

## ASPECTUAL CONSTRAINTS ON THE (ANTI)CAUSATIVE ALTERNATION IN OLD ITALIAN

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### ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the strategies used for the anticausative alternation and the constraints on their distribution in two early Italian vernaculars, Old Florentine and Old Neapolitan, focusing on the emergence of aspectual notions such as telicity in determining variability in the occurrence of the reflexive morpheme *si/se*, the main/only strategy for anticausatives with some inherently telic and punctual verbs, depending on the vernacular. It is also shown that in the early varieties the reflexive in the anticausative alternation mainly signals the suppression of the Actor, only gradually coming to mark the presence of a terminal point in the meaning of the verb/predicate.

### 1. INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

This paper investigates the morphosyntax of anticausatives in a number of thirteenth–fifteenth century texts from two early Italian vernaculars, Old Florentine and Old Neapolitan, in relation to the variability in the presence/absence of the reflexive morpheme *si/se* and the parameters determining it, whether *thematic* (relating to the nature of the Undergoer subject – its affectedness/animacy/control – and to the presence of an external wilful causer in the verb’s eventuality), or *lexico-aspectual* (reflecting the aspectual classes of the verb/predicate allowing this type of intransitive alternation and their interplay with the nature of the verb’s inherent meaning, the lexical root, for example, the type of change encoded).

The discussion is organized as follows. Section 2 illustrates some current issues on anticausativization, analysed with reference to Italian in section 3. Section 4 describes the strategies used to encode anticausatives in two early Italian vernaculars, Old Florentine and Old Neapolitan, representative of a central and southern variety, respectively, highlighting

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the constraints on their morphological realization and the function of the reflexive morpheme in this pattern, and considers their relationship to some aspects of the encoding of voice and the tense-aspectual continuum in Old Italian. Finally, section 5 summarizes the conclusions.

## 2. THE ANTICAUSATIVE ALTERNATION: SOME CURRENT ISSUES

The term *anticausative* refers to the non-causative (i.e. intransitive) member of a transitivity alternation, characterized by an Undergoer subject and suppression of the Actor,<sup>2</sup> either both syntactically and semantically (Haspelmath 1987: 7), or at the level of argument structure (i.e. the lexical syntactic representation), but retained in the lexical semantic representation (Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1995: 84).<sup>3</sup> The process is presented as taking place spontaneously, with no Actor implied (see Alexiadou et al. 2006 for a critical review of the literature on this issue, and Koontz-Garboden 2009 for a different view). Depending on the language and on the diachronic stage from which the phenomenon is described (Lazzeroni 2009), the anticausative pattern may be either morphologically unmarked, with no change in the verbal form, as illustrated in (1a) for English, or it can be both morphologically unmarked and marked, signalled by a dedicated morpheme (e.g. the reflexive), as exemplified in (1b, c) from German and in (1d, e) from French (Siewierska 1984: 77–8; Haspelmath 1987: 3; Labelle 1992; Schäfer 2008: 28–9).<sup>4</sup>

- (1) a. The vase **broke**. (<Mark broke the vase) (unmarked)  
 b. Das Segel **zerriss** (Schäfer 2008: 11)  
*the sail tore*  
 ‘The sail tore.’  
 c. Die Tür **öffnete sich**. (marked)  
*the door opened RFL*  
 ‘The door opened.’  
 d. La neige **fond**. (unmarked)  
*the snow melts*  
 ‘The snow is melting.’

<sup>2</sup> Actor and Undergoer are semantic macroroles subsuming the different thematic relations of arguments with verbs. Actor is the generalized Agent-type argument (comprising Agent, Effector, Instrument, Experiencer and other thematic relations), while Undergoer is the generalized Patient-like argument (comprising Patient, Theme, Experiencer and other thematic relations) (Van Valin & La Polla 1997: 141, Van Valin 2002, 2005: 60).

<sup>3</sup> We regard as anticausative patterns with an inanimate Undergoer as subject, as in (i). The corresponding intransitive form of a transitive structure with an animate Undergoer, as in (ii) from Italian, instantiates instead an endoreflexive/agentive anticausative, very frequent with motion verbs, e.g., *move*, *turn* (Haspelmath 1987: 27–9):

- (i) La tenda **si è mossa**. (anticausative)  
*the curtain RFL is moved*  
 ‘The curtain moved.’  
 (ii) Marco **si è mosso**. (endoreflexive/agentive anticausative)  
*Mark RFL is moved*  
 ‘Mark moved.’

In some languages (e.g. Latin, Italian and the other Romance languages) endoreflexives/agentive anticausatives may show the same marker as anticausatives (as in (i)–(ii)). They involve, however, different transitivity domains and parameters from anticausatives, both synchronically and diachronically (see Cennamo 1993, 1998). In Latin, for instance, the presence of the reflexive marker with endo-reflexives/agentive anticausatives reflects the notion of control, that plays no role in the occurrence of the reflexive with anticausatives (Cennamo 1998, 1999 and note 13).

<sup>4</sup> In our discussion we do not address the issue of the derivation of the anticausative variant, recently discussed in Alexiadou et al. (2006), Schäfer (2008), Rappaport Hovav & Levin (2011).

- e. Le vase (**se**) casse. (optionally marked)  
*the vase RFL breaks*  
 ‘The vase breaks.’

Two semantic constraints are generally recognized in the literature: (i) *spontaneous manifestation of an eventuality*, together with its corollary, ‘unspecific change of state’ (Haspelmath 1987: 15), (ii) *thematic underspecification of the causer* (Koontz-Garboden 2009: 80–6).

By constraint (i) *spontaneous manifestation of an eventuality*, only transitive causative verbs denoting events which may come about spontaneously, without a wilful animate causer may occur in the anticausative alternation (Haspelmath 1987: 15, Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1995: 102). More specifically, the verbs must denote an ‘unspecific change of state’ (Haspelmath 1987: 15), thus lacking *agent-oriented meaning components* or other ‘highly specific meaning components’ that debar the spontaneous interpretation of the verbal process (Haspelmath 1987: 15; 1993: 94).

Therefore ‘actions are excluded which imply specific instruments or methods, for example, *bite, cut, dig, paint*’ (Haspelmath 1993: 93). Thus, verbs which lexicalize a manner component rather than a result state seem to be excluded from the alternation (Rappaport Hovav & Levin 2010).

Constraint (ii) *thematic underspecification of the causer*, reflects the fact that only verbs with a thematically underspecified causer (e.g. English *break, open*) undergo anticausativization (regardless of the strategy employed), as illustrated in (1). Verbs with a thematically specified causer (i.e. an agent) (e.g. *kill, assassinate*), on the other hand, do not allow the anticausative alternation (Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1995: 102–4, Koontz-Garboden 2009: 80–6).

The core of the category in several languages is instantiated by verbs denoting (telic) change (i.e. achievements/accomplishments) (Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1995: 93).<sup>5</sup> To a lesser extent, however, activities and states may also occur in anticausative patterns, with the Undergoer surfacing as subject and suppression of the Actor (Haspelmath 1987; Letuchiy 2009). Indeed the lack of an external Instigator (i.e. the Actor) is regarded in the literature as differentiating anticausative (where the process is presented as self-induced) from passive structures (where the process is externally caused and the Actor is optionally expressed, surfacing as an oblique) (Siewierska 1984: 77; Haspelmath 1987: 6–7; Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1995: 108–9; Alexiadou et al. 2006, with a different view).

### 3. ANTICAUSATIVES IN ITALIAN: AN OVERVIEW AND SOME CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

Two subclasses of anticausative are usually recognized in the literature on the basis of the distribution of the reflexive morpheme *si* (Centineo 1995; Bentley 2006: 131), while three subtypes emerge by considering the interplay of the presence, absence and optionality of *si* with auxiliary selection (Folli 2002; Manente 2008; Cennamo & Jezek 2011).

Depending on the perspective taken, which can be labelled, respectively, *thematic* and (*lexico-*)*aspectual*, the presence of the reflexive (*si*) is either viewed as reflecting an externally caused eventuality, with verbs lacking *si* instantiating internally caused events (Centineo 1995; Bentley 2006: 130–4, following a distinction put forward in Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1995:

<sup>5</sup> We follow the Vendler/Dowty classification of the temporal properties of verbs/predicates, as adopted in most current models of event structure/predicate decomposition. In particular, *accomplishments* are durative dynamic predicates with an inherent endpoint (i.e. telic), variously called *telos*, bound or delimiter; *achievements* are dynamic, non-durative predicates denoting an instantaneous (i.e. punctual) event with an inherent endpoint; activities are dynamic, durative predicates with no inherent endpoint (i.e. atelic), and states are non-dynamic predicates involving no change (see Levin & Rappaport Hovav 2005: 88–105 and further references therein). Accomplishments are aspectually non-homogeneous and different subtypes can be identified, according to the type and degree of change they lexicalize (Bertinetto & Squartini 1995; Hay, Kennedy & Levin 1999; Rappaport Hovav 2008).

102–6, building on Smith 1970),<sup>6</sup> or it is described as resulting from the inherent and/or compositional aspectual characteristics of predicates, in particular the presence of a final goal/result (i.e. non-reversible) or target (i.e. reversible) state (Parsons 1990: 234–5)<sup>7</sup> for *si*-anticausatives (Jezek 2001, 2008; Folli 2002; Cennamo & Jezek 2011). As we shall see (section 3.2), the two views are not mutually exclusive but represent different diachronic stages in the development of the morphological encoding of anticausatives in Italian.

Under the *thematic approach*, only the form with *si* (e.g. *rompersi* ‘break’) instantiates an anticausative structure, while the pattern without *si* (e.g. *affondare* ‘sink’) realizes an internally caused event (Centineo 1995: 67). Thus, with verbs optionally taking *si* in the anticausative pattern (e.g. *bruciare-bruciarsi* ‘burn’, *gelare-gelarsi* ‘freeze’), only the structure with *si* should be regarded as anticausative, as shown in (2a) vs (2b). Accordingly (2b) would exemplify instead an intransitive verb, denoting an internally caused event (Bentley 2006: 128–31):

- (2) a. La foresta **si bruciò**/il lago **si gelò**. (anticausative)  
*the forest RFL burnt/the lake RFL froze*  
 ‘The forest burnt down/the lake froze.’
- b. La foresta **bruciò**/il lago **gelò**. (intransitive - internally caused event)  
*the forest burnt/the lake froze*  
 ‘The forest burnt/the lake froze.’

Under this view *si* with anticausatives marks a suppressed unspecified external causer (Centineo 1995: 67; Bentley 2006: 127). Verbs which in the anticausative form do not take *si* are regarded instead as lacking a causal component and as denoting a self-induced change (see Centineo 1995; Bentley 2006: 126–33 and note 6).

Under the (*lexico*-)*aspectual approach* *si* marks the presence of a terminal point (either a final/ result or target state) in the verb/predicate (Jezek 2001; 2008; Folli 2002, Manente 2008; Cennamo 2011; Cennamo & Jezek 2011), singled out by a number of diagnostic tests (Folli 2002: ch.2; Jezek 2003), some of which we listed in Table 1, whereby three subclasses of anticausative can be identified, discussed below.

Table 1. Some diagnostic tests for telicity/atelicity, gradual/total completion, result/target state

- (a) occurrence with adverbials of temporal duration and extent, such as *for X time/in X time – at time X* adverbials, focusing, respectively, on the duration and on the absence or presence of a terminal point in the eventuality described by the predicate (Bertinetto & Delfitto 1997, among others);
- (b) entailment of the predicate from the progressive to the past form (the perfect) (impossible with telic predicates, possible with atelic ones);
- (c) negation of the final endstate by means of an additional phrase (infelicitous with inherently telic predicates, felicitous with atelic ones);
- (d) interpretation with quantificational adverbs such as *un po’* ‘a bit’, *completamente* ‘completely’, which modify the final state of an eventuality (Folli 2002; Jezek 2008; Manente 2008);
- (e) occurrence with the adverbial phrase *di parecchio* ‘by a lot’ (only possible with gradual completion verbs/degree achievements, which are degree verbs, encoding a comparative component in their lexical meaning; Bertinetto & Squartini 1995: 22).

Source: Folli (2002); Manente (2008); Cennamo & Jezek (2011: 813, note 1).

<sup>6</sup> Although taking into account aspectual distinctions, since [-*si*] anticausatives are regarded as basic achievements (one-argument verbs denoting a telic change) and [+*si*] anticausatives as basic accomplishments (two-argument verbs denoting a telic change), in Centineo (1995: 64–6) the presence/absence of *si* is viewed as differentiating an externally caused from a self-induced, autonomous change, respectively.

<sup>7</sup> Parsons (1990: 234–5) distinguishes result states, which ‘hold for ever after the culmination of the event’, from target states, ‘which may or may not last for a long time’ after the event.

Class 1 is characterized by the *obligatory presence of the reflexive morpheme si* and the selection of the auxiliary BE in compound tenses (with past–participle agreement with the subject).<sup>8</sup> It mostly comprises inherently telic predicates, [ $\pm$  punctual], namely, achievements (e.g. *rompersi*, ‘break’, *spezzarsi* ‘crack’, *spegnersi* ‘turn off, go out’) (3a) and accomplishments (e.g. *gonfiarsi* ‘swell’ (3b), *placarsi* ‘soothe, ease’ (3c)):

- (3) a. Il bicchiere **si ruppe** (\*ruppe)/**si è rotto**  
*the glass RFL broke/ RFL is broken*  
 ‘The glass broke.’  
 b. La caviglia **si è gonfiata**.  
*the ankle RFL is swollen*  
 ‘The ankle swelled up.’  
 c. Il diluvio **si è placato**.  
*the downpour RFL is eased*  
 ‘The downpour has eased.’

Thus, this class consists of verbs lexically encoding a final goal or a result/target state (Folli 2002; Jezek 2008; Manente 2008). This is shown by their occurrence with durational (*for X time*) and extent/completion adverbials (*in X time - at X time*) (test a) (4a), and by the fact that their use in the progressive does not entail the past form (test b) (4b) (Folli 2002: 88):

- (4) a. Le luci **si sono spente** alle 8.  
*the lights RFL are gone-out at 8.*  
 ‘The lights went out at 8p.m.’  
 b. Le luci **si stanno spegnendo**.  $\rightarrow$  Le luci **si sono spente**.  
*the lights RFL stay going-out the lights RFL are gone-out*  
 ‘The lights are going out. The lights have gone out.’  
 c. Le luci **si sono spente** \*di parecchio.  
*the lights RFL are gone-out by a lot*  
 ‘The lights went out by a lot.’  
 d. Le luci **si sono spente**, \*ma non **sono spente**.  
*the lights RFL are gone-out, \*but not are gone-out*  
 ‘The lights went out, \*but they are not out.’

With these verbs the occurrence with the degree adverbial *di parecchio* ‘by a lot’ (test (e)) is ruled out, as shown in (4c), and the negation of the final point/result state by means of an additional phrase is infelicitous, as in (4d).

<sup>8</sup> The patterns discussed have a clear anticausative meaning, as brought out by the *da solo* ‘by itself’ test (Salvi 1988: 108; Cennamo 1995: 96), applying to all the examples of reflexive anticausatives described in the present paper, and illustrated in (i) for the verb *aprire* ‘open’. With accomplishments and achievements, depending on the transitivity context, however, the *S si V* sequence can also have a passive interpretation, signalling an external human causer, that can only be hinted at by means of a manner adverbial (e.g. *facilmente* ‘easily’) or by an instrument phrase (e.g. *con un calcio* ‘with a kick’), but not syntactically expressed (cf. \**da Maria* ‘by Mary’), as shown in (ii) (Cennamo 1993: 24; 1995: 97–8), unlike in earlier stages of the language (Cennamo 1993: 79; Salvi 2010: 152). The distinction between accomplishments and achievements, however, is not clear-cut: several verbs (e.g., *aprire* ‘open’), in fact, have a ‘hybrid’ aspectual status, depending on the context (Piermarco Bertinetto, personal communication, Bertinetto 1986: chapter 4):

- (i) La porta **si aprì**/si è **aperta** da sola.  
*the door RFL opened/RFL is opened by itself*  
 ‘The door opened by itself.’  
 (ii) La porta **si aprì** facilmente/con un calcio/\*da Maria.  
*the door RFL opened easily/with a kick/\*by Mary*  
 ‘The door opened easily/with a kick/\*by Mary.’

Although most typically this construction denotes the spontaneous manifestation of an eventuality, as in (3)–(4), it may occur, however, also in contexts where such a value is not available, as in its uses with continuation of activity/activity verbs (5a, b) and states (5c, d) (Cennamo 1995: 93), where *si* appears instead to mark the suppression of an unspecified Actor (see note 2):

- (5) a. La lezione è **continuata** per tre ore.  
*the lecture is continued for three hours*  
 ‘The lecture went on for three hours.’
- b. Per ora il malumore **si esprime** in lettere ai giornali.  
*For now the dissatisfaction RFL expresses in letters to-the newspapers*  
 ‘For the time being dissatisfaction manifests itself in letters to newspapers.’
- c. Quel quadro **si ispira** all’arte pop.  
*that painting RFL inspires at-the-art pop*  
 ‘That painting draws its inspiration from Pop Art.’
- d. La sua ipotesi **si basa** su un presupposto sbagliato.  
*the his hypothesis RFL bases on an assumption wrong*  
 ‘His hypothesis is based on a wrong assumption.’

Class 2, instantiated by the absence of *si* and selection of BE in compound tenses, includes predicates of variable telicity, so-called degree achievements/gradual completion verbs, denoting the gradual approximation to a terminal point along a scale, which may or may not be attained, for example, *aumentare* ‘increase’, *migliorare* ‘improve’ (Centineo 1995; Sorace 2000: 864) and which can be ‘the final goal or a further stage’ (Bertinetto & Squartini 1995: 13):

- (6) I prezzi **aumentarono**. (< I commercianti **aumentarono** i prezzi.)  
*the prices increased the shopkeepers increased the prices*  
 ‘Prices increased.’ ‘The shopkeepers increased the prices.’

These verbs share properties of both atelic and telic predicates and, owing to their ‘hybrid’ aspectual nature (Bertinetto & Squartini 1995: 12), they allow both *for* and *in* adverbials (7a) (test a). They can occur with the degree adverbial *di parecchio* ‘by a lot’ (test e) (7b) and are also sensitive to syntactic or contextual coercion (7c), since the final goal/state is not lexically encoded, but can be only compositionally reached (Folli 2002: 103; Cennamo & Jezek 2011):

- (7) a. La temperatura è **diminuita** per un’ ora/in un’ ora.  
*the temperature is decreased for an hour/in an hour*  
 ‘The temperature has gone/went down for an hour/in an hour.’
- b. La temperatura è **diminuita** di parecchio.  
*the temperature is decreased of a-lot*  
 ‘The temperature has gone/went down by a lot.’
- c. La temperatura è **diminuita** di cinque gradi.  
*the temperature is decreased of five degrees*  
 ‘The temperature has gone/went down by five degrees.’

With gradual completion verbs/degree achievements the use in the progressive entails their use in the past form (test b) (8a), a characteristic which they share with atelic predicates, together with the non-co-occurrence with adverbs which modify eventualities with a final state such as *completamente* ‘completely’ (8b) (test d). This behaviour might be regarded as reflecting the lack of a proper final state in the lexical root of the verb, that is, the fact that these verbs denote a process/change leading to a target (i.e. a reversible) state, but not to a result (i.e. non-reversible) state, in the sense of Parsons (1990: 234–5) (see also Folli 2002: 104 and note 7):

- (8) a. La temperatura **sta diminuendo**. → La temperatura **è diminuita**.  
*the temperature stays decreasing*      *the temperature is decreased*  
 ‘The temperature is going down.’      ‘The temperature has gone down.’
- b. La temperatura **è diminuita \*completamente**.  
*the temperature is decreased completely*  
 ‘The temperature has gone down \*completely.’

Class 2 [-*si*] verbs comprise different subtypes of accomplishments, including indefinite change verbs such as *guarire* ‘heal’, *cambiare* ‘change’, as well as verbs like *affondare* ‘sink’, that in Italian encode a final state (Folli 2002: 85, note 18; Cennamo & Jezek 2011). The aspectual non-homogeneity of these verbs is shown by their different behaviour with durational adverbials, which can co-occur with *cambiare* ‘change’ (9a), but are unfelicitous with *affondare* ‘sink’ (9b), as well as the different applicability of test e, whereby the degree adverbial *di parecchio* ‘by a lot’ can occur with *cambiare* ‘change’ (9d) but not with *affondare* ‘sink’ (9c):

- (9) a. Il tempo **è cambiato** per un po’ in pochi minuti.  
*the weather is changed for a while in few minutes*  
 ‘The weather changed for a while/from one minute to the next.’
- b. La nave **è affondata** \*per un’ ora (vs. in un’ ora).  
*the ship is sunk for an hour* (vs. in an hour)  
 ‘The ship sank \*for an hour/in an hour.’
- c. La nave **è affondata** \*di parecchio.  
*the boat is sunk a lot*  
 ‘The boat sank \*a lot.’
- d. Il tempo **è cambiato** di parecchio.  
*the weather is changed by a-lot*  
 ‘The weather has changed by a lot.’

They also show different entailments (test b), as illustrated in (10a, b) (Cennamo & Jezek 2011: 816–7):

- (10) a. La nave **sta affondando**. → La nave **è affondata**.  
*the ship stays sinking*      *the ship is sunk*  
 ‘The ship is sinking.’      ‘The ship has sunk.’
- b. Il tempo **sta cambiando**. → Il tempo **è cambiato**.  
*the weather stays changing*      *the weather is changed*  
 ‘The weather is changing.’      ‘The weather has changed.’

Interestingly, these verbs obligatorily take *si* in some southern Italian dialects (e.g. Molise), showing direct correspondence between the semantics of the pattern (i.e. telicity of the verb/predicate) and its morphological coding (i.e. presence of the reflexive morpheme) (Cennamo 1999: 141–2; Cennamo & Jezek 2011: 814):

- (11) a. La ferita **s’ è sanata**. (Isernia - Molise)  
*the wound RFL is healed*  
 ‘The wound healed.’
- b. La barca **s’ è affondata**.  
*the boat RFL is sunk*  
 ‘The boat sank.’

- c. Il tempo **s' è cambiato**.  
*the weather RFL is changed*  
 'The weather changed.'

With class 2 the BE+PP structure can also have a non-eventive meaning, the past participle conveying an adjectival function, denoting a result state, as shown in (12a), which exemplifies a copular construction:

- (12) a. I prezzi **sono molto aumentati**. (result state)  
*the prices are much increased*  
 'Prices are up.'
- b. I prezzi **sono aumentati molto** (eventive)  
*the prices are increased much*  
 'Prices increased a lot.'

The difference between the eventive (i.e. verbal) and adjectival function of the past participle can be brought out by the position of the (quantificational) adverbial *molto* 'much', which occurs after the past participle when modifying the whole verb phrase, as in (12b), but before it when modifying the past participle only, as in (12a).

Class 3, optionally occurring with *si* and selecting both HAVE and BE in compound tenses in the form without the reflexive morpheme, includes verbs describing a complex event consisting of a change process and an optional *telos* (e.g. *fonder(si)* 'melt', *bruciar(si)* 'burn', *cuocer(si)* 'cook', *gelar(si)* 'freeze') (Folli 2002; Schäfer 2008). The focus is on the attainment of a final goal/result state in the pattern with *si*, with ensuing telic interpretation and selection of the auxiliary BE in compound tenses (13):

- (13) Il querceto **si bruciò/si è bruciato** (\*per giorni).  
*the oak-wood RFL burnt/RFL is burnt.PP.M.SG for days*  
 'The oak-wood burnt down completely (\*for days).'

The pattern without *si* on the other hand can have both a telic and an atelic (i.e. processual) interpretation (14a) – as shown by its co-occurrence with *in/for X* time adverbials (test a) – with related BE/HAVE selection in compound tenses (14b, c) (Sorace 2000: 874–5; Cennamo & Jezek 2011):

- (14) a. La foresta **bruciò** per tutta la notte/in poche ore. (atelic/telic)  
*The forest burnt for whole night/in few hours*  
 'The forest burnt the whole night long/in a few hours.'
- b. La foresta **ha bruciato** per tutta la notte (atelic)  
*the forest has burnt for whole the night*  
 'The forest burnt the whole night long/in a few hours.'
- c. La foresta **è bruciata** in poche ore. (telic)  
*the forest is burnt in few hours*  
 'The forest burnt in a few hours.'

Unlike in the pattern without *si* (15a), in the form with *si* the final state cannot be negated (15b):<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The telic ~ atelic interpretation of the pattern is not triggered by the presence of an adverbial modifier, which is optional under both meanings, as in (15a, b), but reflects the presence ~ absence of *si*.



- (15) a. La foresta **ha bruciato** (per giorni), ma per fortuna le querce non  
*the forest has burnt for days but by luck the oaks not*  
**si sono bruciate.**  
*RFL are burnt*  
 ‘The forest burnt (for days), but luckily the oaks did not burn down.’
- b. La foresta **si è bruciata** (in poche ore), \*ma non è bruciata.  
*the forest RFL is burnt (in few hours) but not is burnt*  
 ‘The forest burnt down (in a few hours), \*but it did not burn.’

In point of fact, in (15b) the use of *si* correlates with a high(er) degree of affectedness of the subject, since the pattern implies that the forest burnt completely, unlike in (15a), where this implication is lacking (see also Cennamo 1995: 98).

In class 3 the use in the progressive entails the use in the past form in the pattern without *si* (16a) (i.e. in the processual/activity interpretation of the verb, whereby the process component of the event can be modified by a progressive operator), unlike in the pattern with *si*, that encodes the presence of a final/result state (16b):

- (16) a. Il querceto **sta bruciando**. → Il querceto **ha bruciato**.  
*the oak-wood stays burning the oak-wood has burnt*  
 ‘The oak-wood is burning.’ ‘The oak-wood has burnt.’
- b. Il querceto **si sta bruciando**. → Il querceto **si è bruciato**.  
*the oak-wood RFL stays burning the oak-wood RFL is burnt*  
 ‘The oak-wood is burning.’ ‘The oak-wood got burnt down.’

Although in the variant without *si* in compound tenses the pattern with the auxiliary BE tends to have a telic interpretation and the structure with HAVE tends to trigger an atelic reading, with some verbs (e.g. *bruciare* ‘burn’, *stingere* ‘fade’), BE is not completely excluded from an atelic context and HAVE is not completely excluded from a telic one (Manente 2008: 212), as shown in (17a), where both types of adverbials are possible with either auxiliary:

- (17) a. La carne **ha bruciato/è bruciata** per alcuni minuti/in pochi minuti.  
*the meat has burnt/is burnt for some minutes/in few minutes*  
 ‘The meat burnt for some minutes/in a few minutes.’

In the form without *si* the presence of an activity/processual component and the lack of a ‘degree’ component also accounts for the non-occurrence of these verbs with the degree adverbial *di parecchio* ‘by a lot’ (17b), which is possible instead with class 2 verbs:

- (17) b. La casa **è bruciata** \*di parecchio.  
*the house is burnt by a-lot*  
 ‘The house has burnt \*by a lot’.

Some class 3 verbs in their use without *si* show the same ambiguity of interpretation of the sequence BE+PP that characterizes class 2 verbs, as illustrated in (18a, b) for *bruciare* ‘burn’ in relation to the position of the adverb *completamente* ‘completely’. The latter precedes the past participle which has an adjectival function (i.e. when the adverb modifies a result state) as in (18a), but follows it when the adverb modifies the whole predicate, as in (18b) (see Bentley 2006: chapter 7 for a full discussion of past participles in Italian):

- (18) a. Il querceto è **completamente bruciato**. (result state interpretation)  
*the oak-wood is completely burnt*  
 ‘The oak-wood is completely burnt.’
- b. Il querceto è **bruciato completamente**. (eventive interpretation)  
*the oak-wood is burnt completely*  
 ‘The oak-wood got burnt completely.’

With the verb *cuocere* ‘cook’, instead, probably owing to the result component it lexicalizes (Beth Levin, personal communication), the sequence BE+PP can only have a stative interpretation, with the past participle *cotto* ‘cooked’ having an adjectival function, as in (19a). This is shown by the position of the quantificational adverbial *molto* ‘much’, which can only occur before the participle, unlike in the corresponding sentence with the auxiliary HAVE (19b), where the past participle has a verbal function (see also Cennamo & Jezek 2011: 818):

- (19) a. La carne è **molto cotta** (vs \*è **cotta molto**).  
*the meat is much cooked is cooked much*  
 ‘The meat is overcooked.’
- b. La carne **ha cotto molto** (vs \***ha molto cotto**)  
*the meat has cooked much has much cooked*  
 ‘The meat overcooked.’

### 3.1. Interim summary

To sum up, the three subclasses of anticausative, identified by means of a number of tests isolating the different aspectual features encoded in the verb/predicate, appear to differ in terms of the presence, absence, optionality of a final goal/result or target state component in the lexical meaning of the verb, its ‘root’ and in their interaction with contextual and syntactic factors (see Table 2).

Table 2. Subclasses of anticausatives in Italian and auxiliary selection

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class 1: [+ <i>si</i> ] [+ BE]: achievements, accomplishments, (some) activities, (some) states
class 2: [- <i>si</i> ] [+ BE]: different subtypes of accomplishment (e.g. gradual completion verbs, indefinite change verbs)
class 3: [± <i>si</i> ] [± HAVE/BE]: change process with an optional <i>telos</i>
[- <i>si</i> ] [+ HAVE]: atelic interpretation
[- <i>si</i> ] [+ BE]: telic interpretation
[+ <i>si</i> ] [+ BE]: telic interpretation (higher degree of telicity/affectedness of S)

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In class 1 [+*si*] verbs, the *rompersi* ‘break’ and *aprirsi* ‘open’ type, a final goal/result or target state is lexically encoded. In class 2 [-*si*] verbs, the *aumentare* ‘increase’, *guarire* ‘heal’ and *crescere* ‘grow’ type, telicity may be optionally reached, with the culmination of the event (i.e. the *telos*) instantiating either a target or a result state, depending on the verb. In class 3 [±*si*] verbs, the *bruciar(si)* ‘burn’ type, the result state component is conveyed by the form with *si*, unlike in the form without *si*, that denotes an inherently atelic process, an activity. The different aspectual make up of verbs correlates, in turn, with different patterns of auxiliary selection in compound tenses, with BE always selected when the terminal point is either lexically encoded or contextually provided, marked by *si*, or when there is an optional

target/result state, as in the class of verbs that never take *si*. Thus the pattern with *si* generally encodes a final goal/result/target state and always correlates with the auxiliary BE.<sup>10</sup>

### 3.2. *Semantic constraints on anticausativization in Italian and the nature and function(s) of si*

As discussed above, thematic and lexico-aspectual features intertwine in a complex but principled way to determine anticausativization and its encoding in Italian. More specifically, the anticausative pattern occurs when an externally caused eventuality — most typically denoting a telic situation, but to a lesser extent also an atelic and stative one — is described as taking place without the intervention of an external (wilful) causer (i.e. an Actor), with the Undergoer as subject. Two strategies are employed for this situation, either the active intransitive or the reflexive morpheme *si*, with an imperfect correspondence between the semantic constraints on their distribution and their syntactic realization.

It has been widely debated whether *si* is a marker of the suppressed causer (i.e. the Actor) (Centineo 1995; Bentley 2006: 134) or whether it should be regarded instead as the marker of a final goal/result/target state (Folli 2002; Jezek 2008; Manente 2008). As pointed out above, we believe that the two perspectives complement each other: they focus on two aspects of the construction, which represent different diachronic stages of its morphological encoding in Italian. More specifically, we argue that *si* is primarily and originally a strategy used to suppress the Actor of an externally caused eventuality and to promote the Undergoer to subject function. Its aspectual function is, instead, a later development.

The direction of the derivation of the anticausative pattern (whether transitive > intransitive or intransitive > transitive) has also been a matter of discussion (see also Cennamo & Jezek 2011: 810–1). The difficulty in determining the direction of the derivation may at times reflect different diachronic paths (intransitive > transitive/transitive > intransitive) and changes of strategy (active intransitive > reflexive/reflexive > active intransitive), depending on the verb/predicate and on the stage of development. This issue links up with the status of the reflexive ~ non-reflexive anticausative, recently addressed by Bentley (2006: 131) (building on Centineo 1995), who does not regard the non-reflexive intransitive member of class 3 verbs (e.g. (intr.) *bruciare* ‘burn’, *cuocere* ‘cook’, *gelare* ‘freeze’) as anticausative, on the grounds that it denotes an internally caused eventuality, unlike its reflexive counterpart, which encodes instead an event with a defocused/unknown causer.

In the course of discussion we investigate the possible insights offered by the analysis of anticausatives in early Italian varieties, in relation to the nature and function of *si*, with the related issue of the status of the non-reflexive intransitive variant of some anticausatives.

<sup>10</sup> This generalization, however, only holds for the core of the category. A major problem one faces with Italian anticausatives, in fact, is the lack of aspectual homogeneity of the subclasses identified in the literature, whereby, for instance, the class of [+si] verbs also comprises activities and states, as shown in (5a–c) (see Schäfer 2008: 11–20; Cennamo & Jezek 2001: 815–9 for a full discussion of this issue).

## 4. THE ANTICAUSATIVE ALTERNATION IN OLD FLORENTINE AND OLD NEAPOLITAN

The analysis of thirteenth–fifteenth century texts from two early Italian vernaculars, Old Florentine and Old Neapolitan,<sup>11</sup> shows the alternation of the reflexive<sup>12</sup>/non–reflexive form to mark anticausatives in simplex tenses with the verb classes instantiating the core of the category, achievements and accomplishments, in accordance with the Late Latin situation, whereby the anticausative strategies were in free variation (Cennamo 1998).<sup>13</sup> In compound tenses, instead, the presence/absence of the reflexive reflects the gradual reconstitution of the tense-aspectual and voice systems following the loss of the

<sup>11</sup> The corpus investigated consists of literary and non-literary texts from the thirteenth–fifteenth century, taken from OVI (*Opera del Vocabolario Italiano*) (available at <http://www.oivi.cnr.it/>) and listed in the Appendix, comprising prose, poetry, letters, testimonies of minute-books, volgarizzamenti (i.e. adaptations from Latin), deeds, contracts, transactions and court trials, following the approach by Vincent, Parry & Hastings (2004). The present study intends to offer a qualitative investigation of the phenomenon, and the figures obtained from the electronic search are used to suggest tendencies, to be tested for a wider range of lexical verbs – that in the present analysis comprise mainly achievements and different types of accomplishment – and vernaculars, an issue that we leave for further research. The earliest Florentine texts date back to the early thirteenth century, while the earliest Neapolitan texts are from the end of the thirteenth century. They represent the local speeches or *volgari*, before the emergence of Italian, that can be roughly dated to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. During this period of time a variety of Tuscan dialect, based on fourteenth century Florentine, the language of the so-called *three crowns*, the great Tuscan writers Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, gradually gained ground, becoming codified as the national standard language at the beginning of the sixteenth century (Maiden 1995: 5, 10; Lepschy & Lepschy 2006: 546).

<sup>12</sup> The reflexive patterns investigated have a clear anticausative (i.e. self-induced) interpretation in both vernaculars, regardless of the pre/postverbal position of the subject that usually reflects the distribution of given/new information, respectively (Cennamo 2000). With achievements and accomplishments, depending on the transitivity context, the pattern may be ambiguous at times between an anticausative and a passive interpretation. With activities (e.g. *vendere* ‘sell’, *bollire* ‘boil’) instead the reflexive pattern only has a passive interpretation (see Cennamo 2001b for a discussion of the aspectual characteristics of verbs as determining the self-induced vs externally caused interpretation of a pattern with *se/si* in the transition from Latin to Romance). A syntactic test occasionally differentiating the anticausative function of the structure from a passive meaning in Old Florentine is the occurrence of the *da/per (s)se medesimo* ‘by itself’ phrase, which identifies the event as self-induced, as in (i). Most typically, however, in both vernaculars only the context resolves the ambiguity when it occurs (see also Salvi 2010: 151–4):

- (i) Onde Aristotile disse, che natura è quella virtù per la quale tutte  
 Whereby Aristoteles said that nature is that virtue by the which all  
 cose **si mutano** e si riposano per loro medesime.  
 things RFL change and RFL rest by them themselves  
 ‘Whereby Aristoteles said that nature is that virtue by which all  
 things change and are at rest by themselves.’ (Brunetto Latini, *Tesoro*, 2, 50, p. A381.16)

Also the occurrence of manner adverbs such as *naturalmente* ‘naturally, by nature’ may differentiate anticausative from passive *se/si*, as in (ii), that can only denote a self-induced event:

- (ii) (l’acqua) naturalmente **si moverà** più a quella parte de  
 (the-water) naturally RFL will-move more to that part of  
 la terra ove queste qualità, umido e freddo, ...più abbondano.  
 the earth where these qualities humidity and cold more abound  
 ‘Water will move naturally more towards that part of the earth  
 where these qualities, humidity and cold abound.’ (Metaura d’Aristotile volgarizzata, 2, 20, p. 267. 35)

<sup>13</sup> In Late Latin three strategies marked anticausatives, the (medio-passive) *r*-suffix, *se*+active and the active intransitive. Their distribution is in free variation, unlike in early and Classical Latin, when the occurrence of the reflexive morpheme *se* and of the active intransitive appears to be aspectually determined, with *se* occurring with achievements and accomplishments (e.g. *rumpere* ‘break’, *aperire* ‘open’), but not with gradual completion verbs (e.g. *\*se minuere* ‘decrease’) and generally with verbs of variable/reduced telicity, while the active intransitive is confined to activities (e.g. *quassare* ‘shake’) and gradual completion verbs (e.g. *lenire* ‘soothe’) (see full discussion in Cennamo, Eythórsson & Barðdal 2011).

grammatical dimension of voice in the passage to Romance (Cennamo 1998, 2005, 2008; Cennamo, Eythórsson & Barðdal 2011 and section 4.4).<sup>14</sup>

#### 4.1. Anticausatives in Old Florentine

In Old Florentine both strategies are available in simplex tenses, apparently regardless of the aspectual nature of the predicate and of the verb's inherent meaning. The eventuality described by the verb is presented as taking place spontaneously, with suppression of the Actor, optionally marked by *si*, as in (20a, b):

- (20) a. Come fa l'onda là sopra Cariddi, che si **frange** con quella in  
*as does the-wave there over Charybdis that RFL breaks with that in*  
*cui s'intoppa.*  
*which RFL-bumps*  
 'As the wave does there, over Charybdis, when it it breaks against the other wave  
 with which it comes into contact.' (Dante, *Commedia, Inferno*, 7, p. A112. 23)
- b. com' albore che troppo è caricato, che **frange** e perde seve e lo  
*like tree that too is loaded that breaks and loses itself and the*  
*suo frutto.*  
*its fruit*  
 'Like a tree that is too laden with fruit, which breaks and does for itself and its  
 fruits.' (Ghiberti, *Rime*, p. 54. 29)

At times the Actor may be contextually recoverable, realized as an oblique, as in (21), where the suppressed causer, *la luce della virtù* 'the light of virtue', is expressed as a prepositional phrase, headed by *in* 'in':

- (21) Qui dice Vergilio, che amore, che **si accende** nella luce della virtù, ...  
*Here says Vergil that love that RFL ignites in-the light of-the virtue*  
 'Here Virgil says that love, which ignites in the light of virtue ...'  
 (Ottimo, *Purgatorio*, 22, p. 406. 4)

As already pointed out (note 12), with achievements and accomplishments the pattern with *si* may be ambiguous between an anticausative (i.e. spontaneous) and a passive (i.e. externally caused) interpretation, as in (22), where not even the wider context allows one to distinguish between the anticausative and passive reading of the structure (see also Kontzi 1958: 81):

<sup>14</sup> In particular, as a result of the deep restructuring taking place in these grammatical domains, whereby the passive voice can occur in active function (so-called Deponentization; Flobert 1975; Cennamo 1998), an analytic passive pattern consisting of a form of *BE + PP*, such as *foris aperta est* (i) – that in early and Classical Latin could either refer to a past event ('the door was opened') (past perfective interpretation) or to the current relevance of a past event ('the door has been opened') (present perfective interpretation), as well as instantiating a copular construction, the past participle having an adjectival function, denoting a result state ('the door is open') – can be found in active function (Cennamo 2005: 180–1). Thus *foris aperta est* can equal *foris aperuit* (with the active synthetic perfect *aperuit*), occurring therefore with an anticausative meaning 'the door opened/has opened', an interpretation that was impossible in the earlier stages of the language:

(i) foris **aperta est** = **aperuit**.  
*door opened is open.PERF.3SG*  
 'The door opened/has opened.'

- (22) questo uscio fa      si      gran romore quando s'      **apre** che leggermente  
*this door makes such big noise when RFL opens that lightly*  
 sarei      sentita      da      fratello.  
*I-would-be heard by brother-mine*  
 'This door makes such a lot of noise when it opens/is opened that I would be easily  
 heard by my brother.' (Boccaccio, *Decameron*, VIII, 7, p. 539. 25)

Although *si* generally functions as a marker of thematic reduction, signalling the suppression of the Actor, as in (20a), (21), (22) (under its anticausative interpretation) and in the reflexive variant of (23-32), it tends to occur more prominently, however, with verbs which lexicalize a terminal point (e.g. achievements like *frangere*, *rompere* 'break', *spezzare* 'crack', *accendere* 'light' and accomplishments like *aprire* 'open', *mutare* 'change') and it is not attested with activity verbs (e.g. *bollire* 'boil'), as discussed below (examples (34a, b)) (an issue that needs to be thoroughly investigated). With achievements like *spezzare* 'crack' only the reflexive form is attested, as in (23a), with only one example of a non-reflexive form, ambiguous between an anticausative ('the spears broke') – with the noun phrase *le lance* 'the spears' as subject – and an active transitive interpretation ('they broke the spears') – with an unexpressed subject and *le lance* 'the spears' as a direct object – as shown in (23b):

- (23) a. la spada si      **si spezza** presso alla      punta.  
*the sword thus RFL breaks near to-the tip*  
 'The sword breaks near the tip.' (*Tavola ritonda o l'Istoria di ...*, 18, p. 71. 19-20)  
 b. si      feriscono per tale vigoria, che le lance **spezzarono** in più pezzi.  
*RFL wound for such strength that the spears cracked in many pieces*  
 'They wound each other fiercely, so that the spears break into several pieces/so as  
 to break the spears in several pieces.' (*Tavola ritonda o l'Istoria di ...*, 18, p. 70. 28)

With other achievements (e.g. *frangere* 'crack' and *rompere* 'break') the two strategies, instead, alternate, as shown in (24) and (25):

- (24) a. Come **si frange** il sonno.  
*how RFL breaks the sleep*  
 'As sleep gets interrupted.' (Dante, *Commedia*, *Purgatorio*, 17, p. B283. 40)  
 b. e'l mar che **frange**.  
*sea that breaks*  
 'And the sea that breaks.' (Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, 148, p. 204. 3)
- (25) a. (la terra) **ruppe** in molte parti del mondo.  
*(the earth) broke in several parts of-the world*  
 '(The earth) opened up in several parts of the world (lit. broke).'  
 (Bono Giamboni, *Vizi e Virtudi*, 59, p. 98. 6-7)  
 b. lo mio ... sonno ... **si ruppe**.  
*the my sleep RFL broke*  
 'My sleep was interrupted (lit. broke itself).' (Dante, *Vita Nuova*, 3, 1-9, p. 14. 9)

The alternation between the two patterns also involves different subtypes of accomplishment, for instance verbs denoting indefinite change like *mutare* 'change' (26), as well as verbs denoting a process optionally leading to an endpoint, such as *ardere* 'burn' (27) and,

marginally, *gelare* ‘freeze’ (28), for which the non-reflexive form is the one normally attested (see also Brambilla Ageno 1964: 61–82):

- (26) a. (lo stato di Roma) quasi ogni die di diverse maniere **si muta**.  
*the state of Rome almost every day of different ways RFL changes*  
 ‘The State of Rome changes almost every day.’  
 (Bono Giamboni, *Orosio*, 6, 12, p. 384. 9)
- b. (lo giorno) poi ver’ mezzo giorno ... **muta**.  
*the day then towards noon ... changes*  
 ‘Then the day changes towards noon.’ (Percivalle Doria, p. 162)
- (27) a. parve che il cielo **ardesse**.  
*seemed that the sky burnt*  
 ‘It looked as if the sky burnt.’ (Bono Giamboni, *Orosio*, 4, 14, p. 237. 4)
- b. però che’l legame d’amore col fuoco dell’ira **s’ arde** in lui.  
*since the tie of-love with-the fire of-the rage RFL burns in him*  
 ‘Since he burns with an angry love (lit. the tie of rage burns in him).’  
 (Ottimo, *Purgatorio*, 22, p. 403. 16)
- (28) a. che gli **gelino** le spalle.  
*that to-him freeze the shoulders*  
 ‘And that his shoulders freeze.’ (Bono Giamboni, *Orosio*, 4, p. 193. 2)
- b. (li vapori) ... e quivi **si gelano**.  
*the vapours and there RFL freeze*  
 ‘And there the vapours freeze.’ (Ottimo, *Purgatorio*, 5, p. 63.16)

The verb *cuocere* ‘cook, burn’ alternates the two strategies under the meaning ‘burn’ (i.e. under its processual/activity interpretation), as in (29), whereas it occurs mainly in the reflexive form in the sense of ‘cook’ (i.e. when it lexicalizes a result) as exemplified in (30):

- (29) a. quanto il fuoco è più ristretto, più **cuoce**. (= arde)  
*When the fire is more concentrated more cooks (= burns)*  
 ‘When the fire is more concentrated, it burns more.’  
 (Boccaccio, *Esposizioni*, X, 7, p. 514. 27)
- b. per che ‘l ciel, come pare ancor, **si cosse**  
*since that the sky as seems yet RFL cooked*  
 ‘As a result of which, as can be seen, the sky burnt’  
 (Dante, *Commedia, Inferno*, 17, p. A290. 108)
- (30) metti uno bicchiere d’acqua che **si cuoca** con essa a conpimento.  
*put-there a glass of-water that RFL cooks with it thoroughly*  
 ‘Add a glass of water, so that it cooks thoroughly.’  
 (*Ricette d’un libro di cucina*, LVII, 2, p. 6. 11)

With these verbs, however, there is no difference in meaning between the form with and without *si*, that is, between *bruciare-bruciarsi* ‘burn’, *gelare-gelarsi* ‘freeze’, *cuocere-cuocersi* ‘cook’, unlike in contemporary Italian (see section 3).

The free variation between the two strategies also involves gradual completion verbs/degree achievements (e.g. *scurare* ‘darken’, *seccare* ‘dry’, *ampliare* ‘enlarge’, *umentare* ‘increase’, *variare* ‘vary’), as illustrated in (31) and (32), as well as continuation of activities (e.g. *continuare* ‘continue’) as in (33):

- (31) a. le pene ... **s’ aumentano** e stanno e  
*the punishments RFL increase and stay and*  
 staranno ... (gradual completion verbs)  
*will-stay*  
 ‘The punishments increase and continue and will continue for ever.’  
 (Boccaccio, *Esposizioni*, 47, p. 664. 20)
- b. e le biade **aumenteranno**.  
*and the corn will-increase*  
 ‘... and corn will increase.’ (Boccaccio, *Filocolo*, 5, 54, p. 624. 2)
- (32) a. per la qual cosa la fama sua **s’ ampliò**  
*owing-to the which thing the fame his RFL increase*  
 molto. (deadjectival < *amplio* = wide)  
*a lot*  
 ‘Owing to this his fame increased a lot.’ (Boccaccio, *Esposizioni*, 22, p. 692. 16)
- b. poi **ampliò** la fama di Santa Maria in Pruneta.  
*then increased the fame of Saint Mary in Pruneto*  
 ‘Then the fame of Saint Mary in Pruneto increased.’  
 (Sacchetti, L, 9, 29; Brambilla Ageno 1964: 64)
- (33) a. dalle altre due parti, onde **si continua**  
*from-the other two parts where RFL continues*  
 la terra. (continuation of activity)  
*the earth*  
 ‘From the other two areas, where the earth continues.’  
 (Bono Giamboni, *Orosio*, 1, 2, p. 19. 11)
- b. In questa prima parte **continua** (sc. il capitolo).  
*in this first section continues the chapter*  
 ‘In this first section the chapter continues.’  
 (Chiose falso Boccaccio, *Inferno*, 3, p. 21. 22)

With activity/process verbs such as *bollire* ‘boil’, only the non-reflexive form occurs, as in (34a). With this verb, in fact, the reflexive pattern only has a passive interpretation, as expected, since it is an activity verb (see also note 12). Thus, *l’acqua si bolle* in (34b) does not mean ‘water boils’ but ‘water is boiled’:

- (34) a. perocché il mosto ancora **bolliva**, ...  
*since the grape-must still boiled*  
 ‘Since the grape must was still boiling.’  
 (Marchionne di Coppo..., *Cronaca fiorentina*, 876, p. 382. 3)
- b. la cui acqua **si bolle** in caldare di piombo e  
*the which water RFL boils in containers of lead and*  
 fassene sale.  
*makes.RFL.of it salt*  
 ‘Whose water is boiled in three lead containers and salt is made with it.’  
 (*Metaura d’Aristotile volgarizzata* ..., App. B, 2, 29, p. 327. 2–3)



We cannot exclude either the existence of regional and diachronic variation, as hinted at by the different distribution of the anticausative strategies in texts from different areas within the same region. For instance, the achievement verb *accendere* ‘ignite’ occurs mainly in the reflexive form in Old Florentine (35a), but alternates both structures in Old Pisan, as in (35b, c). Thus, Old Pisan might represent the older pattern (with alternation), while Old Florentine would instantiate an innovative variety (Adam Ledgeway, personal communication), with *si* gradually becoming obligatory with verbs lexically encoding a terminal point, as in modern Italian, an issue that deserves, however, further investigation:

- (35) a. nel tempio de’ Dei **s’ accese** il fuoco. (Old Florentine)  
*in-the temple of-the gods RFL ignited the fire*  
 ‘Fire ignited in the gods’ temple.’ (Bono Giamboni, *Orosio*, 4, 12, p. 230. 22)
- b. come carbon, che’n fuoco **accende**. (Old Pisan)  
*like charcoal that-in fire ignites*  
 ‘Like charcoal that ignites.’ (Fazio degli Uberti, *Dittamondo*, 5, 25, p. 409. 67)
- c. (il fuoco) che **s’ accese** in quell’ anno. (Old Pisan)  
*the fire that RFL ignited in that year*  
 ‘The fire that ignited that year.’ (Fazio degli Uberti, *Dittamondo*, 1, 24, p. 69. 11)

In compound tenses the reflexive is attested with telic verbs, namely, achievements and accomplishments of different types (e.g. *rompere* ‘break’ (36a), *accendere* ‘ignite’ (36b), *aprire* ‘open’), including also some attestations with gradual completion verbs/degree achievements such as *ampliare* ‘spread’ (36c):

- (36) a. la cordellina del pesce di legno **s’ era rotta**, ...  
*the little-cord of-the fish of wood RFL was broken*  
 ‘The wooden fish’s string had broken.’ (Sacchetti, *Trecentonovelle*, 216, p. 561. 24)
- b. credeano di spontanea volontà **acceso si fosse** (sc. il tumulto).  
*thought of spontaneous will ignited RFL were (sc. the turmoil)*  
 ‘They thought that the turmoil had arisen spontaneously (lit. ignited).’  
 (*Deca terza di Tito Livio*, 10, 6, p. 454. 15)
- c. verso l’Occidente miserabilmente **s’ era ampliata** (sc. pestilenzia).  
*towards the-West wretchedly RFL was spread (sc. plague)*  
 ‘The plague had spread towards West.’  
 (Boccaccio, *Decameron*, Introduzione, p. 9. 31)

*Si*, however, hardly occurs in compound tenses *with verbs of reduced telicity*, for example, indefinite change of state verbs such as *mutare* ‘change’ (37a) and never with gradual completion verbs such as *aumentare* (e.g. *\*si è aumentato* ‘it raised’), and with change verbs optionally encoding the endpoint of the process (e.g. *gelare* ‘freeze’, *ardere* ‘burn’, ‘cook’; cf. *\*si è gelato* ‘it froze’, *\*si è arso* ‘it burnt’, *\*si è cotto* ‘it cooked’) (37b-d):

- (37) a. se in tenebre **si fosse mutato** si fatto giorno!  
*if in darkness RFL were changed such day*  
 ‘If the day had turned to night.’ (Boccaccio, *Fiammetta*, 1, 8, p. 25. 9)
- b. del sangue ... della sua madre che **è gelato**. (*\*si è gelato*)  
*of-the blood ... of-the his mother that is frozen RFL is frozen*  
 ‘Of his mother’s blood ... that froze.’ (Libro di Sidrach, 294, p. 323. 1)

- c. nel foco mirando, vide che 'n esso **era arso** ogni  
*in-the fire looking-at he.saw that in it was burnt every*  
*tizzone. (\*si era arso)*  
*fire-brand RFL was burnt*  
 'Watching the fire, he noticed that every fire-brand had burnt.'  
 (Boccaccio, *Ninfale Fiesolano*, 193, p. 271. 3)
- d. e quando è **cotto** a compimento. (\*si è cotto)  
*and when is cooked at completion RFL is cooked*  
 'And when it has cooked thoroughly.'  
 (*Ricette d'un libro di cucina*, LVII, 11, p. 10. 17)

Interestingly, in anticausative patterns without *si*, with verbs optionally encoding telicity such as *gelare* 'freeze', *ardere* 'burn', illustrated in (37b, c), HAVE and BE do not alternate in compound tenses (albeit with a different aspectual interpretation), as in contemporary Italian (see section 3), but only BE is selected, as shown in (37b, c). Thus there never occurs a pattern like *\*il tizzone ha arso* 'the fire-brand burnt' (lit. 'has burnt'), with the auxiliary HAVE, but only *il tizzone è arso* 'the fire-brand burnt' (lit. 'is burnt'), with the auxiliary BE, as in (37c).

Also in (37d) the sequence BE+PP without *si* instantiates an anticausative pattern, as shown by the adverbial *a compimento* 'thoroughly' which modifies the whole predicate, occurring after the past participle. Depending on the syntactic context, the structure can also have either a result state interpretation, with the past participle having an adjectival function, as shown by the position of the manner adverb *bene* 'well, thoroughly' in (38a), or a passive meaning, as in (38b), where the iterative adverbial *due volte* 'twice' modifies the whole predicate, and the pattern has a clearly eventive (passive) interpretation:

- (38) a. E quando **sono bene cotti** (sc. i capponi), ... (result state)  
*and when are well cooked the capons*  
 'And when they (sc. the capons) are thoroughly cooked.'  
 (*Ricette d'un libro di cucina*, LVII, 16, p. 14. 4)
- b. e l'uno e l'altro **sia cotto due volte**. (passive)  
*and the-one and the-other be cooked two times*  
 'And that both be cooked twice.' (Pegolotti, *Pratica della mercatura*, p. 341. 8)

The data illustrated in (36)–(38) also show the interaction of the gradual spread of the reflexive to compound tenses in the anticausative function, with the ambiguity of the BE+PP pattern among three possible interpretations: an *active* (anticausative) function, a *passive* and a *result state* reading, depending on the context and the verb. The multiple interpretation of these structures is a clear outcome of the Late Latin changes taking place in the domain of voice (discussed in note 14 for the interpretation of forms of the analytic passive BE+PP), as further illustrated in (39a, b) (see Brambilla Ageno 1964: 186–99 and discussion in section 4.5):

- (39) a. come la lampana quando ella è **rotta**, non può essere intera.  
*like the oil-lamp when it is broken not can be whole*  
 'Like the oil-lamp when it is broken/it has broken, cannot be whole.'  
 (Bencivenni, *Esposizione del Paternostro*, p. 95, 10)

- b. perch' **era rotto** ventiquattro schodelle d' ariento.<sup>15</sup>  
*since was broken twenty-four bowls of silver*  
 'Since twenty-four silver bowls had broken/were broken/had been broken.'  
 (*Inventari degli argenti della...*, p. 360. 2)
- c. il calice ... che prima **era rotto** cadendo in terra.  
*the goblet that before was broken falling onto ground*  
 'The goblet that before had broken falling onto the ground.'  
 (*Leggenda Aurea*, 112, S. Lorenzo, p. B951.9)

Thus, the sequence *è rotta* 'is broken' in (39a), can either mean 'is broken', with the past participle *rotta* 'broken' having an adjectival function, denoting a result state, or it can be interpreted as a self-induced process, as in its anticausative meaning 'it has broken'). Out of context the sequence *è rotta* could also refer to an event perpetrated by an external causer, as in its resultative passive function 'it has been broken' (see further discussion in section 4.5).

The same ambiguity of interpretation obtains in (39b), where the pattern *era rotto* 'was broken' can have an anticausative interpretation ('had broken'), a result state meaning ('was broken') as well as a (resultative) passive function ('had been broken').

In (39c), instead, the syntactic context, in particular the presence of the punctual adverbial *prima* 'before' clearly reveals the eventive (anticausative) function of the verb phrase. The ambiguity of interpretation of the sequence BE + PP is resolved when the reflexive occurs, as in (40), which can only have an anticausative reading:

- (40) = (36a) la cordellina del pesce di legno s' **era rotta**, ...  
*the little-cord of-the fish of wood RFL was broken*  
 'The wooden fish's string had broken.'

However, Brambilla Ageno's (1964: 211) claim that by the thirteenth/fourteenth century the reflexive and non-reflexive patterns were both found in compound tenses (and in non-finite tenses) is only partially confirmed. In point of fact, the alternation seems to be more common with non-anticausative reflexives of different types,<sup>16</sup> but it is quite rare with anticausatives, although there might be regional variation in this respect as well, with some varieties using the reflexive strategy more prominently/frequently, both in simplex and compound tenses.

Summing up the main findings (schematized in Table 3), in Old Florentine the reflexive and non-reflexive strategy alternate freely in simplex tenses with all verbs undergoing anticausativization, comprising mainly achievements and different subtypes of accomplishment, including gradual completion verbs, as well as (continuation of) activity verbs. With some achievements, however, the reflexive appears to be the main/only strategy. In compound tenses, instead, *si* occurs with achievements and some accomplishments, while it is only marginally attested with degree achievements/gradual completion and never with activity verbs. Its occurrence, therefore, appears to start being aspectually determined, sensitive to the aspectual template of predicates and to the type of change lexically encoded in the verb (e.g. a result/non-reversible change or a target/reversible change).

<sup>15</sup> It is worth noticing the lack of agreement of the auxiliary and the past participle – occurring respectively, in the 3SG and in the unmarked masculine singular form – with the postverbal nominal, characteristic of existential and presentative patterns (Ciconte 2010; Parry 2010).

<sup>16</sup> The phenomenon is well-attested, in particular, with (i) endoreflexives/agentive anticausatives (e.g. *è mosso* 'is moved' ~ *si è mosso* RFL is moved 'He has moved'), (ii) reflexives/middles (patterns with identity of reference between the Actor and the Undergoer, and an agentive/non-agentive subject, respectively, often with an indistinct boundary between the two categories) (e.g. *è levato* is got up ~ *si è levato* RFL is got up 'he got up' and inherent reflexives (iii) *è accorto* is realized - *si è accorto* RFL is realized 'he has realized' (Brambilla Ageno 1964: 200–5 and examples therein).

Table 3. Anticausative strategies and their distribution in Old Florentine

Strategy	Verb class	Simplex tenses	Compound tenses (aux. BE)
+ <i>si</i> (only/mainly)	(some) achievements (some) accomplishments	+	+
± <i>si</i> (= free alternation)	(some) achievements, degree achievements/gradual completion verbs, accomplishments, (continuation of) activity	+	–
– <i>si</i>	activity	+?	+

#### 4.2. Anticausatives in Old Neapolitan

In Old Neapolitan the two strategies (i.e. the reflexive and the active intransitive) alternate less freely than in Old Florentine. Although the suppression of the Actor is the main function of the presence of the reflexive morpheme in anticausative patterns, as in (41) and (42) and the reflexive variant of (43)–(45) – where the Undergoer of a corresponding transitive structure occurs as subject and the eventuality is described as taking place spontaneously (i.e. as self-induced) – the aspectual characteristics of verbs appear to play a prominent role in determining the distribution of the  $[\pm se]$  construction.

More specifically, in simplex tenses the reflexive is the only anticausative strategy with most verbs which lexically encode a final point/result state, such as achievements (e.g. *spe(c)zare* ‘crack, break’, *squarzare* ‘tear’, *allumare* ‘light’), as in (41a, b) and accomplishments (e.g. *mutare* ‘change’, *accrescere* ‘grow’, *refrescare* ‘become harsh’, *mescolare* ‘mix’), as in (41c, d). Also indefinite change of state and gradual completion verbs tend to occur in the reflexive form only, as shown in (42). The two strategies, however, alternate with some achievements (e.g. *frangere* ‘smash’, *rompere* ‘break’) (43)–(44) and gradual completion verbs such as *aspiare* ‘wither’ (45). Therefore there occurs minimal alternation with inherently telic verbs:

- (41) a. li arbore **se** **spezavano** in trunco. ([+se] only)  
*the masts RFL broke in base*  
 ‘The masts broke at their base.’ (Destructione de Troya, 31, p. 267. 32)
- b. **squarzavalesse** lo core.  
*broke-to-her-RFL the heart*  
 ‘Her heart broke.’ (Destructione de Troya, 23, p. 206. 32-33)
- c. quillo vivo robicundo colore non **se** **mutava**.  
*that bright red colour not RFL changed*  
 ‘That bright red colour did not change.’ (Destructione de Troya, 7, p. 100. 17)
- d. la vattaglia plu duramente **se** **refrescava**.  
*the battle more harshly RFL took up*  
 ‘The battle took up again more cruelly.’ (Destructione de Troya, 15, p. 159. 36)
- (42) a. honore e salute ve **se** **accresca**.  
*honour and health there RFL grows*  
 ‘May your honour and health increase.’ (Destructione de Troya, 13, p. 135. 3)

- b. quattro volte **si varia**.  
*four times RFL varies*  
 ‘It changes four times.’

(*Regimen Sanitatis*, p. 565. 70)

- (43) a. colla schiuma che getta lo mare quando **frange**. ([±se])  
*with-the foam that throws the sea when breaks*  
 ‘With the foam that is thrown up by the sea when it breaks.’

(*Libro de la Destructione de Troya*, 34, p. 300. 22)

- b. la preta perde lo colore e tutta **se frange** in molte pieze.  
*the stone loses the colour and all RFL breaks in many pieces*  
 ‘The stone loses its colour and breaks up into many pieces.’

(*Libro de la Destructione de Troya*, 3, p. 66. 9)

- (44) a. iamay la nave non **romperria** in mare.  
*never the ship not would-break at sea*  
 ‘The ship would never break at sea.’

(*Destructione de Troya*, 7, p. 99. 4)

- b. **rompevanose** le lanze.  
*broke-RFL the spears*  
 ‘The spears broke into pieces.’

(*Destructione de Troya*, 15, p. 163. 16)

- (45) a. La vattaglya **aspriava** fortemente.  
*the battle intensified strongly*  
 ‘The battle became much more intense.’

(*Destructione de Troya*, 13, p. 133. 16)

- b. la vattaglya plu **se aspriava**.  
*the battle more RFL intensified*  
 ‘The battle became more intense.’

(*Destructione de Troya*, 14, p. 143. 14)

As shown in (42)–(45), there is no difference in meaning between the patterns with and without *se*. The low degree of alternation between the two strategies signals a more advanced stage in the change leading to the use of the reflexive morpheme *se* with all telic verbs/predicates, regardless of their different subtypes (e.g. whether achievements, gradual completion verbs, etc.), as still testified in contemporary Neapolitan (see Ledgeway 2009 and references therein).

In compound tenses there obtains a different picture: the reflexive hardly ever occurs, and is confined to (some) inherently telic verbs (e.g. *spe(c)zare* ‘crack’, *fenire* ‘finish’), often with the auxiliary HAVE, as in (46a, b) (see also Ledgeway 2009: 608–10):

- (46) a. che la soa lanza **se avesse spezata** in trunco.  
*that the his spear RFL had broken at base*  
 ‘That his spear had broken at its base.’

(*Destructione de Troya*, 16, p. 169. 21)

- b. pareva ... che lo mundo **se avesse voluto finire** ad acqua un'altra  
*looked ... that the world RFL had wanted to-finish to one more time*  
 volta.  
*water*

‘It looked as if the world wanted to end up under water again.’

(*Destructione de Troya*, 18, p. 176. 35)

- c. per dubitazione de qualeche remore **se fosse sollevato**.  
*for doubt of whatever turmoil RFL was raised*  
 ‘In case a turmoil had arisen.’ (Cronaca 123r. 19)

Most typically, in compound tenses the non-reflexive form is attested, as in (47), at times with ambiguity of interpretation of a pattern between an active (anticausative), passive and result state (i.e. copular) meaning, according to the verb and the context. Thus, in (47) the pattern *llo fuoco fosse allumato* can have a (resultative) passive interpretation ‘the fire had been ignited’, an anticausative reading ‘the fire had ignited’ as well as a copular function, with the past participle *allumato* ‘ignited’ having an adjectival function, denoting a result state ‘the fire was ignited.’ The ambiguity of interpretation in fourteenth/fifteenth-century texts is only rarely resolved by the occurrence of the reflexive morpheme *se*, as in (46c), that gives the pattern a clear anticausative function, with a perfective-resultative reading.

- (47) quando para a lloro che llo fuoco **fosse allumato**.  
*when seemed to them that the fire was ignited*  
 ‘When the fire seemed to have ignited/have been ignited/be ignited.’  
 (*Destructione de Troya*, 30, p. 252. 35)

Most typically, in fact, the pattern occurs without *se*, and only the wider context allows one to detect the eventive (either active intransitive-anticausative or passive) or result state, i.e., copular interpretation of the sequence BE+PP, with the past participle denoting a result state, as shown in (47). In (48), on the other hand, the occurrence of the quantificational adverb *multo* ‘a lot’ before the past participle seems to point to its adjectival function, that is, to the copular interpretation of the sequence BE+PP, ‘the battle was harsher’, with the degree adverbial modifying the past participle, and therefore occurring before it. An anticausative interpretation (‘the battle had become harsher’), however, does not seem to be completely excluded:

- (48) la vattaglia **era multo aspriata** intru lloro.  
*the battle was much become-harsh among them*  
 ‘The battle among them had become harsher/the battle between them was harsher.’  
 (*Destructione de Troya*, 11, p. 123. 16–17)

Thus, in Old Neapolitan the reflexive strategy does not alternate freely with the non-reflexive form, but it is the main/only strategy (depending on the texts) with achievements and accomplishments (see Table 4). In compound tenses the reflexive occurs rarely, and in some texts it is attested only with the auxiliary HAVE. So the Neapolitan data give further evidence for the different paths of development of *se* as an anticausative strategy in simplex and compound tenses. More specifically, whereas in simplex tenses the (reflexive) morpheme *se* narrows down its original (lexical) domains of occurrence, showing the tendency to become fixed with telic verbs, in compound tenses *se* as an anticausative strategy is gradually introduced into the sequence BE/HAVE+ PP, starting from telic verbs/predicates, thereby disambiguating the patterns and coming to interact with other changes taking place in the transitivity domain, such as the spread of HAVE as the only perfective auxiliary in Old Neapolitan (Cennamo 2002; 2008; Ledgeway 2003; 2009: 591–622).

Table 4. Anticausative strategies and their distribution in Old Neapolitan

Strategy	Verb class	Simplex tenses	Compound tenses (BE/have)
+ <i>se</i> (only/mainly)	(most) achievements, accomplishments	+	+ (rare)
± <i>se</i> (= free alternation)	(some) achievements, accomplishments	+	–
– <i>se</i>	activities	+	–

#### 4.3. Constraints on the distribution of the anticausative strategies

The scrutiny of some thirteenth–fifteenth-century Florentine and Neapolitan texts shows that the apparently free alternation – albeit with a different incidence – between the two strategies for anticausatives, the reflexive morpheme *si/se* and the active intransitive morphology, is instead structured, and reflects a change in progress, the emergence of aspectual features in determining the occurrence of the reflexive as the main/only strategy with some aspectual classes of verbs, according to the text(s) and the vernacular.

In *simplex tenses* in both vernaculars verbs lexically encoding a final point/result state (i.e. achievements and accomplishments) tend to occur in the reflexive form. Old Neapolitan, however, instantiates a more advanced stage in the fixing of the reflexive morpheme with telic verbs, while Old Florentine represents an earlier phase, with fluctuation between the two strategies and obligatoriness of *si* only with some telic, punctual verbs (e.g. achievements such as *spezzare* ‘crack’), and otherwise generally showing free alternation with the non-reflexive form, with both achievements and accomplishments.

In *compound tenses* the pattern without the reflexive is more frequent in both varieties, a fact that reflects the different paths of development of the reflexive strategy in these domains (see also the discussion in section 4.5). There are some examples of *si/se*, but only with achievements/accomplishments, that is, with verbs which lexicalize a final state (e.g. *spe(c)zare* ‘crack’, *fenere* ‘finish’ in Old Neapolitan, *rompere* ‘break’, *ampliare* ‘widen’, *aprire* ‘open’, *accendere* ‘ignite’, *mutare* ‘change’, in Old Florentine).

The study of early Italian vernaculars from different areas reveals, therefore, a clearly perceivable tendency for the reflexive morpheme *si/se* to occur with inherently telic, punctual verbs in both simplex and compound tenses, as well as the lack of *si/se* with some gradual completion verbs and generally with verbs which do not lexicalize a final point/result state (e.g. *scurare* ‘become dark’, *arrossare* ‘turn red’) in compound tenses. This can be interpreted as reflecting the gradual establishment of the reflexive as the main/only anticausative strategy with some aspectual classes of verbs, namely those which lexically encode a final point/result state. This is so both in simplex and compound tenses, although as the result of two different paths. In simplex tenses, in fact, the reflexive gradually narrows down its range of occurrences, with fluctuation between the reflexive ~ non-reflexive strategy becoming restricted to verbs of a lower degree of telicity as well as activities and states. In compound tenses, instead, *si/se* is gradually penetrating into the anticausative domain, starting from telic verbs. This picture anticipates the contemporary Italian and Neapolitan situation, where telic predicates obligatorily take *si/se* in anticausative structures (see section 3 and Ledgeway 2009 for Neapolitan).

*Si/se*, however, do not appear to have become markers of telicity yet, that is, they do not encode a final point/result or target state yet. This is signalled by the free alternation between the reflexive/non-reflexive forms with verbs which allow both an activity/processual reading and a result interpretation, such as *cuocere* ‘cook’, *gelare* ‘freeze’, *ardere* ‘burn’, with which the presence of *si/se* does not signal the completion of the process.

#### 4.4. Anticausatives and voice in Old Italian

The rise of aspectual notions such as telicity in determining the occurrence of *si/se* or the preference for this strategy in anticausative patterns is to be viewed in the light of a wider phenomenon, the reconstitution of voice – with the extensive use of the reflexive in all transitivity domains (Cennamo 1998; 1999) – and the reorganization of the tense-aspect system in early Italo-Romance, following the temporary loss of the grammatical dimension of voice in Late Latin, with which this change comes to interact (Ambrosini 1960/1961, Brambilla Ageno 1964, Cennamo 2002, 2003, 2001a).

As a result of the restructuring of voice and its related tense-aspectual distinctions in Late Latin (on which see Cennamo 1998; 2005; 2008 and further references therein), in fact, the early Italian vernaculars – albeit with a different incidence and with regional/areal differences – are characterized by three morphosyntactic features testifying to the gradual reshaping of the grammatical dimension of voice in Old Italian and already partially illustrated in sections 4.1–4.3 (Ambrosini 1960/1961, Brambilla Ageno 1964: 177–247, Cennamo 2002: 206–11, Ledgeway 2009 for Old Neapolitan):

1. the frequent lack of the reflexive morpheme *se/si* in compound tenses with pronominal patterns, namely, patterns occurring with the reflexive morpheme (e.g. with endoreflexive/agentive anticausative, anticausative, pleonastic and inherent reflexives). Thus, as discussed in sections 4.1–4.3, the sequence *è rotto* ‘is broken’, out of context, can have an anticausative interpretation, corresponding to the reflexive anticausative form *si è rotto* (RFL is broken) ‘it broke’ (anticausative) and the pattern *è mosso* ‘is moved’ can be interpreted as *si è mosso* (RFL is moved) ‘He moved’ (endoreflexive/agentive anticausative). Similarly, the form *era fuggito* (was run away) ‘He ran away’ can alternate with *si era fuggito* (RFL was run away) (pleonastic reflexive) and *era pentito* (was repented) ‘He had repented’ can equate *si era pentito* (RFL was repented) ‘He repented’ (inherent reflexive), with overt expression of the reflexive morpheme;
2. the use of the past perfect (and more rarely also the present perfect, alongside the double compound forms with unaccusatives in Old Neapolitan, with attestations from fifteenth– century texts) (Ledgeway 1997/1999; 2009: 596–600) to replace the simple past in order to underline the terminal point of an eventuality (Ambrosini 1960/1961: 37) with all verbs (intransitive, reflexive, transitive). Therefore, a pattern such as *fu sanato* (was healed) ‘He/it healed’ could replace (*si*) *sanò* (RFL healed) ‘He/it healed’, *fu giunto* (lit. was arrived)/*è stato giunto* (lit. is been arrived) could equate to *giunse* ‘He/it arrived’, and *ebbe promesso* (lit. had promised) often could substitute *promise* ‘He/she promised’, etc.;
3. the ambiguity of the sequence BE + PP in the passive function, between a dynamic-eventive, a resultative-stative and an adjectival interpretation with telic verbs and between a resultative-stative and an adjectival interpretation with atelic ones. Thus, a pattern such as *è rotto* (lit. is broken) can equate to *viene rotto* (lit. comes broken) ‘It gets broken’/*è stato rotto* (lit. is been broken) ‘It has been broken’, as well as *è rotto* ‘It is broken.’ A pattern with an atelic verb such as *amare* ‘love’, as in *è amato* (lit. is loved), can be ambiguous instead between a resultative-stative (*è stato amato* ‘He has been loved’) and an adjectival interpretation (‘He is loved’) (Brambilla Ageno 1964: 186–99; Cennamo 2003; Ledgeway 2009: 599 for Old Neapolitan).

Therefore, a pattern such as *è rotto* out of context can be interpreted as referring both to a past event (*si ruppe/ruppe* ‘it broke’), and to the current relevance of a past event (*si è rotto* ‘it has broken’), with the reflexive morpheme coming to differentiate the perfective, resultative



active reading (*si è rotto* ‘it has broken’) from a resultative passive one (*è stato rotto* ‘it has been broken’).

#### 4.5. Nature and function of anticausative *se/si*

The data investigated, hence, support the hypothesis that the main and original function of the reflexive in the anticausative alternation is to signal the suppression of the Actor. Its aspectual meaning (whereby it comes to mark telicity), is a later development in the early vernaculars, with varying degrees of attestation, depending on the variety. Indeed, the diachronic investigation casts doubts on the non-anticausative status of non-reflexive uses of these verbs (Bentley 2006: 131 and section 3.2). In point of fact both strategies show free alternation in simplex tenses and the non-reflexive form appears to be the only anticausative strategy used in compound tenses with some aspectual classes.

### 5. CONCLUSIONS

The investigation of the anticausative alternation in two early Italian vernaculars reveals a change in progress – albeit at two different stages in the two varieties, with Old Neapolitan at a more advanced stage than Old Florentine in this respect – the gradual gaining ground of aspectual notions such as the inherent telicity of the verb in determining either the obligatory occurrence of the reflexive pattern or the preference for this strategy to mark anticausatives.

In point of fact, with telic verbs (i.e. achievements and accomplishments) the reflexive gradually comes to be fixed in the anticausative function, according to the vernacular, both in simplex and compound tenses. This change is part and parcel of the recasting of the voice system and of tense-aspectual distinctions in Old Italian, whereby the presence of *si/se* comes to disambiguate the eventive, anticausative function of the BE+PP sequence from its passive and copular interpretations, interacting, in Old Neapolitan, with the gradual gaining ground of HAVE as the only perfective auxiliary.

The diachronic data show that the original function of the reflexive in the anticausative alternation is to signal the suppression of the Actor. Its aspectual meaning is a subsequent development, as shown by the tendency for *si/se* to be strongly associated, and obligatory in some cases, with verbs lexically encoding a terminal point. The reflexive, however, is not attested yet as a marker of a telicity, since no difference is attested, in either variety investigated, between *gelare/si* ‘freeze’, *cuocere/si* ‘cook’, *aspriare/si* ‘become harsher’), unlike in contemporary Italian and Neapolitan, where the distinction also correlates with a different auxiliary in compound tenses.

The data also point to the need to further investigate the status of the non-reflexive anticausative form, in the light of the alternation occurring between the reflexive/non-reflexive variants in different aspectual classes. Indeed, the meaning components lexicalized in the verb appear to play a key role in the morphological encoding and distribution of anticausative strategies in some early Italian vernaculars. Probably alternative, more fine-grained classifications than the traditional four-way Vendler/Dowty classification of predicates might help to uncover further, more subtle distinctions and regularities, an issue that we leave for further study.

The diachronic study of anticausativization in Italian, therefore, throws light onto the theoretically controversial status of the reflexive morpheme in Italian anticausatives, showing that the hypotheses concerning the nature and function of *si/se* in Italian – whether a marker of the suppression of the Actor or a marker of telicity (e.g. completion of the event) – instantiate two different stages in the reconstitution of the domain of transitivity in early

Italian, with a clear difference between simplex and compound tenses as a result of their different paths of development in the passage to Romance.

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