From impersonal to reflexive verb

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Abstract
Old Swedish had impersonally construed verbs with an oblique subject(-like) Experiencer argument. Most of them are personally construed verbs today, with nominative Experiencer. Whereas this change for most formerly impersonal verbs just showed up as a change from oblique to nominative, a small number of verbs showed an additional change: a reflexive pronoun became obligatory. In this paper I will discuss two possible analyses of this change. The first possibility is that the reflexive is the spell-out of a trace in the object position, a visible marking that the surface subject is an underlying object. According to the other possible analysis, the reflexive verb is regularly formed from a causative verb, with Agent/Source subject and Experiencer object. As will be shown, the formally impersonal verbs that developed a reflexive are attested as causative transitive verbs.

1 Introduction
A number of Experiencer verbs in Swedish have changed from impersonal to personal construction, as illustrated in (1):^1

(1) a Konugenom drömde ... at hans gudh amon soff når hans hustru (ST 512)
   king.DEF.DAT dreamt that his god Amon slept close to his wife
   ‘The king dreamed that his god Amon slept close to his wife.’

b Jag drömde att jag flög
   I.NOM dreamt that I flew
   ‘I dreamed that I flew.’

The topic of this paper is a number of Old Swedish impersonal verbs that developed into reflexive verbs, i.e. verbs obligatorily taking the reflexive pronoun sig, as illustrated in (2):^2

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^1 In the English glosses of Old Swedish impersonal verbs I will throughout use a verb or a verb phrase corresponding to the personal construction found in Modern Swedish. Many pronouns in Old Swedish were ambiguous between dative and accusative. These forms will be glossed _OBL_. Case will be glossed only when relevant for the discussion, i.e. in connection with verbs with experiencer arguments of different types. Morphological case was almost completely lost in Early Modern Swedish. A common object form, distinct from nominative, was preserved for personal pronouns. This form will be glossed _OBJ_ in Early and Late Modern Swedish below. Traditionally, the 1526 translation of The New Testament is considered to be the end of (Late) Old Swedish and the beginning of (Early) Modern Swedish, a custom I follow.

^2 Sig will not be glossed. With some verbs, sig is obligatory (as with gruva), and “reflexive” should be understood as a label of the form, not as denoting coreference with an antecedent. In these cases sig cannot be replaced by another NP/DP. With other verbs, sig can have reference, e.g. tvätta sig ‘wash (oneself)’. The distinction between referential and non-referential sig is often described as vague. Of relevance in this paper will be a middle interpretation of sig, where sig turns a transitive verb into an intransitive verb; see further below.
therefore feels-distressed me. OBL.

‘Therefore, I don’t dread these 12 men.’

He feels uneasy about this.

(2a) shows the Old Swedish construction, where the verb *gruva* is construed with an Experiencer argument in oblique case. In Modern Swedish *gruva* is construed with a nominative subject and an obligatory reflexive *sig*, as in (2b). Other verbs that developed in this way are *ångra sig* ‘repent’ and *nöja sig* ‘be content’, in Early Modern Swedish also *fasa sig* ‘dread’ and *behaga sig* ‘be delighted’.

I will discuss two alternative analyses of the development from impersonal to reflexive verb. According to the first analysis, *sig* (Old Swedish *sik*) is a spell-out of a trace in the object position, a visible marking that the surface subject is an underlying object. According to the other analysis, *sig* is the result of reinterpreting the verb as an ordinary transitive verb, where *sig* denotes a middle reading. Before presenting these two alternatives in more detail, I will briefly sketch the theoretical background I will take as my point of departure.

### 1.1 Theoretical background

Impersonal verbs have gained a lot of attention, both the change illustrated in (1) and the status of the oblique argument in clauses like (1a). The change took place in Germanic languages like English and the Mainland Scandinavian languages (see for instance Allen 1995 on English, Falk 1997 on Swedish), while the impersonal construction was kept in languages like Icelandic and German (see for instance Thráinsson 2007: 158–167). This paper will focus on the special development illustrated in (2), from impersonal to reflexive in Swedish.

As for the status of the oblique argument it has been established for Modern Icelandic that the oblique argument is the structural subject (see Thráinsson 2007: 158–167, with references). Its status in older varieties of Germanic is less clear, however. Eyþórsson & Barðdal (2003) argue that oblique subjects were found in all varieties of the Old Germanic languages, whereas Falk (1997) proposes that oblique arguments did not have subject status in Old Swedish. This much-debated question will not be addressed in this paper, as the proposed analyses are compatible with either of the analyses. Of importance is instead that the oblique argument was the highest argument of the verb.

The change in Swedish from the impersonal to the personal construction illustrated in (1) above is described in detail by Lindqvist (1912). He argues that the development should be explained in terms of a tendency to identify the “psychological subject” (oblique in impersonal constructions) with the “syntactic subject” (nominative in personal constructions). Sundman (1985) instead argues that the development is the consequence of a semantic change in the verbs, such that an experiencer in no control of the event whatsoever (imper-
personal construction), is gradually reinterpreted as a referent with at least some control (1985: 91–95). One problem with these accounts is that not all Old Swedish experiencer verbs with an oblique Experiencer changed. Alongside impersonal verbs (like *dröma, gruva* above), Old Swedish had causative transitive verbs with Experiencer direct objects that did not change, even though the two verb types could be superficially very similar. Cf. the transitive verb *gläpia* in (3a–b) and the impersonal verb *lika* in (3c):

(3) a gläpia huar annan mz ḳy guþ giuar hanom (Leg Bu 153)
make-happy.SUBJ each.NOM other.ACC with that god gives him
‘May each of them make the other happy with the gifts from God’

b thz gledde karela ok rytza land (RK 1:487)
this made-happy Karelia and Russia
‘This made Karelia and Russia happy.’

c thzte likade allom well (Di 198)
this liked all.DAT well
‘Everybody liked this very much.’

I will follow the analysis in Falk (1997) for the verbs in (3) and the construction change in (1). Impersonal verbs assigned a lexical, idiosyncratic case to its highest argument, the Experiencer. The dominant lexical case was dative. The lower argument of an impersonal verb (Source/ Cause) was assigned structural case. In contrast, both arguments of a causative Experiencer verb like *gläpia* were assigned structural case, and the argument ordering was the reverse from im-personal verbs, with Source/Cause as the higher argument and the Experiencer as the lower argument. Of significance is also that a transitive causative verb with an Experiencer direct object often had an agentive subject. Another characteristic property of causative verbs was that they often had an adjective-like past participle. Impersonal verbs had neither of these properties. The lexical properties of the two verb types are illustrated in (4):

(4) Spec vP SpecVP complement of V
a lika: Experiencer Source/Cause Dative
b gläpia: Agent/Source/Cause Experiencer

The semantic labels in (4) should be interpreted as “proto-roles”, associated with certain structural base positions.

Structural case was assigned to arguments without lexical case, following the hierarchy of arguments: the highest argument without lexical case was assigned nominative, the lower accusative (Falk 1997:48, following Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson 1985). Thus, the case pattern of causative verbs like *gläpia* was nominative + accusative, whereas impersonal verbs

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3 Lexical case accusative, still used in Modern Icelandic, was lost quite early in Old Swedish and replaced by dative. See Falk (1997:61–62). Some examples with accusative case are found, and many pronouns are ambiguous between accusative and dative; they are glossed OBL in this paper.
like *lika* showed the case pattern dative + nominative. The construction change reflects loss of lexical case. The Experiencer of an impersonal verb like *dröma, lika*, etc. will then turn up in nominative (visible only on personal pronouns in Modern Swedish).

Old Swedish also had dative Experiencers that did not change to nominative. Just like transitive verbs like *gläpja* they could resemble impersonal verbs on the surface, cf. (3) above:

(5) *thz räkker oss allom ekke at* it is-Enough us.DAT all.DAT not PRT
    ‘This is not enough for all of us’

Typically, these datives were optional arguments, i.e., not lexically specified. Thus, the dative case was not lexical but purely semantic (Falk 1997:45–46, 56–60). These optional Experiencers will be called free datives below.

### 1.2 From impersonal to reflexive verb: two possible analyses

The morpheme -s is historically derived from the reflexive pronoun Old Swedish *sik*. Its main function in Modern Swedish is to form the passive (*jaga – jagas ‘hunt – be hunted’*). In this paper, another function will be of relevance, namely to turn a transitive verb into a middle verb. Often there is a synonymous reflexive form. For instance, from transitive *samla ‘collect (something)’, an s-form or *sig*-form is formed, with a middle, non-agentive reading ‘collect’; Note the bold -s in (6b), not glossed:

(6) a *Jag samlar damm* I collect dust
    ‘I collect dust.’

    b *Damm samlar/samlar sig i hörnen* dust collects/collects REFL in corners.DEF
    ‘Dust collects in the corners’

In Old and Early Modern Swedish a number of intransitive verbs had a synonymous s-form. Typically, they were non-agentive, with a Theme(-like) or Experiencer subject. (7a–b) show simple verbs *ängsla ‘be-anxious’ and anda ‘breathe’, (17c) synonymous s-forms:

(7) a *änxla ther entke om* be-anxious.IMP there not about
    ‘Don’t worry about that’

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4 Alternatively, structural case may be determined by the position of the argument. If so, the lower Source/Cause argument of an impersonal verb is assigned accusative (the case for the V-complement position). A case pattern of dative + accusative has been argued to be an intermediate stage in English, from the impersonal case pattern (dative + nominative) to the personal case pattern (nominative + accusative; Allen 1986). Swedish shows few, if any, clear indications of such an intermediate stage (cf. Falk 1997:76). The Source/Cause argument of impersonal verbs is often ambiguous between accusative or nominative (as e.g. the common *bör ‘it/this’*). These ambiguous forms are not glossed for case.
gather and say: go through nostrils.DEF like other animals but rather go through ears.DEF draw breath.DEF

‘Goats don’t breathe through the nostrils like other animals but rather through the ears’

c hon ängxladhis mykit thy at hon gat ey andas gynum munnin (Jär 66)

‘She was very worried much because that she could not breathe through mouth. DEF

By saying that the older construction was “transitive” Lindqvist probably means that the oblique case indicated the object status of the Experiencer. The idea that the reflexive “fills the empty space that the lost object (the psychological subject) left” is close to the more theoretical formulation of Falk (1997) and used here, as one of the two possible analyses of former impersonal verbs turning into reflexive verbs.

The other analysis to be presented here is that the verbs in question were reanalysed as transitive causative verbs like gläpia (cf. (3a–b) and (4b) above). Whereas impersonal verbs did not have any regularly formed s-/sik-forms, transitive Experiencer verbs formed intransitive verbs with Experiencer subjects with -s and/or sik. The transitive gläpia was a causative verb ‘make happy’, with its corresponding s-/sik-verb denoting the resulting change or state

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5 Sik and -s differ in that sik is a free morpheme, whereas -s is bound (always the outmost bound morpheme of the verb). I will not discuss the intriguing question of the formation of s-forms.
(‘become/ be happy’); see the examples in (8a) below. The examples in (8b) show a more negative experience:

(8) a Ḗhe glāþas af they.NOM are-happy of 'They are happy about that’

the ... glādde sik mot thetta spil they.NOM were-happy REFL about this devastation

'‘They were happy about this devastation’

b thet drōue manzens hierna (KS 43)

this distresses man.GEN.DEF.GEN brain.ACC

‘This distressed one’s brain’

Tok constantinus her vm mykit drōuas (Leg Bil 59)

began Konstantin.NOM here about much be-distressed

‘Konstantin began to be very distressed about this’

As far as I know, the idea that a reinterpretation of impersonal verbs as transitive causative verbs paved the way for regular formation of reflexive intransitive verbs has not been proposed in the literature before. This reinterpretation will be of a slightly different nature for the one-place verb gruva and the two-place verb angra, as will be shown in more detail below.

2 The different developments

The development of the reflexive Experiencer verbs in Swedish will be discussed in the next three subsections. First I consider formerly impersonal one-place verbs (gruva, fasa). Second I discuss formerly impersonal two-place verbs (angra, behagha). In the third subsection I take a look at the more complicated case of nōghta.

2.1 One-place impersonal verbs: gruva, fasa

Gruva was an uncommon verb in Late Old Swedish. According to Lindqvist (1912:86), it was a loan from Low German, where it was an impersonal verb. The impersonal construction is repeated in (9a) below. Loss of lexical case resulted in the personal construction, with a nominative Experiencer, as in (9b), which is marginally younger. Alongside these construction possibilities, gruva had synonymous s- and sik-forms; note that (9d) is from the same manuscript as the impersonal construction in (9a):

(9) a ty grwffuar mik encte for these xij (Di 170)

therefor feels-distressed me.OBL not for these 12

‘Therefor, I don’t dread these 12 men’

b wij grwffuade fasth (LRK 270)

we.NOM were-distressed much

‘We felt very uneasy’
c allä grwffwädis ther wedh  
all.NOM felt-distressed there with  
‘All men felt uneasy about this’

(9) d järlsens men gröywadhe sik fast  
jarl.l.GEN.DEF.GEN men.NOM felt-distressed REFL much  
‘The counsellor’s men felt very uneasy’

The personal construction in (9b) reflects loss of the lexical case. The constructions in (9c–d) could be analysed as displaying optional overt marking of the underlying object status of the surface subject.

In almost all examples of gruva in Old Swedish, the Experiencer is the only argument. Sdw gives one example with two arguments:

(10) Her Sten hawer thet ryckte her nedhre thet mik grwar (BSH 5:114, 1506)  
sir Sten has this reputation here down that me.ØBL GRUVAR  
‘Sir Sten has this reputation down there, something that I am distressed about/ 
/distresses me’)

As indicated by the translations, (10) could be interpreted in two ways. It could be an instance of an optional lower Source/Cause of the impersonal verb (‘be distressed about’). A parallel case would be Old Swedish dröma, where one-place constructions alternated with constructions of Experiencer + complement:

(11) a tha haffde honum oc drömt  
then had him.DAT also dreamt  
‘Then, he had also dreamt’

b them war badhom thz sama drömpt  
them.DAT was both.DAT the same dreamt  
‘Both of them had the same dream’

Alternatively though, (10) could be interpreted as having an additional higher argument, such that something (the reputation) distresses somebody (me), i.e. a transitive causative. S-/sik-forms could then be regularly formed intransitive verbs, parallel to the alternations exemplified in (8) above.

The two-place construction of gruva in (10) is a unique example in preserved Swedish, as far as I know (irrespective if interpreted as an impersonal or as a causative verb). If we take (10) to be an instance of a causative verb, the only surviving form would be the reflexive gruva sig.

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6 ‘The jarl’ was the king’s closest counselor.

7 If so, the direct object mik ‘me’ is stylistically fronted. Stylistic Fronting (SF) involves a non-subject being placed before the finite verb in subordinate clauses without an overt subject (including relativized subjects). On SF in Old Swedish, see Falk (2007) with references.
Like gruva, fasa was an uncommon verb in Old Swedish. A few examples of the impersonal construction are given in Sdw, see (12a), alongside contemporary examples of the personal construction as in (12b). $\text{-}/\text{sig}$-forms are shown in (12c–d):

(12) a nar människionne fasar fore lästinna hot (SpV 551)  
when man.DAT dreads for scripture.DEF.GEN threat

‘When humans dread the threats in the scriptures …’

b Alle aff persida fasadho för hans strangheet (MB 2:174)  
all.NOM from Persia dread for his severity

‘All men from Persia dread his severity’

c än iak owärđogh all fasas oc forfāras (Mecht 97)  
even I.NOM unworthy all dread and am-terrified

‘Even the whole of me, unworthy, dreads and is terrified’

d Hvem kan icke fasa sig här före? (c. 1750, SAOB fasa I 3)  
who can not dread REFL here for

‘Who cannot get terrified at this?’

Note that the reflexive construction in (12d) is considerably younger than the other alternatives, as opposed to gruva sik (see (9d)). Fasa sig also seems to be a more occasional alternative than gruva sik/sig. Furthermore, there are unambiguous attested examples of fasa construed as a transitive causative verb, with the Experiencer as an ordinary direct object. (13a) presents the oldest example (and the only one in Sdw), (13b) Early Modern Swedish examples:

(13) a thän ondhe … hwilkin ey kwnna ordhin faasa, ey ythersta  
the evil who.ACC not may words.DEF.NOM frighten not last

timans rädde, ok stranga domarns rätuisa (SpV 293)  
time.DEF.GEN fear.NOM and severe.DEF judge.DEF.GEN justice.NOM

‘The devil, whom no words could frighten, nor the fear of the last day and the severe judge’s justice’

b Ett Spöke kan rät snart, en swagan Mennskia fasa (1690, SAOB fasa II 2)\(^8\)  
a ghost can quite soon a weak.ACC man frighten

‘A ghost can frighten a weak man quite quickly’

c Den gula döden ..., som fasat våra fäder. (1916, SAOB fasa II 2)  
the yellow.DEF death.DEF that frightened.PTC our fathers

‘The yellow fever that has frightened our ancestors’

I find it quite plausible that the reflexive in (12d) is formed from the transitive fasa in (13) (cf. the regular patterns in (8) above): it is a quite late example, dating from a period where the personal intransitive construction was well established, and the transitive construction seemed to be a productive alternative, if not as common as the intransitive one. Thus, fasa sig

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\(^8\) Case on the Experiencer is visible on the Old Swedish adjective accusative ending \(-\text{an}\), only very sporadically used in Early Modern Swedish.
does not seem to be contemporary with the loss of lexical case, as was seen with *gruva*. Perhaps this is the case also with the older *s*-form. Note the coordination with the *s*-verb *forfåras* ‘be terrified’ in (12c), regularly formed from the transitive causative verb *forfåra* ‘frighten’.

The reinterpretation of *fasa*, and possibly *gruva*, as a transitive causative verb is a change in the valency of the verb, from a one-place verb to a two-place verb with an added higher argument. Such an alternation between intransitive and transitive use of the same verb had (and still has) parallels, in (14a–b) illustrated by *trösta* ‘trust; console’. (14c) shows the reflexive verb, formed from the causative *trösta* in (14b):

(14)  
(a) hon tröste mera a diäwlen  
   she trust.SUBJ more on devil.DEF
   ‘She has to trust more in the Devil’

(b) gvez ängel ... tröste han räddan  
god.GEN angel console.SUBJ him.ACC afraid.ACC
   ‘May God’s angel console him while he is afraid’

(c) tröst pik väl  
   console.IMP REFL well
   ‘Feel well consoled!’

In present-day Swedish, both the transitive verb *fasa* ‘frighten’ and the *s/-sig*-forms have disappeared, the only surviving option being the simplex intransitive verb *fasa* ‘fear, be frightened’.

### 2.2 Two-place impersonal verbs: *angra*, *behagha*

*Angra* ‘regret, repent’ was a two-place impersonal verb in Old Swedish. The lower argument Source/Cause was a clause or a DP, see (15a–b). An early example of the personal construction is shown in (15c). More generally, the personal construction became more common in texts from the 17th century, see (15d):

(15)  
(a) honom angradhe at han hafde väl gjort  
him.DAT regretted that he had well done
   ‘He regretted that he had done the right thing’

(b) Mik angrar thz  
me.OBL repents this
   ‘I regret this’

(c) Tha angradhe sorghfullir sina bön  
then regretted sorrowing.NOM his.ACC request.ACC
   ‘Then the sorrowing man regretted his request’

(d) Dogh iagh ångrar jagh kom bort så wijda  
still I.NOM repent I came away so far
   ‘Still, I regret that I left to such a distant place’
Reflexive constructions with nominative Experiencers are found from Late Old Swedish and onwards:

(16) iudas … angrade sik än thot mz ofrutsamlikom angir  
    Judas repented even though with unavailing remorse/repentance
    ‘Judas repented, even though with unavailing remorse/repentance’

Today, ånga is construed either as a transitive verb with Experiencer subject as in (15b), or as an intransitive reflexive verb as in (16).

In his account of the emergence of reflexive forms from impersonal constructions, Lindqvist equates angra with gruva (see section 1.2 above). However, while gruva was a one-place impersonal verb (in Lindqvist’s terminology “A-type”), angra was a two-place impersonal verb, see (15a–b) above. Thus, the reflexive did not preserve “the intransitive character of the verb”. Neither could the reflexive be a trace of a moved (in)direct object – that would give the unattested *Han ångrar sig detta (He regrets REFL this). Instead, I will propose the alternative analysis, that the reflexive form is the intransitive version of a transitive causative verb. I proposed above that fasa sig is formed through a reinterpretation of the intransitive fasa ‘feel fear’ to a transitive verb fasa ‘frighten’ by adding a higher argument. With angra the reinterpretation does not add a higher argument, but instead reinterprets the lower Source/Cause argument as a higher argument.

The ordering of the arguments is not always visible on the surface. Due to the V2 requirement, any argument can be placed in the first position, followed by the finite verb. Cf. (15b) above with the following example, with topicalised Source/Cause, where the unambiguous dative Experiencer reveals that we have the old impersonal construction:

(17) thz angrade allom swenskom  
    this repented all.DAT swedes.DAT
    ‘All Swedes regretted/were remorseful of this’

When both arguments followed the finite verb, the original ordering with Experiencer above Source/Cause is shown in (18a–b). (18c–e) show the reinterpreted hierarchy of the arguments. In (18c), the order of the postverbal arguments is reversed. In (18d) the embedded word order shows the clause-anticipating Source/Cause det ‘it’ in the subject position, with the Experiencer as the lower argument. In (18e) the position of the Experiencer argument after the infinitival verb reveals its object status:

(18) a Sidhan angradhe mik thz mykyt sarlika  
    afterwards regretted me.OBL it much hardly
    ‘Afterwards, I regretted this very much’

    b när wärlden wender sigh annorledes motte honom thetta ångra  
    when world.DEF turn REFL otherwise must him.OBJ this repent
    (c. 1560, Lindqvist 1912:91)
    ‘When things change, he will certainly regret this’
Också ångrar det mig icke, att jag … *\(^{(1829, \text{Lindqvist 1912:91)}*\)

‘Also, it does not make me regretful that I …’

… at thz ey sidhan angrar han
that this not later makes-repentant him.ACC
‘… that this will not make him repentant later’

Herren swoor, thet skal icke ångra honom *\(^{(1526, \text{Lindqvist 1912:90)}*\)

lord.DEF swore it will not make-repentant him.OBJ
‘The Lord has sworn and will not repent’

I find it plausible that the reflexive ångra sig is formed from this transitive causative ångra. A synonymous s-form ångras is however not found (cf. glädjas = glädja sig above).

The normal development of two-place impersonal verbs was triggered by the loss of lexical case, cf. above, subsection 1.1. The oblique case, still visible in personal pronouns (e.g. *henne* ‘her’ vs. *hun* ‘she’), was then neglected. Alternatively, the loss of lexical case led to an interpretation of oblique case as an object characteristic, which in turn caused a reinterpretation of the Source/Cause as the subject, i.e. the higher argument. This was much less common, but at least one parallel is found, the Late Old Swedish verb *förtryta*, MSw *förtryta*:

(19) a Thå thik thz forthrytir, wil thu hafwa höns … *\(^{(ST 320)}*\)

when you.OBL this disapprove want you have hens
‘When you are not content with this, you want to have hens’

b Sådant förtryter jagh sanerligh
such disapprove I.NOM certainly
‘I certainly disapprove such things’

c Skeer thet offtere, Dhå skall thet oss fast förtryte *\(^{(1543, \text{Lindqvist 1912:96)}*\)

happens this more-often then will it us.OBJ much annoy
‘If this happens more often, it will annoy us very much’

d Det förtryter dem in i Säilen at andre skola hafvanöije
it annoys them.OBJ in to soul.DEF that others shall have pleasure
i verlden och de måste vara utan. *\(^{(1730, \text{SAOB förtryta I 2 d)}*\)
in world.DEF and they must be without
‘It annoys them in the soul, that other should have pleasures in this world, while they must be without’

(19a) shows the impersonal construction, with Experiencer above Source/Cause. (19b) shows loss of lexical case and the preserved interpretation of the hierarchy of arguments, meaning that the Experiencer turns up in nominative. (19c–d) show Experiencer as object, i.e. transitive causative construction with Source/Cause as the higher argument. Compare the ordering (Experiencer + Source/Cause) of the postverbal arguments in (19a) to the shifted ordering Source/Cause + Experiencer in (19c). A transitive analysis of (19d) seems most probable, though the fronting of *det* renders the analysis ambiguous. While the alternative in (19b) was not uncommon, the alternative in (19c–d) became the standard, and still is, to the extent that the verb is still used.
From a transitive causative *förtryta* ‘annoy’ we would expect an intransitive reflexive *förtryta sig* ‘be annoyed’. Such a reflexive is however very uncommon. It is found in a Swedish-Latin dictionary from 1739 (Schenberg; quoted in SAOB, *förtryta* II b); (20a) is the only example we have found in the literature. Somewhat more common was the s-form *förtrytas*, see (20b).

(20) a om du ej ännu vore att anse såsom sjuk, kunde jag riktigt if you not yet were.SUBJ to consider as sick could I.NOM really *förtryta mig* öfver dem. (Flygare-Carlén, *Waldemar Klein* 199, 1838)

‘If you were not to be considered as sick, I would really get annoyed at them’

b Borgaren (kan) aldrig ... *förtrytas.* (GHT 1924, nr 54, s. 3)

‘The bourgeois can never get annoyed’

In other words, *förtryta* showed the opposite pattern of *ångra*, where the reflexive instead became the standard. The s-form *förtrytas* is no longer used today.

*Behagha* has a somewhat more complex history. Like *ångra*, Late Old Swedish *behagha* was an impersonal two-place verb, see (21a), where loss of lexical case with preserved argument hierarchy resulted in nominative Experiencer subjects as in (21b):

(21) a *thz monde keysarenom* wäl *behaga* (Schack 1143)

this might emperor.DEF.DAT well like ‘The emperor may like this’

b *Hår hafwa warit ... månge hungrige magar ibland, som intet hafwa* here have been many hungry stomachs among that not have *behagat detta Rådet* (1616, SAOB *behaga* 3)

liked this advice ‘There have been many hungry stomachs here among them that did not like this advice’

In (21b) the argument hierarchy is preserved, with Experiencer (the people with empty stomachs) above Source/Cause (the advice). But a transitive causative *behagha* is also attested, with Experiencer direct object, see (22a). It seems plausible that this gave rise to reflexive *behagha sig* in (22b):

(22) a *Hwilket och så skedde, oansedt at thet intet synnerligen behagade några* which too so happened despite that it not much pleased some *rijka Köpmän* (1614, SAOB *behaga* 1 e β)

rich merchants ‘…something that actually happened, even though it did not please some rich merchants very much’

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9 Searches in Litteraturbanken from the Språkbanken corpora resource (Borin et al 2012).
b I grefve Brahes hus syntes han mest behaga sig
in count Brahe’s house seemed he most please
(c. 1815, SAOB behaga 6 a)
‘In count Brahe’s house he seemed to please himself most’

The two possibilities in (21b) and (22a) coexisted – and still exist, to the extent that the verb is still in use. The reflexive verb in (22b) has disappeared, however, and it did not have a synonymous s-form. Instead, s-forms of behagha have Source/Cause subjects. The oldest attested example is from Late Old Swedish and has an oblique Experiencer. In the Early Modern Swedish example in (23b) the Source/Cause subject is represented by så ‘so’, formally an adverb:

(23) a göra alt thz illa ther them behaghas
   do all the bad that them please
   ‘(They) do all the evil things that they want’

b Innan tre nätter, skall liggia så stark ijs på sjöns, att man kan
before three nights will lay such strong ice on lake that man can
rijda måd många hästar thär uppå, om så behagas.
ride with many horses there upon if so please
(1680, SAOB behaga 5 a)
‘Within three nights, the ice will be so thick that you can ride with many horses, if you so desire’

Behaghas in (23) is formed from the Experiencer + Source/Cause verb behagha in (21), where the Source/Cause argument is promoted to subject, a passive(-like) promotion. The demoted higher Experiencer argument could optionally be realized as a free dative (23a).

In sum, my proposal is that reflexive ångra sig and behaga sig have a common origin. For both verbs, the loss of lexical case led to two alternative constructions: one with the Experiencer as the preserved highest argument, as a nominative subject, and another with the Experiencer as the lower argument, as an object of a causative verb. The latter construction led to the emergence of reflexive forms. But whereas the reflexive form became the standard way of construing an intransitive ångra sig – ångra disappeared as a transitive causative verb with a lower object Experiencer – the development of behaga is somewhat more complicated: both alternatives survived, and the alternative Experiencer + Source/Cause developed a passive(-like) s-form, with Source/Cause as subject and an optional free dative.

2.3 Nöja sig
Of the five different reflexive verbs in focus in this study, nöja sig ‘be content’ shows the most complicated pattern. The simplex verb Old Swedish verb nöghia was an impersonal verb with dative Experiencer, either as its only argument (24a) or with a lower Source/Cause argument in the form of a DP or a clause (24b–c). (24d) shows the reflexive verb, with the Experiencer bearing nominative case:
(24) a hafdhé en männskia alla werldena hänne nögdhe ey än tha (ST 510) had a person whole world.DEF her.DEF was-content not yet then
‘If somebody had the whole world, he would still not be content’
b ey nögdhe henne thetta (Su 161) not was-content her.DEF this
‘She was not content with this’
c Nögdhe henne wäl … at hon hafídhe hona til patronam (Leg 3:13) was-content her.DEF well that she had her as patron-saint
‘She was well content that she had her as her patron saint’
d ther at nögd sig fasolt well (Di 81) there about was-content REFL Fasolt well
‘Fasolt was well content with this’

So far, nöghia resembles the one-place predicate gruva, and the later development of fasa, or the two-place verb angra, and the later development of behagha. But as opposed to gruva (and fasa) and angra (and behagha), nöghia had a synonymous s-form, impersonally construed: 10

(25) a … swo at mik wäl nöffdäs (SD 4:585, late 15th century) so that me.OBL well was-content
‘… so that I was completely content’
b nögdis almoganom thz ey wäl (LRK 224) was-content peasantry.DEF.DAT this not well
‘The peasantry was not very content with this’

Comparing nöghia and nöghias, with identical meaning and argument structure, it is actually nöghias that has the etymologically motivated meaning and argument structure. The verb is derived from an adjective nog ‘enough, sufficient’. Impersonal nöghias has parallels with two other impersonal verbs in Old Swedish: þäkkias (from þäkker ‘pleasant’) and leþas (from leþer ‘unpleasant’). These verbs are derived from adjectives denoting properties of things or states of affairs that could cause Experiencer-like reactions in humans, a meaning that could be realized as an optional free dative ‘for somebody’:

(26) a gudhlikir kännedombir är gudhi thäkkir (MB 1B:375) godly teaching is god.DEF pleasant
‘Godly teaching is pleasant for God’
b conungin . . . wardh hwariom manne ledher (Leg Bil 230) king.DEF became every.DEF man.DEF unpleasant
‘The king became unpleasant for every man’

10 I do not know of any other impersonal verb in Old Swedish with synonymous s-forms. Impersonal pykkia ‘think’ had an s-form, but not completely synonymous, since the dative Experiencer of pykkias was optional. Thus, –s manipulated the argument structure/valency, as was (and is) the normal. Pykkias did not change its construction, but has kept its possibility to be construed with an optional Experiencer Det tycks (mig) som om … ‘It seems (to me) as if …’
From the adjectives we may assume transitive causative verbs, *þäkkia* and *leþa*, with the regular reading of ‘make something (un)pleasant (for somebody)’. Causative *þäkkia*, *leþa* are not attested in Old Swedish, but found in Old Icelandic. S-forms þäkkias, leþas would then give the meaning ‘be (un)pleasant (for somebody)’. The verbs found in Old Swedish were impersonal, and the optional Experiencer ‘for somebody’ had been reinterpreted as a lexically case marked higher argument with a lower optional Source/Cause (27a–b). (27c–d) show loss of lexical dative, giving a nominative Experiencer:

(27) a huru mykyt gudhi ðň̈kkias ödmiuka manna böne (Bir 2:32)
how much god.DAT is-pleased humble.gen.man.gen prayer.nom
‘… how much God is pleased by humble men’s prayer’
b thzt方形 sorgh at wngom aldre ledhis widh lifuit (Leg Bil 476)
this is sorrow that young.dat never feel-weariness with life.def
‘It is sad that young people never feel weariness of life’
c … hwem the täckä in tiil siig tagha magä (1524, SAOB täckas 1)
who they.nom like in to themselves take may
‘… whoever they want to take into their group’
d Siälen ledhis widh twnga liifuet (Su 108)
soul.def feels-weariness with hard.def life.def
‘The soul feels weariness of the hard life’

The meaning and argument structure of nöghias is derivable from the adjective nogh ‘enough, sufficient’ in a parallel fashion, from ‘be enough (for somebody)’ to Old Swedish impersonal ‘be content (with)’. It remains somewhat mysterious why the simple verb nöghia did not have the expected causative meaning ‘make something enough’, but instead ‘be enough’.

Like þäkkias and leþas, nöghias lost lexical case, with the effect that the Experiencer showed up with nominative case. In examples with proper names, like (28a–b), case is ambiguous; nevertheless, (28a) is given as an example of a personal construction in Sdw, and in (28b) the agreeing plural form of the verb reveals that the Experiencer is a nominative subject:

(28) a epte tet at hinrik hyllebrandh nögdes jernit … (STb 2:312, 1488; Sdw suppl)
after that that Hinrik Hyllebrand was-content iron.def
‘Since Hinrik Hyllebrand was content with the iron…”
b Wänner i Nöd, nöyas medhlijet Brödh. (1665, SAOB nöja 1 b)
friends in need are-content.pl with little bread
‘Friends in need are content with little bread’

So where does the reflexive nöghia sik/nöja sig come from? One possibility would be to assume one of the analyses of gruva vs. gruva sik, as outlined above: in both cases we have a one-place impersonal construction, where the loss of lexical case led to a derived subject with nominative. The reflexive could in both cases be seen as an overt marker of the status of the surface subject as an underlying object. The other possibility outlined for gruva...
vs. gruva sik was an added higher Source/Cause, thus creating a causative. This is a possibility also for nögha sik. An example from Late Old Swedish shows a transitive nöghia, with Agent subject and Beneficiary object ‘compensate’, and later we find examples of transitive nöja ‘please’:

(29)  a fasbiørn olson hadhe honom wel nøkt fore then gardin (ATb 2:261, 1485)
      Fasbjörn Olsson had him.OBL well compensated for this estate.DEF
      ‘Fasbjörn Olsson had payed him fully for this estate’
    b Om det kan nöija Er, så står Er fritt at giöra’t. (1738, SAOB nöja 4)
      if it can please you.OBJ so stands you.OBJ freely to do-it
      ‘If it can please you, you are free to do it’

These examples could also be analyzed as a reinterpretation of the arguments of the two-place nöghia, from Experiencer + Source/Cause to Source/Cause + Experiencer, i.e. a parallel to angra vs. angra sik. Perhaps we could even imagine an old unattested causative, cf. the unattested *þäkkia, *lepa. I find the option that nöghia sik is formed from a transitive causative verb to be the most probable. The Modern Swedish adjective nöjd ‘satisfied’ is formally a past participle of this causative. It is attested already in Old Swedish:

(30)  mz honom war hon wäl nøgdh (Leg 3:405)
      with him was she.NOM well content
      ‘She was very content with him’

The causative no longer exists. It is difficult – maybe even irrelevant – to establish whether the causative was derived by adding a higher Source/Cause argument to one-place nöghia, or by rearranging the arguments of two-place nöghia.

3  Summary and discussion
In this paper I have discussed five formerly impersonal verbs that have attested reflexive forms in the history of Swedish. Three of them, gruva sig, ångra sig and nöja sig are standard intransitive verbs today. As for the other two, fasa sig and behaga sig, the reflexive forms seem to be more peripheral.

It should be pointed out that the regular development of impersonal verbs involved the loss of lexical case and the subsequent shift of the originally dative Experiencer to a nominative subject. Thus, the verbs in focus here show idiosyncratic developments, or more occasional uses. I do not think we can fully account for such phenomena. What we can do, however, is to understand them, by showing that they followed patterns found elsewhere in the language. One such parallel is found with intransitive unagentive verbs with synonymous s-forms. Elsewhere, I have suggested that this -s could be an overt marking of an underlying trace in the object position (Falk 1997, 2017). Sik could be analyzed in the same way, an analysis close to an idea put forth already by Lindqvist (1912). This is certainly a possible analysis of at least gruva sik, which is as old as the other attested construction possibilities of this verb (cf. (9)).
But another alternative is also possible, offering another way of understanding the reflexive forms: they are formed from transitive causative verbs with Experiencer objects. Transitive causative verbs with Experiencer objects were quite a large group of verbs in Old Swedish; Falk lists 44 verbs in her Appendix (“object-oriented Experiencer verbs”; Falk 1997:189–190), and they regularly formed intransitive verbs with Experiencer subjects by adding -s or reflexive sik. In this paper I have shown that at least four of the verbs in focus have attested causative constructions: fasa, ångra, behaga and nöja (MSw spelling). I have also found one possible example of causative gruva. As causatives they never became very common – only behaga ‘please’ is mentioned in modern lexica. However, the reflexive forms gruva sig, ångra sig and nöja sig have all survived.

The reinterpretation of a (formerly) impersonal verb into a transitive causative verb took different routes, depending on if the verb was a one-place verb or a two-place verb. For one-place verbs (gruva, fasa), a higher argument was added. Again, parallel patterns existed, with the same verb construed either with the Experiencer as the only argument, or with the Experiencer as a lower object under an Agent/Source subject (=14)). For two-place verbs (ängra, behaga), the argument hierarchy was instead reinterpreted. This was a much more uncommon way of interpreting the lexical properties of two-place impersonal verbs when lexical case was lost, but there is at least one other impersonal verb that changed into a causative transitive, namely förtryta.

Finally, we would expect Old Swedish nöghia to be a causative transitive verb given its etymology, being derived from the adjective nogh ‘enough, sufficient’, with a free (optional) dative, resulting in the reading ‘make something enough/sufficient for somebody’. We can understand the impersonal construction of the s-form nöghias through this assumed meaning, with the free dative reinterpreted as a lexical dative. OSw nöghia was not, however, a causative verb, but rather an impersonal verb. Its meaning may be opaque, but its further development follows the other verbs discussed here.

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