

From impersonal to reflexive verb

Cecilia Falk
Stockholm University

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 när hans hustru (ST 512)
king.DEF.DAT dreamt that his god Amon slept close his wife
'The king dreamt that his god Amon slept close to his wife.'
- b Jag drömde att jag flög
I.NOM dreamt that I flew
'I dreamt 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

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.

- (2) a ty grwffuar mik encte for these xij (Di 170)
 therefore feels-distressed me.OBL not for these 12
 ‘Therefore, I don’t dread these 12 men.’
- b Han gruvar sig för detta
 he.NOM feels-uneasy REFL about this
 ‘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. Eythórsson & 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-

1p and 2p have no distinct reflexive forms; instead, personal pronouns (*mig* ‘me’, *dig* ‘you’, etc.) are used. They will also be glossed REFL.

like *lika* showed the case pattern dative + nominative.⁴ 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 rækker oss allom ekki at (ST 350)
 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 *samlar* ‘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 samlas/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 (MB 2:332)
 be-anxious.IMP there not about
 ‘Don’t worry about that’

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 *pät* ‘it/this’). These ambiguous forms are not glossed for case.

- b gether anda ey gönom näsburona som annor dywr, uthan heller
 goats breathe not through nostrils.DEF like other animals but rather
 gönöm öronen dragha andhan (PMBond 217)
 through ears.DEF draw breath. DEF
 ‘Goats don’t breathe through the nostrils like other animals but rather through the ears’
- c hon ängxladhís mykit thy at hon gat ey andas gýnum munnin (Jär 66)
 she was-anxious much because that she could not breath through mouth. DEF
 ‘She was very worried since she could not breathe through the mouth’

Falk (1979, 2017) proposes that the *s*-form was an optional overt marker of the surface subject’s status as an underlying object. In this respect, the optional *-s* resembles the middle *-s* in *samlas* (6b), the difference being that the *s*-less form was not a transitive verb (cf (7a)), but a synonymous non-agentive intransitive verb. Falk (1997:161) further proposes that *sig* in *gruva sig*, *ångra sig* has the same function as *-s* in verbs like Old Swedish *ängslas* and *andas*: a visible marking that the surface subject is an underlying object, a spell-out of a trace in the object position. This symmetry of *-s* and *sik* is vital for the following discussion.⁵

A very similar idea is actually articulated already by Lindqvist:

Vid de forna A-verbena [enställiga opersonliga verb] är uppkomsten av dessa *s*-former särskilt lättbegriplig. Med den gamla konstruktionen, A-typen, voro verben transitiva *mik angrar*, *mik gruvar*; genom övergången till D-typ [personlig konstruktion] blevo de intransitiva. Det är naturligt att denna användning till en början var stötande för språkkänslan. Reflexivet fyllde, så att säga, det tomrum, som det försvunna objektet (det psykologiska subjektet) lämnade efter sig, utan att verbets karaktär av intransitivum därigenom ändrades. (Lindqvist 1912:45)

‘As for the former A-verbs [one-place impersonal verbs], the emergence of these *s*-forms is especially easy to understand. In the older construction, the A-type, the verbs were transitive, *mik angrar*, *mik gruvar*; by changing to D-types [the personal construction], they became intransitive. Naturally, this use was initially at odds with the language intuition. The reflexive filled, as it were, the empty space that the lost object (the psychological subject) left, without changing the intransitive character of the verb.’ (My translation)

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 *gläpja* (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 *gläpja* was a causative verb ‘make happy’, with its corresponding *s*-/*sik*-verb denoting the resulting change or state

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 þe gläpas af (Leg Bu 24)
 they.NOM are-happy of
 ‘They are happy about that’
 the ... glädde **sik** mot thetta spil (AI 9726)
 they.NOM were-happy REFL about this devastation
 ‘They were happy about this devastation’
- b thet dröue manzens hierna (KS 43)
 this distresses man.GEN.DEF.GEN brain.ACC
 ‘This distressed one’s brain’
 Tok constantinus her vm mykit dröuas (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 *nöghia*.

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 (FM 337, 1507)
 all.NOM felt-distressed there with
 ‘All men felt uneasy about this’
- d järlsens men gröywadhe sik fast (Di 267)⁶
 jarl.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.OBL 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 (MB 1B:74)
 then had him.DAT also dreamt
 ‘Then, he had also dreamt’
- b them war badhom thz sama drömt (Leg 3:10)
 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.⁷ *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 (irrespectively 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*.

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). *S-/sig*-forms are shown in (12c–d):

- (12) a nar människionne fasar fore lästinna hot (SpV 551)
 when man.DEF.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 owärdogh all fajas oc forfäras (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 dreadREFL 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 räuisa (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*

⁸ Case on the Experiencer is visible on the Old Swedish adjective accusative ending *-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 *forfäras* ‘be terrified’ in (12c), regularly formed from the transitive causative verb *forfära* ‘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 (Leg Bu 135)
 she trust.SUBJ more on devil.DEF
 ‘She has to trust more in the Devil’
- b gvz ängel ... tröste han räddan (Leg Bu 4)
 god.GEN angel console.SUBJ him.ACC afraid.ACC
 ‘May God’s angel console him while he is afraid’
- c tröst **pik** väl (Leg Bu 102)
 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 giort (Leg Bil 848)
 him.DAT regretted that he had well done
 ‘He regretted that he had done the right thing’
- b Mik angrar thz (Svm 141)
 me.OBL repents this
 ‘I regret this’
- c Tha angradhe sorghfullir sina bön (Leg Bil 878)
 then regretted sorrowing.NOM his.ACC request.ACC
 ‘Then the sorrowing man regretted his request’
- d Dogh iagh ångrar jagh kom bort så wijda (1611, Lindqvist 1912:91)
 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 ofruitsamlikom angir (Bir 1:160)
 Judas repented_{REFL} even though with unavailing remorse/repentance
 ‘Judas repented, even though with unavailing remorse/repentance’

Today, *ångra* 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 *ångra* with *gruva* (see section 1.2 above). However, while *gruva* was a one-place impersonal verb (in Lindqvist’s terminology “A-type”), *ångra* 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 *ångra* 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 (PK 234)
 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 (ST 46)
 afterwards regretted me.OBL it much hardly
 ‘Afterwards, I regretted this very much’
 b när världen 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’

- c Också ångrar det mig icke, att jag ... (1829, Lindqvist 1912:91)
 also makes-repentant it me.OBJ not that I ...
 ‘Also, it does not make me regretful that I ...’
- d ... at thz ey sidhan angrar han (AI 1332)
 that this not later makes-repentant him.ACC
 ‘... that this will not make him repentant later’
- e Herren swoor, thet skal icke ångra honom (1526, 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. *hon* ‘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 *fortryta*, 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 sannerligh (1645, Lindqvist 1912:96)
 such disapprove I.NOM certainly
 ‘I certainly disapprove such things’
- c Skeer thet offtere, Dhå skall thet oss fast förtryte (1543, 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 Siälen at andre skola hafva nöije
 it annoys them.OBJ in to soul.DEF that others shall have pleasure
 i verlden och de måste vara utan. (1730, 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):⁹

- (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)
 annoy REFL over them
 ‘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)
 bourgeois.DEF can never annoy
 ‘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 Här hafwa warit ... många 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’

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.NOM most please REFL
 (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 (MD 79)
 do all the bad that them.OBL please
 '(They) do all the evil things that they want'
- b Innan tre nätter, skall liggia så stark ijs på siön, att mann kan
 before three nights will lay such strong ice on lake.DEF that man can
 rijda mäd många hästar thär uppå, om så behagas. (1680, SAOB *behaga* 5 a)
 ride with many horses there upon if so pleases
 '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 hafdhe en människia alla werldena hänne nögdhe ey än tha (ST 510)
 had a person whole world.DEF her.DAT 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.DAT this
 ‘She was not content with this’
- c Nögdhe henne wäl ... at hon haffdhe hona til patronam (Leg 3:13)
 was-content her.DAT well that she had her as patron-saint’
 ‘She was well content that she had her as her patron saint’
- d ther at nögdhe 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 nögdhis 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: *þökkias* (from *þakker* ‘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 kändombir är gudhi thäkkir (MB 1B:375)
 godly teaching is god.DAT pleasant
 ‘Godly teaching is pleasant for God’
- b conungin ... wardh hwariom manne ledher (Leg Bil 230)
 king.DEF became every.DAT man.DAT 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 *þykkia* ‘think’ had an *s*-form, but not completely synonymous, since the dative Experiencer of *þykkias* was optional. Thus, *-s* manipulated the argument structure/valency, as was (and is) the normal. *Þykkias* 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, **päkkia* and **lepa*, with the regular reading of ‘make something (un)pleasant (for somebody)’. Causative **päkkia*, **lepa* are not attested in Old Swedish, but found in Old Icelandic. *S*-forms *päkkias*, *lepas* 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 thäkkias ödhmiuka manna böne (Bir 2:32)
 how much god.DAT is-pleased humble.GEN men.GEN prayer.NOM
 ‘... how much God is pleased by humble men’s prayer’
- b thzta är sorgh at wngom aldre ledhis with 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 täckäs 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 with twnga liffuet (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 *päkkias* and *lepas*, *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 nögdas 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 medh liltet 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 fasbiörn olson hadhe honom wel nøkt fore then gardin (ATb 2:261, 1485)
 FasbjörnOlson 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 **päkkia*, **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 nögdh (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 (*ångra*, *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.

Cited Old Swedish texts

Al = *Konung Alexander*, SFSS 12, ed. G. E. Klemming, Stockholm, 1862. Written c. 1380, based on a Latin original. Manuscript from 1430–1450

ATb = *Arboga stads tänkebok*, SFSS 53, eds E. Noreen & T. Wennström, Uppsala, 1935–50

Bir = *Birgittas uppenbarelsen*, SFSS 14:1–3, ed. G.E. Klemming, Stockholm, 1857–61. Translated from Latin in the 1380th. Bir 1: manuscript from c. 1450, Bir 2–3: manuscript from the beginning av 14th century

BSH = *Bidrag till Skandinaviens historia ur utländska arkiver*, ed. C. G. Styffe, 1859–84

Di = *Sagan om Didrik af Bern*, SFSS 10, ed. G.-O. Hylthén-Cavallius, Stockholm, 1850–54. Written sometime between 1449 and 1476, based on an Old Norse original. Manuscript from late 15th or early 16th century

FM = *Nya källor till Finlands Medeltidshistoria* 1–5, ed. E. Grönblad, Köpenhamn, 1857

- Jär = *Järteckenboken*. In *Klosterläsning* SSFS 22, pp. 1 – 128, ed. G.E. Klemming, Stockholm 1877. Contemporary manuscript from 1385
- KS = *En nyttigh bok, om Konunga Styrilse och Höfdinga*, ed. J. T. Bure 1634, from a lost manuscript from late 15th century. Phototype in SFSS 39:1. Written c. 1330
- Leg = *Ett fornsvenskt legendarium*, SFSS 7:1, ed. G. Stephens, Stockholm 1847. Written sometime between 1276 and 1307, based on a Latin original. Manuscripts: Codex Bureanus (Bu) from c. 1350. Codex Bildstenianus (Bil) from first half of the 15th century
- Leg 3 = *Ett fornsvenskt legendarium*, SFSS 7:3, ed. G. Stephens, Stockholm 1874. Manuscript from the middle of 15th century
- LRK = *Lilla Rimkrönikan*. In *Svenska medeltidens rim-krönikor* SFSS 17:1, pp. 215–31, ed. G.E. Klemming, Stockholm, 1865. Contemporary manuscript from 1457
- MB 1B = *Fem Moseböcker på fornsvenska*, SFSS 60, ed. O. Thorell, Uppsala 1959. Written the first half of 14th century. Manuscript from 1526
- MB 2 = *Svenska medeltidens bibelarbeten*, SFSS 9:2, utg. G.A. Klemming, Stockholm, 1853. Translated from Latin, late 15th century. Manuscript from 1526
- MD = *Medeltidens dikter och rim*, SFSS 25, ed. G.E. Klemming, Stockholm, 1881–82. The example is from a poem written in the beginning of the 15th century, manuscript from the first half of the same century
- Mecht = *Hel. Mechthilds uppenbarelser*, SFSS 32, ed. R. Geete, Stockholm 1899. Translated from Latin 1469, manuscript from c. 1500 or somewhat older
- PK = *Prosaiska krönikan*. In *Småstycken på forn svenska*, pp 219–248, ed. G.E. Klemming, Stockholm, 1868–81. Written sometime 1450–1457, contemporary manuscript.
- PMBond = *Peder Månssons Bondakonst*, SFSS 75, ed. J. Granlund, Uppsala, 1983. Author's own manuscript from 1516–1519, based on a Latin original
- RK 1 = *Erikskrönikan*. In *Svenska medeltidens rim-krönikor*, SFSS 17:1, ed. G.E. Klemming, Stockholm, 1865. Probably written in the 1320th, manuscript from the 1470th.
- RK 2 = *Karlskrönikan*. In *Svenska medeltidens rim-krönikor*, SFSS 17:2, ed. G.E. Klemming. Stockholm, 1866. Original manuscript from 1452
- Schack = *Schack-tafvels lek*. In *Medeltidens dikter och rim*, SFSS 25, pp. 200–309. Probably translated 1450–75. Manuscript from 1492.
- SD = *Svenskt diplomatarium*, vol. 4 ed. B. E. Hildebrand, Stockholm 1865-1878
- SpV = *Speculum Virginum*, SFSS 31, ed. R. Geete, Stockholm 1897–98. Translated from Latin sometime between 1472 and 1486. Manuscript from late 15th century or early 16th century
- ST = *Siälinna tröst*, SFSS 59, ed. S. Henning, Uppsala, 1954. Translated from German in the 1430th, manuscript from 1438–1442
- STb 2 = *Stockholm stads tänkeböcker 1504–1514*, ed. J.A. Almquist. 1931
- Su = *Susos Gudelige Snilles Väckare*, SFSS 18, ed. R. Bergström, Stockholm, 1868–70. Translated from Latin in the end of the 15th century. Contemporary manuscript

Svm = *Sju vise mästare*, in *Prosadikter från Sveriges medeltid*, SFSS 28, pp 111–172, ed. G.E. Klemming, Stockholm, 1887-89. Probably translated in the second half the 14th century or early 15th century, from French or Low German. Manuscript from the 1430th.

SFSS = *Svenska fornskriftssällskapets samlingar*

References

- Allen, Cynthia. 1986. Reconsidering the history of *like*. *Journal of Linguistics* 22, pp. 375–409
- Allen, Cynthia. 1995. *Case Marking and Reanalysis. Grammatical Relations from Old to Early Modern English*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Borin, Lars, Markus Forsberg & Johan Roxendal. 2012. Korp - the corpus infrastructure of Språkbanken. In *Proceedings of LREC 2012*, 474–478. Istanbul: ELRA
- Eythórsson, Thórhallur & Jóhanna Barðdal. 2003. Oblique Subjects: A Germanic Inheritance! *Working Papers in Scandinavian Syntax* 71:145–202
- Falk, Cecilia. 1997. *Fornsvenska upplevarverb*. (Lundastudier i nordisk språkvetenskap A 49) Lund: Lund University Press
- Falk, Cecilia. 2007. Kilkonstruktionen och ordföljd i äldre fornsvenska. In: L. Wollin, A. Saarukka & U. Stroh-Wollin (eds) *Det moderna genombrottet – också en språkfråga? Studier i svensk språkhistoria* 9. Skrifter från Svenska institutionen vid Åbo Akademi 5, Åbo, pp. 90–97
- Falk, Cecilia. 2017. Medial *s*-verbs in Old Swedish. Some unsuspected patterns and cases. Talk given at the workshop Variation and change in the Verb Phrase, University of Oslo, 15–16 May 2017
- Lindqvist, Axel. 1912. *Förskjutning i förhållandet mellan grammatiskt och psykologiskt subjekt i svenskan*. Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup
- SAOB = *Svenska akademiens ordbok*, 1898–. Lund.
- Sdw = K. F. Söderwall. 1884–1918. *Ordbok öfver svenska medeltids-språket*, with *Supplement*. 1925–1973, Lund
- Sundman, Marketta. 1985. Från *Mik ångrar* till *Jag ångrar*. In: *Folkmålsstudier* 29, pp. 85–123
- Thráinsson, Höskuldur. 2007. *The Syntax of Icelandic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Zaenen, Annie, Joan Maling & Höskuldur Thráinsson. 1985. Case and grammatical functions: the Icelandic passive. *Natural Languages and Linguistic Theory* 3, pp. 441–483

Cecilia Falk
 Stockholm University
 Department of Swedish Language and Multilingualism
 106 91 Stockholm, Sweden
cecilia.falk@su.se