

MICROVARIATION IN THE OLD ITALO-ROMANCE LEFT PERIPHERY:
THE CASE OF SI

Sam Wolfe, St Catherine's College, University of Oxford
sam.wolfe@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk

1. INTRODUCTION

- Italy today - rich linguistic diversity within a relatively small geographical area (see among very many others (Sorrento 1950; Rohlf's 1969; Benincà 1994; Maiden 1994; Parry & Maiden 1997; Poletto 2000; Poletto 2002; Kayne 2000; Kayne 2005; Ledgeway 2000; Ledgeway 2016a; Ledgeway 2016b; Damonte 2005; Damonte 2010; D'Alessandro, Ledgeway & Roberts 2010; Cruschina 2012; Tortora 2013; Benincà, Ledgeway & Vincent 2014; Schifano 2015; Schifano 2018).
- Profound impact on formal theorising in the domain of parametric theory (cf. in particular Kayne 2000; Kayne 2005; Kayne 2010; Kayne 2019, D'Alessandro, Ledgeway, and Roberts 2010, chap. 1, and Roberts 2019: chap. 1) and important methodological consequences in the collection and interpretation of dialectal microvariation (Poletto & Benincà 2007; Garzonio & Poletto 2018).
- Recent developments – fine-grained distinctions between Old Italo-Romance varieties can shed light on formal debates in the synchronic and historical-diachronic domains
 - Emergence of digitised textual editions and searchable corpora, such as the Opera del Vocabolario Italiano (OVI) database.
- Not all of this research is new:
 - Vanelli et al.'s (1986) study of the null-subject syntax of Old Italo-Romance is the first significant formal work in the clausal domain.
 - Important subsequent works:
 - Important differences in the null-subject system (Benincà 1983; Poletto 2020; Cognola & Walkden Forthcoming)
 - Verb-subject inversion (Lombardi & Middleton 2004: 567–574; Parry 2010; Parry 2013; Ciconte 2015)
 - Emergence of subject pronouns and clitics (Vanelli 1987; Poletto 1995; Roberts 2014; Vai 2014; Vai 2017)
 - Dual complementiser system (Ledgeway 2005; Ledgeway & Lombardi 2014; Munaro 2015; Colasanti 2017)
 - Syntax-pragmatics mapping (Vanelli 1986; Vanelli 1998; Cruschina 2011)
 - VSO/V2 syntax of Old Italo-Romance varieties (Benincà 1983; Benincà 1995; Ledgeway 2007; Lombardi 2007; Benincà & Poletto 2010; Poletto 2014; Wolfe 2015).
 - Important points of continuity between the Old Italo-Romance varieties (Benincà 2004; Benincà 2006; Benincà 2013) *but* growing body of evidence renders labels such as 'Old Italo-Romance syntax' increasingly unsustainable.
- Importance of the left periphery
 - Many of these case-studies concern left-peripheral syntax.
 - Since Rizzi (1997), Italo-Romance research has drawn on and contributed to cartographic models of the CP.
 - Synthesis and analysis in Ledgeway (2010a) drawing in particular on Benincà & Poletto (2004):

(1) [_{Frame} HT, Adv_{Scene} Setting [_{Force} Complementizer₁ [_{Topic} CILD, Aboutness Topic [_{Focus} FocusContrastive, QuantifierIndefinite, FocusInformation [_{Fin} Complementizer₂ [_{TP} . . .]]]]]]]

- Important theoretical consequence – specific classes of XPs or functional heads once conceived of as occupying a single position can occupy a variety of positions:
 - Ledgeway (2005) – finite complementisers in Italo-Romance varieties can be merged in a structurally higher position that where they are base-generated (cf. also Manzini & Savoia 2003; 2010 and Damonte 2010 amongst many others)
 - Internally merged topics and foci may target a rich field of positions in the Topic-Focus field depending on syntactic and pragmatic status (Quer 2002; Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl 2007; Cruschina 2012)
 - Increasing body of evidence that declarative verb movement may target a range of head positions in the C-domain (Poletto 2000, 2002; Wolfe 2016; Greco & Haegeman 2020).
 - This insight may shed light on the Old Italo-Romance particle *si*
- si* is derived from Latin *SIC* 'thus, so, like this' and is found across a range of early Romance texts in both Italo-Romance and Gallo-Romance:
 - (2) a. E poi **si** n' andò in Francia...
and then *si* cl go.3SG in France
'and then he went to France...' (Old Florentine, Rettorica 7)
 - b. che mo' de presente **si** fo morto in la
that now of present *si* be.3SG.PST die.PTCP in the
terra d'Urbiçano uno lo quale...
land of-Urbiçano one the which
'that now one who [...] died in the land of Urbiçano' (Old Bolognese, Documenti 62)
 - c. Poy che yo scrissi q(ue)sta lectera, **si**
after that I write.1SG.PST this letter *si*
pagay p(er) mano
pay.1SG.PST by hand
'After I wrote this letter, I paid by hand...' (Old Campidanese, Lettere 123)
- Discussed by a range of linguists and philologists throughout the 20th century (Sorrento 1950: 25–91; Schiaffini 1954: 283–297; Rohlf's 1969: 760), but there is still no uniformly accepted analysis of its function or distribution.
- Almost all linguists working on *si* in Italo-Romance or elsewhere have acknowledged that its distribution is linked to other aspects of left-peripheral syntax (Benincà 1995; Ferraresi & Goldbach 2002; Poletto 2005; Ledgeway 2008; Wolfe 2018a; Wolfe 2020a; Meklenborg 2020a; Meklenborg 2020b).
- In this talk I'll suggest that that the articulated mapping of the left periphery as in (1) can shed new light on *si*'s function and distribution other aspects of the clausal syntax of the Old Italo-Romance varieties.
- Empirical focus today: Old Sicilian, Old Neapolitan, Old Venetian, and Old Piedmontese.

2. (VERY BRIEF) BACKGROUND

- SI has amassed a truly enormous literature, but certain analyses are particularly prominent.
- Lots of traditional scholars have focussed in particular on SI's role after an initial clause such as (2c) where it is analysed as akin to a resumptive pronoun (Schiaffini 1954: 283–97; Rohlf 1969: 760; Caprio 2010).
 - Whilst cases like these account for some of the data (see Tables 1-4 below), it is arguably better to have an account which can also capture the data where SI occurs with an initial clause alongside its other uses, which include its ability to stand in initial position (3).
 - Recent work has improved our understanding of the syntax of resumptives which occur after constituents classically considered 'clause-external' (De Clercq & Haegeman 2018; Meklenborg 2020a), so a simple classification of SI as an element occurring after initial clauses should not be considered in any way a final analysis.

(3) **Si** viti molte fontane de diversi colori
 si see.1SG.PST many fountains of diverse colours
 'I saw many fountains of different colours' (Old Venetian, Brendano 232)

- Prominent recent analysis – SI is a phrasal category which can satisfy the V2 constraint, assumed to be operative in all varieties considered here.
- Benincà (2004: sec. 5.3) and Poletto (2005; 2014: 27–33) suggest that SI occupies a position within the Focus layer.
 - Ledgeway (2008: 447): location in Focus jars with the frequent claim that SI has a role in encoding Topic-continuity (see also Fleischman 1990 and Wolfe 2018a on Old French).
 - This proposal would entail SI never co-occurring with focal XPs.
 - Ledgeway (2008: 449–50) shows this is incorrect for Old Neapolitan
 - Wolfe (2018a: 350–54) shows that the prediction also does not hold for Early Old French.
 - Summary – link between SI and V2 is attractive as SI is lost from the Old Romance varieties at the same time as V2 but its location in the Focus layer is a theoretical and empirical problem.
- A third analysis – Ledgeway (2008) on the basis of Old Neapolitan and also Meklenborg (2020b) for Old French – SI is not a phrasal category satisfying the part of the V2 constraint requiring movement or merger of a constituent in the left periphery but a head and an alternative to V-to-Fin.
 - True that SI shows many of the properties of a highly grammaticalised element and would thus be a classic case of Spec-to-Head reanalysis (Van Gelderen 2008; Van Gelderen 2009a; Van Gelderen 2009b).
 - But there is an issue – verb-subject inversion structures standardly analysed as reflexes of V-to-C movement (4). Although some of postverbal subjects could feasibly be in a vP-internal position there is a growing body of evidence that a postverbal Spec-TP position was active in a wide range of early Romance varieties, meaning that the verb has to have been merged in a C-related Head (Salvesen & Bech 2014; Wolfe 2018b: 27–8; Wolfe 2020b).

(4) Et intandu **si** incumminzau la bactaglia
 and then SI begin.3SG.PST the battle
 'And then the battle begun' (Old Sicilian, Eneas VII, 137)

3. THE OLD ITALO-ROMANCE DATA

3.1. Old Neapolitan

- Different task for Old Neapolitan than for the three other varieties examined here.
- Ledgeway (2008; 2009) has already analysed the distribution of SI, so its inclusion here is so that a sample of the Neapolitan data can be analysed in the same way as that for the other varieties included.
- 200 SI-clauses were extracted from the OVI database from the 14th-century prose text, the *Libro de la destructione de Troya* (henceforth *Troya*). See Table 1:

Table 1. SI in Old Neapolitan

	Matrix		Embedded	
SI-Initial	0	0%	1	2.8%
ET + SI	17	10.4%	0	0%
Subject	28	17.1%	19	52.8%
DP Object	4	2.4%	2	5.6%
Prepositional Phrase	18	11%	10	27.8%
Adverb	11	6.7%	0	0%
Adverbial Phrase	10	6.1%	3	8.3%
Clause	13	7.9%	0	0%
SI Third or More	63	38.4%	1	2.8%
Total	164	100%	36	100%

- By far the most frequent pattern for SI is to be preceded by two or more constituents (5), offering evidence for the rich left-peripheral structure assumed for Old Neapolitan by Ledgeway (2007; 2008; 2009).
- The second most frequent context for matrix SI is to be preceded by an initial subject as in (6). This is important – co-occurrence of SI with a subject DP is relatively rare in the well-studied (later) Old French system (Fleischman 1991; Wolfe 2018a: 345).

(5) a. In chilli tempi tucto lo puopulo de Thesalia, per una
 in those times all the people of Thesalia by a
 crudele infirmitate che a lloro sopervenne, **si**
 cruel illness that to them arrive.3SG.PST SI
 morio
 die.3SG.PST

'In those times all the people of Thesalia died through a cruel illness that befell them' (Troya 49)

b. Ancora chisto Hercules, secundo che dice la ,
 still this Hercules according what say.3SG the
 ystoria e se èy convenevole a credere, in
 history and REFL.CL be.3SG plausible to believe.INF in
 tiempo che vippe **si** se nde andao ...
 time that live.3SG.PST SI REFL.CL CL go.3SG.PST

‘Still Hercules, according to what the history says and what is credible, in the time that he lived, went...’ (Troia 41)

(6) Questa citate **si** era multo bellessema
 this city **SI** be.3SG.PST very beautiful
 ‘This city was very beautiful’ (Troia 55)

- If *SI* typically encodes Topic-continuity (Benincà 1995: 333; Salvi 2002: 378) or same-subject reference (Fleischman 1991), we might expect it to occur exclusively with null or highly topical subjects. Is this the case?
- As noted by Ledgeway (2008: 443–444), we find cases where a focal subject, which categorically does not encode old information, precedes *SI* in the corpus:

(7) E multi altri nobili homini de lo mundo **si** nce so'
 and many other noblemen of the world **SI** CL be.3PL
 state venute
 be.PTCP come.PTCP
 ‘And many other noblemen of the world had come...’ (Troia 59)

- We also find that other argumental XPs such as locative PPs (8) and DP objects (9, 10) can precede *SI*.
 - Object + *SI* orders are significant as this pattern is heavily restricted in Old French (Marchello-Nizia 1985: 158).
 - Compare (8) which is already active in the discourse with focal (9, 10, where both DPs refer to constituents not previously mentioned in the text.

(8) Et in chesta insula de Colcos **si** regnava uno re che
 and in this island of Colcos **SI** reign.3SG.PST a king that
 se clamava Oetis
 REFL.CL call.3SG.PST Oetis
 ‘And a King named Oetis ruled reigned in this island of Colcos’ (Troia 50)

(9) et onne thesauro e l'altra cose **si** nde
 and all treasure and the-other things **SI** PART.CL
 levaro
 take.3PL.PST
 ‘and they took all the treasure and other things’ (Troia 102)

(10) e terrimoti orribile **si** faceva
 and earthquakes horrible **SI** make.3SG.PST
 ‘and she could bring about terrible earthquakes’ (Troia 56)

- A highly productive pattern across many Medieval Romance varieties is the co-occurrence of a clause or other ‘clause-external’ element before *SI*.
- Here we see Old Neapolitan *SI*’s occurrence with an initial clause as well as with scene-setting adverbials (11):

(11) a. E, voltandose ad Hector, **si** le
 and turn.PROG.REFL.CL to Hector **SI** him.CL
 diceva
 say.3SG.PST
 ‘And turning to Hector, he said to him...’ (Troia 88)
 b. allora **si** nce regnava questo re Laumedonta

then **SI** PART.CL reign.3SG.PST this king Laumedonta
 ‘Then this King Laumedonta reigned’ (Troia 54)

- In contrast to other Medieval Romance varieties where *SI* is either absent or heavily restricted in embedded contexts (Marchello-Nizia 1985: 15; Lemieux & Dupuis 1995: 96), embedded *SI* accounts for 18% of the sample (see also the data in Ledgeway 2008: sec. 4.1.2.3):

(12) la quale lo re Priamo **si** la concesse
 the which the king Priam **SI** it concede.3SG.PST
 ‘...which King Priam agreed to’ (Troia 193)

3.2. Old Sicilian

- Old Sicilian – 200 *SI*-clauses extracted from the *Libru de lu dialogu di sanctu Gregoriu* (henceforth *Gregoriu*), also a 14th-century prose text.
 - This text has recently been analysed as showing the V2 property (Wolfe 2015; Wolfe 2018b: chap. 3).
- The main findings on the distribution of matrix *SI* appearing in Wolfe (forthcoming) are in Table 2:

Table 2. *SI* in Old Sicilian

	Matrix	
<i>SI</i> -Initial	0	0%
ET + <i>SI</i>	1	0.5%
Subject	72	36%
DP Object	5	2.5%
Prepositional Phrase	21	10.5%
Adverb	7	3.5%
Adverbial Phrase	0	0%
Clause	9	4.5%
<i>SI</i> Third or More	85	42.5%
Total	200	100%

- There is a degree of continuity with Old Neapolitan:
 - Orders where *SI* is preceded by multiple left-peripheral constituents are the dominant pattern as in Old Neapolitan:

(13) a. et pir li lacrimi soy, Deu **si** avj...
 and through the tears his God **SI** have.3SG
 ‘And through his tears, God has...’ (Gregoriu 35)
 b. Lo abbate, audendo ço, **si** llo salutao...
 the abbot hear.PROG this **SI** CL greet.3SG.PST
 ‘Hearing this, the abbot greeted him...’ (Gregoriu 15)

- Like Old Neapolitan but unlike Old French, SUBJECT + *SI* orders are a fully productive pattern in the corpus.
 - But **in contrast** to Old Neapolitan, all 72 subjects are already discourse-ACTIVE in the sense of Lambrecht (1994).

- See (14) for examples with a demonstrative determiner or a pronominal subject, which is typical of the corpus:

(14) a. chisto monaco **si** trovaò uno grande serpente...
 this monk SI find.3SG.PST a big snake
 Lo serpente **si** llo secutao
 the snake SI CL follow.3SG.PST
 ‘This monk found a great snake.... The snake followed him’ (Gregoriu 11)
 b. et illu **si** prise lu cavallu
 and he SI take.3SG.PST the horse
 ‘And he took the horse’ (Gregoriu 31)

- Five examples show direct objects preceding *si*, but these constituents appear topical rather than focal and refer to an entity already mentioned in the preceding portion of text (15).
- Conclusion – preverbal Information Focus is licensed in Old Sicilian (Cruschina 2011; Wolfe 2018b: chap. 3) but is incompatible with *si*.

(15) a. et chesta tentacione **si** lo fice
 and this temptation SI CL do.3SG.PST
 And this (type of) temptation happened...’ (Gregoriu 12)
 b. e kista parte **si** tene tuctu
 and this part si keep.3SG.PST all
 ‘and all (...) kept this part...’ (Gregoriu 77)

- Final point – clauses or scene-setting adverbials, which lexicalise Benincà & Poletto’s (2004) Frame-field can also precede *si*, but to a limited extent (16/200 cases of *si*):

(16) a. et partendusj da Ruma, **si** vinne ad...
 and leave.PROG=REFL.CL of Rome SI come.3SG.PST to
 ‘And leaving Rome, he came to...’ (Gregoriu 37)
 b. Et tando **si** disse lo fratre allo serpente
 and then si say.3SG.PST the brother-to-the serpent
 ‘and then the brother [monk] said to the serpent...’ (Gregoriu 12)

- We saw above that in Old Neapolitan embedding of *si* is fully productive (18% of the data collected).
- A search of the OVI database for the particle *si* in *Gregoriu* reveals only two instances in the first 200 clauses analysed (cf. 17).
 - This suggests that Old Sicilian is more like Old French than Old Neapolitan.
 - In Old French *si* is rarely embedded in certain, typically early, texts and entirely absent in others (Marchello-Nizia 1985: 15; Lemieux & Dupuis 1995: 96)

(17) ...lu qualj **si** succexi a sanctu Benedictu in lu
 the which SI succeed.3SG.PST to Saint Benedict in the
 regimentu de lu monasteriu
 regime of the monastery
 ‘Who succeeded Saint Benedict in the running of the monastery’ (Gregoriu 37)

3.3. Old Venetian

- Since Benincà’s (1983) work on the *Lio Mazor* text, Venetian data have been used extensively in studies of Old Italo-Romance syntax (Vanelli 1987; Benincà 1995; Benincà 2004; Benincà 2006; Wolfe 2018b: chap. 3; Poletto Forthcoming; Poletto and Wolfe forthcoming).
- For this reason, the corpus here are extracted from the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani* (henceforth *Brendano*) which has not typically been discussed in the literature.
 - In the whole text there are 127 instances of *si* and their distribution is shown in Table 3:

Table 3. *Si* in Old Venetian

	Matrix		Embedded	
SI-Initial	15	12.3%	0	0%
ET + SI	27	22.1%	0	0%
Subject	29	23.8%	4	80%
DP Object	0	0%	0	0%
Prepositional Phrase	0	0%	1	20%
Adverb	6	4.9%	0	0%
Adverbial Phrase	5	4.1%	0	0%
Clause	17	13.9%	0	0%
SI Third or More	23	18.9%	0	0%
Total	122	100%	5	100%

- The dominant Old Venetian pattern is for *si* to be preceded by a subject, which we saw with a lesser frequency in Neapolitan and Sicilian.
 - These SUBJECT + *si* orders show subjects which are either pronominal (18), discourse-OLD (19), or encode an entity we can analyse as forming part of the common knowledge of the speaker-hearer (20) (cf. Ariel 1988).
 - No cases are found with initial objects (in contrast to Sicilian and Neapolitan).

(18) Et clo **si** li respose in questo muodo
 and he SI CL respond.3SG.PST in this way

‘And he respond to him in this way’ (Brendano 190)

(19) Questa osiela **si** aveva...
 this bird SI have.3SG.PST
 ‘This bird had...’ (Brendano 136)

(20) E Dio **si** dise
 and God SI say.3SG.PST
 ‘And God said’ (Brendano 224)

- In contrast to Old Neapolitan, where *si*-initial clauses are not generally found, and Old Sicilian where both *si*-initial clauses and ET + *si* clauses are (near)-absent, these configurations make up nearly a third of occurrences of *si*:

(21) **Si** viti molte fontane de diversi colori
 SI see.1SG.PST many fountains of diverse colours

‘I saw many fountains of different colours’ (Brendano 232)

(22) e **si** montà su la so nave con li suo’
 and SI climb.3SG.PST in the his boat with the his
 frari

brothers

‘And he climbed into his boat with his brothers’ (Brendano 264)

- SI-third or greater cases make up a lesser proportion of the data than they do in either Old Neapolitan or Old Sicilian, but still constitute 18.9%:

(23) E como fo pasado li tre di, in ora
 and as be.3SG.PST pass.PTCP the three days in hour
 de meza terza **si** vene una osiela forte volando
 of mass third SI come.3SG.PST a bird strong fly.PROG
 ‘And as the three days had passed, at the time of the third mass, a bird came, flying hard..’ (Brendano 136)

- We also find a range of scene-setting elements such as clauses and adverbials, which can either be the sole constituent before SI (24) or precede (cf. 23 above):

(24) e como lo ave conplido de cantar la
 and as CL have.3SG.PST finish.PTCP of sing.INF the
 canzon, **si** parlà
 song si speak.3SG.PST
 ‘And once it had finished the song, it spoke...’ (Brendano 246)

- Embedded SI is licensed (25), but Table 4 suggests it is more restricted than in Old Neapolitan:

(25) e devé saver che uno agnolo de Dio, meraveioso da
 and should know.INF that a lamb of God marvellous to
 veder, **si** varda questa isola
 see.INF SI guard.3SG this island
 ‘And you should know that a lamb of God, marvellous to behold, guards this island’ (Brendano 44)

3.4. Old Piedmontese

- Table 4 shows all instances of SI in the *Sermoni Subalpini*, a 13th-century Piedmontese text (Parry 1998: 94–5; Delfuoco et al. 2005):

Table 4. SI in Old Piedmontese

	Matrix		Embedded	
SI-Initial	37	14.9%	0	0%
ET + SI	118	47.4%	0	0%
Subject	42	16.9%	6	60%
DP Object	0	0%	0	0%
Prepositional Phrase	1	0.4%	1	10%
Adverb	11	4.4%	0	0%
Adverbial Phrase	9	3.6%	0	0%
Clause	17	6.8%	3	30%
SI Third or More	14	5.6%	0	0%
Total	249	100%	10	100%

- The dominant pattern is for SI to occur in a clause introduced by the coordinator ET (26), in complementary distribution with an initial subject. We also find SI in co-occurrence with an initial subject (27) and in cases where it is in absolute initial position of the clause (28).

(26) a. E **si** lo temptè per vana gloria
 and SI CL tempt.3SG.PST through vain glory
 ‘And he tempted him through vain glory’ (Sermoni 276)
 b. Apres zo si ven una grant conpaigna d’angeil,
 after this si come.3SG.PST a great company of-angels
 e **si** comenceren a canter
 and SI begin.3PL.PST to sing.INF
 ‘After this a great company of angels came and they began to sing’ (Sermoni 273)
 (27) Aquesta passiu **si** est de la bestia
 this passion SI be.SG of the beast
 ‘This passion is beastly’ (Sermoni 265)
 (28) **Si** ven la bona femena que vos savez
 SI come.3SG.PST the good woman that you know.2PL
 ‘The good woman that you know came’ (Sermoni 225)

- We find a single instance of an initial subject constituting Information Focus (cf. the question-answer pair in 29).
- There are no cases of SI being preceded by an object DP, and a single case of SI preceded by an indirect-object PP.

(29) Or qual pera li trovarem sot lo pe?
 now what stone CL find.1PL.FUT under the foot
 Calcedoni, qui à pali color, **si** à tel
 Calcedoni which have.3SG pale colour si have.3SG such
 virtù que...
 virtue that
 ‘Now which stone do we find under his foot? Calcedoni, which has a pale colour and such virtue that...’ (Sermoni 248)

- Remaining data – scene-setting adverbials or clauses (30), cases where SI is third or more in the ordering (found across all the Italo-Romance texts considered in this talk) (31), although these represent the smallest proportion of any texts considered.

(30) a. Cum el of zo dit, **si** conduist lo
 when he have.3SG that say.PTCP SI lead.3SG.PST the
 rei ultra lo flum
 king beyond the river
 ‘When he said this, he took the king beyond the river’ (Sermoni 227)
 b. Or apres **si** dit que
 now after si say.3SG that
 ‘Soon afterwards he said that...’ (Sermoni 108)
 (31) Or quest bon hom, qui avia questi trei ami, **si**
 now this good man who have.3SG.PST these three men si
 era...

be.3SG.PST

‘Now this good man who had three friends, was...’ (Sermoni 238)

- Embedded SI is found, but only marginally like Old Sicilian and Old Venetian. Embedding accounts for 10/259 occurrences of SI within the text (3.9%):

(32) ki dit in Actibus Apostolorum que, quant nostre Seignor
 who say.3SG in acts apostles that when our Lord
 montò en cel, si veneren doi ioven homen vesti
 go-up.3SG.PST in sky si come.3PL.PST two young men dressed
 de drap blanc
 of cloth white
 ‘...who says that in Acts of the Apostles, when our Lord went up into the sky, two young men dressed in white cloth came...’ (Sermoni 240)

4. SI AND THE LEFT PERIPHERY

4.1. General descriptive points

- Given that these texts come from four distinct varieties of the Extreme South, Upper South, Northwest, and Northeast of the Italian Peninsula, it’s unsurprising that there is variation in the texts.
 - As mentioned in §1, there are two important points of background to this:
 - Increasing consensus that Old Italo-Romance varieties show various points of variation in their left-peripheral syntax, even within a particular region (see the contributions in Garzonio (ed.) forthcoming on the syntax of the Veneto in the medieval period).
 - Growing body of work suggesting that SI is definitely not a homogeneous entity (pace Benincà 1995, 2004; Fleischman 1990) either diachronically or across varieties (Wolfe 2018a, 2020a, forthcoming; Meklenborg 2020a, 2020b, forthcoming).
- Although we have to approach small-scale corpus work with a healthy degree of caution, some revealing generalisations emerge from the data presented so far which suggest that the data concerning SI are systematic points of variation.

4.2. Empirical generalizations

- Old Italo-Romance SI is readily compatible with left-peripheral verbal arguments to some degree.
 - All varieties show SI co-occurring with one or more of a preverbal subject, DP object, or selected PP object.
 - This sets Old Italo-Romance varieties apart from Later Old French (post-1180), where SI can only be preceded by an initial clause, scene-setting adverbial, or a Clitic Left Dislocation structure (Salvesen 2013; Wolfe 2018a).
 - Takeaway – SI’s interaction with lower Topic-Focus field projections is a point of variation (Benincà & Poletto 2004 and Poletto’s 2014 ‘operator layer’).
- From Tables 1-4 and the discussion in Section 3 we see that all varieties permit SI’s co-occurrence with clauses or scene-setting adverbials.

- A sub-class of initial clauses (Poletto 2002; Munaro 2010; Greco & Haegeman 2020) and scene-setting adverbials (Poletto 2000: 100; Öhl 2010; Ledgeway 2010a: 44–45) lexicalise Benincà & Poletto’s (2004) Frame field.
- Takeaway –SI can be preceded by constituents in this field universally across Medieval Romance in contrast to the lower portion of the C-layer.

• Further points of variation

- Orders where SI is third or more in the linear ordering are considerably more frequent in the two Southern Italian Dialects than in the Northern Italian Dialects.
 - Following Benincà (2004, 2006) and Wolfe (2018b), this may not be linked to the syntax of SI per se, but the fact that V3* orders are more frequent in Southern Italian Dialects in general.
- SI’s ability to be the sole constituent in a V2 clause.
 - Entirely absent in the matrix samples of Sicilian and Neapolitan texts
 - More frequent in the Venetian and Piedmontese texts (cf. also Poletto and Wolfe forthcoming).
- Embedded SI constitutes a far larger proportion of the data for Neapolitan than in the other three varieties (compare this with the exceptionality of embedded SI in the Old French literature, e.g. Marchello-Nizia 1983:Chapter 2).
- Syntax-pragmatics interface:
 - Topical subjects – pronominal and lexical – found in all the varieties we have considered.
 - Topical objects are only licensed in Neapolitan, Sicilian and Piedmontese; in the latter case only PP-objects.
 - Informationally focussed subjects are licensed in both Piedmontese and Neapolitan.
 - Informationally focussed objects are only found in Neapolitan, as already reported by Ledgeway (2008: 449–450).
 - This is schematised in Table 5, where we can develop an implicational hierarchy of the types of constituents that may co-occur with SI within a given system:

Table 5. Constituents Resumed by SI

Clause _{scene-Setting}	Frame		Topic		Focus	
	Adverbials _{Scene-Setting}	Topic _{subject}	Topic _{object}	Focus _{subject}	Focus _{object}	
Neapolitan	Neapolitan	Neapolitan	Neapolitan	Neapolitan	Neapolitan	
Piedmontese	Piedmontese	Piedmontese	Piedmontese	Piedmontese	Piedmontese	
Sicilian	Sicilian	Sicilian	Sicilian			
Venetian	Venetian	Venetian				

4.3. Towards a formal analysis (preliminary)

- Tempting to derive all the patterns in Table 5 from independent properties of the left periphery for each variety, but this probably isn’t the whole story.
 - For example, Old Piedmontese is shown in Wolfe (2018b: 44) to license informationally focussed direct objects in the *Sermoni Subalpini*, which we have seen do not co-occur with SI.
 - Old Sicilian, likewise, licenses informationally focussed subjects and objects (Cruschina 2011) but not with SI.

- Proposal: the constituents co-occurring with *SI* are not determined by whether projections in the Topic-Focus layer are activated in the languages in question, but rather the position in which *SI* is merged.
 - Old Italo-Romance – *SI* can either be merged in SpecFinP and preceded by constituents in the Frame, Topic, and Focus fields or in a low specifier position within the Topic-layer, where it is preceded by Topics and Foci.
 - In the latter case we would have to assume movement from SpecFinP to SpecTopP to avoid the generation of unattested *SI*-FOCUS-V orders.

(33) [_{Frame} Adv/Clause_{Scene Setting} [_{Force} [_{Topic} Topic_{Subject}, Topic_{Object}, **SI** [_{Focus} Focus_{Subject}, Focus_{Object} [_{Fin} **SI**₂ [_{Fin} V] [_{TP} . . .]]]]]]]

- In these texts there appears to be no Italo-Romance analogue to Later Old French system where *SI* can only be preceded by scene-setting clauses and adverbials and has grammaticalised upwards to SpecForceP (Wolfe 2018a; Wolfe 2020a).

(34) [_{Frame} Adv/Clause_{Scene Setting} [_{Force} **SI**_{LOF} [_{Force} V] [_{Topic} [_{Focus} [_{Fin} [_{TP} . . .]]]]]]]

- Old Neapolitan shows the most widespread distribution of embedded *SI* (cf. §3.1). Is this related to its first-merged position?
 - Looking at (33) it could be. Ledgeway (2005: 380–389) amongst others – Old Italo-Romance complementisers can be merged in several left-peripheral head positions (Force, Top(ic), Foc(us) and Fin).
 - Prediction: the lower *SI*'s position in the left periphery, the more likely it will be able to appear in an embedded clause. All things being equal, Old Neapolitan *SI*₂ could readily be embedded under all but a complementiser in Fin.
 - By contrast, outside of Old Italo-Romance we predict that Later Old French *SI* in SpecForceP is incompatible with embedding. With a small number of exceptions, this prediction also holds (Marchello-Nizia 1985: 15; Lemieux & Dupuis 1995: 96; Ferraresi & Goldbach 2002: 11, 2003: 113)
- But is the position of *SI* within the C-layer the *only* factor affecting its distribution?
- Holmberg (2020) – V2 can only be satisfied by internal merge.
 - ‘all the categories in the left periphery that satisfy V2, including various adverbs, particles, and operators, can alternatively be spelled out within IP, while no categories that occur in the left periphery and do not satisfy V2 are alternatively spelled out in IP (Holmberg 2020:41).
 - The particle *sà*, which shows certain similarities with *SI* is included in this analysis and reaches the V2 bottleneck via movement (Meklenborg 2020a).
 - However, Holmberg accepts that there are exceptions to this generalisation which raises an interesting question – could the move vs. merge distinction for V2-satisfaction be subject to crosslinguistic variation?
- Returning to *SI*, here is what we find in the data:
 - Old Neapolitan, Old Sicilian (SIDs) – *SI* not typically found in initial position.
 - Old Venetian, Old Piedmontese (NIDs) – *SI* found in initial position.

- Old French – *SI* found in initial position – a ‘northern’ Romance variety in the terms of Ledgeway (2012) and Zamboni (2000).
- Suggests that *SI* can satisfy the V2-related Edge Feature only in northern varieties but not in southern ones.
- Suppose that in Old Neapolitan and Old Sicilian V2 is – in line with Holmberg (2020) – only satisfied by an internally merged constituent.
 - It follows that *SI*, a base-generated particle, would not be able to satisfy V2 in the absence of another constituent in the left periphery.
 - This is precisely what we see in the data.
- In contrast, if, in the two Northern Old Italo-Romance varieties, V2 can also be satisfied by external merge (i.e. base-generation), *SI* is predicted to be able to occur in initial position in the absence of other constituents.
 - This is also what we find.
- One independent piece of evidence for this comes from the left-peripheral syntax of Italo-Romance varieties today.
 - Southern Italo-Romance – a wide variety of operations which target the Topic and Focus layer via internal merge, including various types of focus fronting an topicalization which can plausibly be analysed as internal merge (Cruschina 2006; Cruschina 2012: chap. 3; Mensching & Remberger 2010; Ledgeway 2010b)
 - Subject to internal microvariation, this is not the case in Northern Italo-Romance varieties –licensing of both Information and Contrastive Focus is restricted and the topics are plausibly analysed as base-generated (Paoli 2003; Paoli 2010).
 - This split is seen as a significant part of the North/South Italo-Romance divide in Ledgeway (Forthcoming). If the proposal here is correct, this split in the class of V2-satisfiers foreshadows the emergence of a merge vs. move split in Italo-Romance today.

5. CONCLUSION

- The distribution of *SI* across four early Italo-Romance vernaculars is far from uniform.
- This contributes to the growing body of evidence that medieval Italy was home to a comparable amount of microvariation to what we find in the syntactic domain today.
 - *But* widespread use of *SI* does constitute part of the bundle of features which are points of continuity across early Italo-Romance varieties (cf. Benincà 2004, 2006).
- The proposal outlined today is that the most significant of the distributional differences between the four varieties considered can be understood as the result of two converging factors:
 - The height at which *SI* is merged within the extended C-domain, and
 - Whether both externally and internally merged constituents, or internally merged alone, can act as V2-satisfiers.
- The second of these two questions may have important ramifications for the left-peripheral syntax of Italo-Romance and Romance in general today.

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