed out by O'Neill (2011), this does not account for the fact that *que* can combine with any lexical category, including adjectives and verbs, unlike *bona fide* prepositions.

I would like to pursue a different analysis here, largely inspired by the astute observations in Gaatone (1999) on the nature of *que* in the restrictive construction. I will argue that *que* in *ne... que...* is an NPI-like quantifier, identical to the *que* that appears in exclamative clauses:

- (13) a. *Que de bonnes surprises tu nous as réservées!*  
What of good surprises you us have prepared  
'Such nice surprises you have come up with for us!'
- b. *Que la vie est belle!*  
What the life is beautiful  
'How beautiful life is!'

This quantifier *que* has a 'high degree' interpretation close to 'many/very'. It is close in meaning to interrogative *que* 'what' in *Qu'as tu fait?* 'What have you done?'. The same relation between the interrogative and quantificational uses of (the counterparts) of *what* can be observed in Dutch and English (Bennis et al., 1998; Rett, 2011; Nouwen & Chernilovskaya, 2015):



- (14) a. Wat heb je gedaan?  
 what have you done  
 'What have you done?'  
 b. Wat een aardige verrassingen heb je voor ons bedacht!  
 What a pleasant surprises have you for us thought  
 'Such nice surprises you have come up with for us!'  
 c. Wat is het leven mooi!  
 what is the life beautiful  
 'How beautiful life is!'
- (15) a. What have you done?  
 b. What beautiful cards he picked!

I will assume that quantifier *que* is an NPI that can not only be licensed by negation as in *ne... que...* contexts, but also by exclamatives as in (13). Furthermore, as observed by Gaatone (1999, 105), in 'classical' varieties of French, 'restrictive' *que* can also be licensed by interrogative contexts as in (16)<sup>4</sup>. I represent the relevant 'restrictive' *que* in boldface in these examples for reasons of clarity.

- (16) a. Qu' en savait-il **que** ce qu' on lui avait toujours  
 what of.it knew=he COMP that COMP they to.him had always  
 raconté?  
 told  
 'What did he know of it other than what he had always been told?'  
 (Grevisse, 1993, 1455)  
 b. Et **que** puis-je espérer **qu'** un tourment éternel?  
 And what can=I hope COMP a torment eternal  
 'And what can I hope for other than eternal torment?' (Martinon,  
 1926, 545fn1)

Such sentences clearly illustrate that there is an instance of *que* that behaves more like an NPI than like a complementizer. My main argument for treating restrictive *que* in (2) on a par with *que* as an NPI-like quantifier in (13) comes from stress: in (17) and (18), *que* can be stressed. This is illustrated in (17) and (18) by capitalizing *que*:

- (17) Jean ne voit **QUE** Marie (restrictive focus)  
 Jean NEG.CL sees COMP Marie

<sup>4</sup>I will continue to gloss *que* in all example sentences as COMP for the sake of consistency, even though that is not the correct analysis in all cases.

'Jean ONLY sees Marie.'

- (18) a. QUE de bonnes surprises tu nous as réservées!  
What of good surprises you us have prepared  
'Such nice surprises you have come up with for us!'  
b. QUE la vie est belle!  
What the life is beautiful  
'How beautiful life is!'

Note that no other use of *que*, either as an interrogative or as a complementizer, can ever be stressed, as shown in (19):

- (19) a. Que/\*QUE fais-tu ces jours-ci?  
what do=you these days=here  
'What are you doing these days?' (interrogative *que*)  
b. Le livre que/\*QUE j'ai lu  
the book that I have read  
'The book that I read' (relative complementizer *que*)  
c. Je sais que/\*QUE tu viendras.  
I know that you come.FUT  
'I know that you will come.' (subordinating complementizer *que*)

I will therefore assume that the stressability of *que* correlates with its behaviour as an NPI-like quantifier, without providing a further formalization of this relation. I will also assume, extending the proposal by Rett (2011) for exclamative *what* in English, that quantifier *que* is scalar in some sense. The scalar nature of *que* in (13) and (18) can be observed in their interpretations: in (13)a, *que* indicates that the degree of niceness of the surprises is particularly high, while in (13), the degree of beauty that life displays is considered to be very high. Note that the high degree can also be strictly quantificational in French:

- (20) Que de problèmes soulève ce destin étrange!  
COMP of problems raises that destiny strange  
'How many (diverse) problems does that strange destiny raise!' (François Mauriac, *Journal 2*, 1937:109)

Note that this quantificational reading receives an extra interpretation that involves diversity, as in English *sundry*. If restrictive *que* is on a par with 'high degree' *que* in (13), it should also have a scalar interpretation in some sense. I will try to tackle this issue in the next section in the context of the syntactic analysis

of *ne... que...*

## 4.2 The syntax and semantics of *ne... que...*

Before examining the semantics of *ne... que...* in the context of the analysis that I adopt here (Rooryck, 2017), the syntax of the *que* phrase deserves more attention. Let me illustrate this with the sentence in (2), repeated here for convenience.

- (2) Jean ne voit que Marie. (restrictive focus)  
Jean NEG.CL sees COMP Marie  
'Jean only sees Marie.'

In this sentence, the *que* phrase at first sight functions as the direct object of the verb *voir* 'see'. However, such an analysis would not explain sentences such as the following, where the *que* phrase is preceded by another DP:

- (21) a. Il n'y a d'issue que l'amour.  
It NEG.CL there have of outcome COMP the love  
'There is no other outcome than love.' (Gatone, 1999, 112)  
b. Il n'a d'amis que son voisin.  
He NEG.CL has of friends COMP his neighbour  
'His only friend is his neighbour.'

In these sentences, the DP preceding the *que* phrase functions as the complement of the main verb. The *que* phrase entertains a predicative relation with the complement that precedes it: in (21)a, the only outcome is love, and in (21)b, his only friend is his neighbour. Note that this relation can be analysed as an exhaustive identification relation: the set of outcomes is exhaustively identified with love, the neighbour is identified as exhausting the set of friends. These sentences suggest that the underlying syntactic structure of *que* phrases is more complex than its visible structure leads us to believe. More precisely, the relation between the direct object and the *que*-phrase is a predicational one that is syntactically expressed as a small clause. I therefore propose the configuration in (22) for the sentence in (21)b:

- (22) ... n'a... [VP [DP d'amis] [VP a [RP [QP que [DP d'amis]] R [DP son voisin]]]]]

In (22), both the direct object and the complement of *que* start out in a small clause, which I will call RP, adopting the terminology of den Dikken (2006). The

QP *que d'amis* 'QUE friends' is the subject of this RP, and the DP *son voisin* 'his neighbour' is the predicate. The DP *d'amis* 'friends' is subextracted from QP, and adjoined to VP where it receives case from the verb *avoir* 'have'.

With this syntactic configuration in place, let us turn to the semantics of negation in this example. I propose to treat the QP *que d'amis* 'que friends' as an NPI with a meaning close to 'any (diverse) number of friends'. The NPI *que d'amis* 'que friends' is on a par with NPIs like *personne* 'nobody/somebody': it represents a partially ordered set of individuals. As in the case of *personne* 'nobody/somebody' in (7), the ordering required by minifier *ne* 'not even one' selects the smallest subsets of the partially ordered set of the NPI *que d'amis* 'que friends' and negates these. The result of this operation is that the interpretation of the partially ordered set of friends is restricted to the empty set, deriving a negative interpretation. This does not exhaust the operation of minifier *ne*, however. I assume that in addition, minifier *ne* also takes the head R of RP as its variable: R in this case can be considered as the silent counterpart of the n-word *pas* 'not'. The result of both negative operations is a double negation, indicated as NEG<sub>1</sub> and NEG<sub>2</sub> in (23)b. The resulting interpretation is informally represented in (23)b:

- (23) a. Il n' a d' amis que son voisin.  
 He NEG.CL has of friends COMP his neighbour  
 'His only friend is his neighbour.'
- b. ... n'a... [VP [DP d'amis] [VP a [RP [QP que<sub>NEG1</sub> [DP d'amis]]] R<sub>NEG2</sub> [DP son voisin]]]]]]
- c. He has no friends that are not his neighbour.

The two negations cancel each other out, yielding the exhaustive and restrictive interpretation. For all intents and purposes, the derivation proposed in (23) involves the same type of double negation as the one in (24): it is well known that an NPI n-word and a non-NPI n-word can cancel each other out in the context of *ne*: in such cases there is no negative concord.

- (24) a. Personne n' est pas arrivé.  
 nobody NEG.CL is not arrived  
 'Nobody didn't come.' (double negation/\*negative concord)
- b. Ce n' est pas rien. (Muller, 1991, 259)  
 it NEG.CL is not nothing  
 'It is not nothing.' (double negation/\*negative concord)

I now propose to extend the analysis of (23) to (2). The only difference between

(23) and (2) is that the complement of QP *que* is left unexpressed. In (23)b, I express this empty DP as *pro*.

- (25) a. Jean ne voit que Marie.  
 Jean NEG.CL sees COMP Marie  
 'Jean only sees Marie.'  
 b. ... ne voit ... [VP [DP *pro*] [VP voit [RP [QP *que*<sub>NEG1</sub> [DP *pro*]]] R<sub>NEG2</sub> [DP Marie]]]]]  
 c. Jean is seeing nobody who is not Marie.

The analysis can be further generalized to include any category that is restricted. In (26), I provide an analysis of the restricted PP in (11), with a configuration that includes an empty PP:

- (26) a. Max ne compte que sur Luc.  
 Max NEG.CL counts COMP on LUC  
 'Max only counts on Luc.' (Gatone, 1999, 110)  
 b. ... ne compte ... [VP [PP  $\emptyset$ ] [VP compte [RP [QP *que*<sub>NEG1</sub> [PP  $\emptyset$ ]]] R<sub>NEG2</sub> [PP sur Luc]]]]]  
 c. Jean counts on nobody who is not Luc.

One potential criticism of this analysis is that it does not predict what factor determines the (c)overtness of complement of QP *que*. In (25) and (26), it is unclear why there are no overt counterparts of the negated QP complement. Intuitively, I believe that this is because the corresponding DPs and PPs are interpreted in a very general way, as empty objects often are. Note that this analysis nevertheless allows for the formal representation of interesting interactions between the subject and predicate of the RP. In (27)a, for example, the restriction ranges over the adjective *pratique* 'practical' that modifies *solution* 'solution'. I propose that in this case the complement of *que* is overt, and the adjective is part of a full DP that is elided with the exception of the adjective. This is represented in (27)b, with an interpretation as in (27)c:

- (27) a. Je ne vois de solution que pratique.  
 I NEG.CL see of solution COMP practical  
 'I only see a practical solution.'  
 b. ... ne vois... [VP [DP de solution] [VP vois [RP [QP *que*<sub>NEG1</sub> [DP de solution]]] R<sub>NEG2</sub> [DP ~~une solution~~ pratique]]]]]  
 c. I don't see a solution that is not a practical solution.

It is unclear to me at this point what governs the (c)overtness of the subject of RP in all cases of restrictive *que*, and I will not pursue this topic here.

Finally, I would like to address one last issue that can be addressed by the proposed analysis. In section 4.1. above, I argued that restrictive *que* in (2) and (13) can be stressed, unlike complementizer and interrogative *que* in (19). I had noted that there was one exception to this: in an interrogative context, restrictive *que* cannot be stressed. I fully illustrate this observation in (28):

- (28) a. Qu' en savait-il que/\*QUE ce qu' on lui avait  
 what of.it knew=he COMP that COMP they to.him had  
 toujours raconté?  
 always told  
 'What did he know of it other than what he had always been told?'  
 (Grevisse, 1993, 1455)
- b. Et que puis-je espérer qu'/\*QU' un tourment éternel?  
 And what can=I hope COMP a torment eternal  
 'And what can I hope for other than eternal torment?' (Martinon,  
 1926, 545fn1)

I would like to argue that the analysis developed here can provide an account for this restriction. Under the analysis developed above, the underlying syntactic structure of (28)b is as in (29). In this configuration, interrogative *que* starts out as the complement of restrictive *que* in the specifier of the RP. This is in line with the semantic interpretation, since the range of answers for interrogative *que* is exhaustively identified with the DP *un tourment éternel* 'eternal torment'.

- (29) [<sub>VP</sub> espérer [<sub>RP</sub> [<sub>QP</sub> que [<sub>DP</sub> que<sub>INT</sub>]] R [<sub>DP</sub> un tourment éternel]]]]]

I would like to argue that this configuration accounts for the fact that restrictive *que* cannot be stressed in interrogatives. Under usual assumptions about the relation between interrogative elements and focus, interrogative *que* carries focus in (28)b. Therefore, restrictive *que* cannot carry an additional focus expressed by stress. The analysis proposed here can thus elegantly account for the unstressability of restrictive *que* in interrogative contexts.

## 5 Conclusion

In this brief paper, I have provided an alternative analysis for restrictive negation in French, making use of the analysis provided in Rooryck (2017). I have argued that restrictive *que* is an NPI, and should be analyzed on a par with 'high degree' *que*: both quantificational and restrictive *que* are stressable, setting them radically apart from the interrogative and complementizer uses of *que*. I have proposed a syntactic configuration for the *ne... que...* construction that involves an RP small clause in which both subject and predicate are negated. This double negation yields the restrictive reading of *ne... que...* in strictly compositional fashion, a desirable result. It remains unclear what factors govern the overtness of subject and predicate in the RP.

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