

# Pragmatic Factors in the Evolution of the Romance Reflexive (with special reference to Spanish)

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*The reflexive has undergone a significant extension of its functions in all the Romance languages, especially in Spanish. In this article it is argued that the historical trajectory of the reflexive follows an evolutionary hierarchy which is ordered according to both semantic and pragmatic criteria, and that the Romance languages differ according to the stage of the hierarchy they have reached, even though puristic intervention can occasionally upset what might be considered their natural evolution.*

*The direct object function of the reflexive pronoun is distinguished from its indirect object function. When the reflexive form of certain verbs does not admit the possibility of a REFERENTIAL interpretation, it lends itself to a metaphorical interpretation, which in the case of direct object reflexives is the starting point for MIDDLE, ERGATIVE, and PASSIVE values. To this evolutionary sequence there also belongs the IMPERSONAL reflexive, which for intransitive verbs has its origin in a reanalysis of the MIDDLE reflexive and quickly extends by analogy to intransitive verbs. Indirect object reflexives give rise to a BENEFACTIVE value, from which the so-called NUANCE reflexive stems. It can be seen that each stage of the functional extension of the reflexive is in accordance with pragmatic expectations and exploits more fully the syntactic possibilities of the language. Finally, there is a short discussion of the degree to which it is possible to speak of ambiguity among the many reflexive values which have become established in the modern language.*

## **1. Pragmatics and the Romance Reflexive**

My contention in this article is that pragmatic factors are an important agent in accounting for the expansion of the functions of the Romance reflexive. The reflexive is a remarkably versatile form in all the Romance languages, nowhere more so than in Spanish. The change is generally a continuous history of addition, without loss, of function, and is an example of what I have in another context called capitalization (see Pountain forthcoming). This capitalizing process is, I will argue, ordered and constrained according to pragmatic and semantic considerations, on the basis of which we can establish the evolutionary hierarchy which is consistent both with such chronological evidence as we have and with the distribution of reflexive

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functions in the modern Romance languages. There is also an obvious associated question as to how it is that Spanish permits synchronically such a wide range of reflexive usage without overlap of function or ambiguity in the message, and I will briefly explore this, arguing that this too is in part due to the same pragmatic factors that allow the extension in the first place.

While linguists have frequently been aware of such motivations in syntactic and morphological change, I feel that they have rarely articulated them with appropriate prominence. I am struck, for instance, by Green (1988: 110), writing in the following terms:

*Curiously* [my italics], voice is the verbal category with which pronominals have been most closely linked during the history of Spanish. The connection is essentially due to the cliticization of the reflexive pronouns, a development which seems likely to result in the emergence of a new set of medio-passive paradigms.

or by Löfstedt (1956: 389, cited in Jensen 1986: 215), who describes the use of a reflexive pronoun with verbs of movement as a '*merkwürdige* Verbreitung' [my italics]. As I will show, it is not curious at all that the reflexive is an exponent of voice. The cliticization referred to by Green may indeed play a part in this process; but the employment of the reflexive as a middle and ultimately as a passive can be seen not so much as a process of grammaticalization or reanalysis as the outcome of a process of natural semantic and pragmatic associations with the reflexive idea itself, and almost certainly began before cliticization of the pronoun to the verb (see 7 and 8 below). The semantic dimensions of this aspect of the trajectory of Romance reflexives have been traced by Croft et al. (1987) and described in some detail by Kemmer (1993). However, I believe that a semantic/pragmatic view can also be taken of the further evolution of what I will call the '*nuance*' function of the reflexive with intransitives.

## 2. The historical trajectory of the Romance Reflexive

I construe the historical trajectory of the Romance reflexive as the hierarchical scheme shown in Figure 1. The descriptors in boxes will be explained in the course of 2.2; beneath them appear the languages in which these functions are present, parentheses denoting some restriction and a deletion denoting attestation at some point in the course of the history of the language with subsequent disappearance.

### 2.1 Traditional terminology and the notion of the passive

Much use of terms such as 'reflexive', 'middle', and 'passive' is flawed because it has not broken free of traditional morphological nomenclature and language-specificity: Ernout & Thomas (1953: 202) see the Latin *moueri* as having 'une valeur moyenne, le plus souvent un sens réfléchi' most probably because the modern French parallel is *se mouvoir*; an English speaker, on the other hand, is more likely to see *moueri* as having an 'intransitive' meaning because it corresponds to *to move*. Most strikingly, in a number of the standard accounts of the fate of the Latin inflected passive, the chief point of interest is the assumed morphological 'substitution' of *laudor* by the erstwhile Perfect *laudatus sum* and the generalization of this periphrasis to the whole paradigm, the reflexive often being referred to as nothing

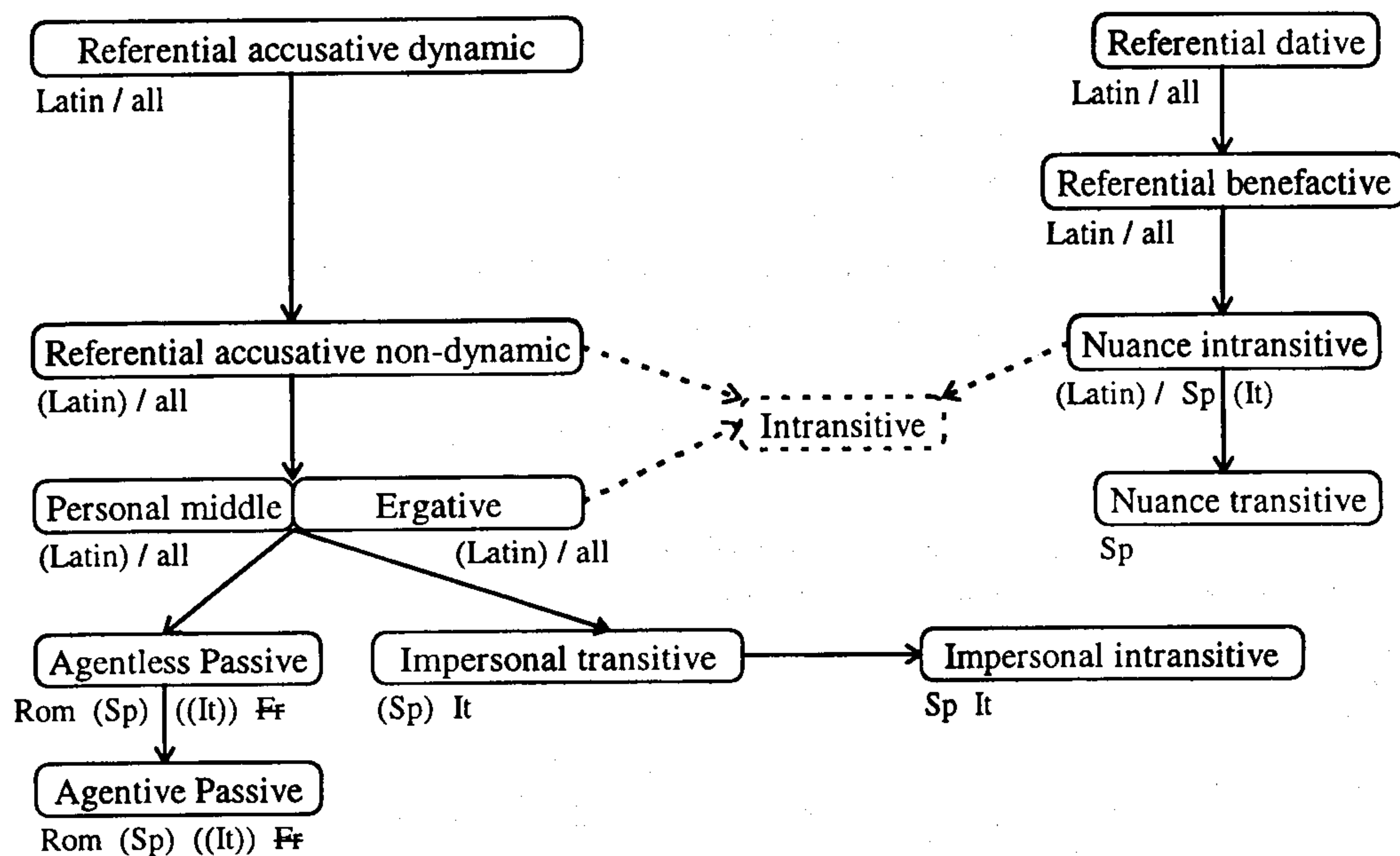


FIGURE 1: The evolutionary hierarchy of reflexive functions

more than an 'alternative' way of expressing the passive idea (Harris 1978: 191). The same is true of the many contrastive accounts of the Spanish and English passives which are offered in pedagogical grammars. However, if, instead, we were to start at the functional rather than at the morphological end of things, we might have a quite different kind of account. The functions discharged by the Latin passive are listed in (1):

(1) Functions of the Latin morphological passive:

- a. 'Syntactic' passive, contracting a regular opposition with active forms, and available only with transitive verbs. The subject of the active verb is the agent of the passive verb.

Numa leges dedit → Leges a Numa datae sunt  
'Numa gave laws' → 'Laws were given by Numa'

- b. The impersonal passive.

Itur  
'People go'

An intransitive verb used in this way may take an agent which hence would be the subject of the corresponding active verb:

Nos currimus → A nobis curritur  
'We run' → 'We run' (lit. 'It is run by us')

## c. Passive as the equivalent of the modern Romance REFERENTIAL reflexive.

Lat. *lauari* = Sp. *lavarse*  
 Lat. *accingi* = Sp. *vestirse*  
 Lat. *colligi* = Sp. *reunirse*<sup>1</sup>

d. Passive as the equivalent of a modern Romance intransitive.<sup>2</sup>

*Memoria minuitur* (Cic., *C.M.* 21, cited in Ernout & Thomas 1953: 202)  
 'Memory diminishes'  
*Omnia in unius potestate uertentur* (Ver. *act. pr.* 20, cited *ibidem*)  
 'Everything relies on the power of one person alone'

## e. What may be designated the morphological, or purely formal, passive, used to form deponent and semi-deponent verbs.

It can quickly be seen by comparison with Modern Spanish that functions (1b–e) are in varying degrees dischargeable by the reflexive, and that even (1a), in some circumstances to which I shall return later, is discharged by the reflexive. The *ser*-passive in Modern Spanish, in fact, shows a substantial reduction in number of functions compared with the *laudor* form of Latin: there are even other passive auxiliaries which become available, most notably *estar*, which is the exponent of the stative passive rendered by ESSE + past participle in Latin; thus Lat. *clausa est* = Sp. *está cerrada*. Add to all this that the *ser*-passive is more or less totally absent from some registers of Spanish (indeed, the passive may not have been common in spoken Latin either, see Löfstedt 1956: 71), and from the functional point of view it would be much more appropriate to say that, for Spanish at least, the Latin passive was replaced in most of its functions by the reflexive, the *ser*-passive being infrequent and very circumscribed, a process that can be represented graphically in Figure 2.

Only the questionable assumption that the passive function is the primary function of the form labelled the morphological passive and the weight of Latinate

<sup>1</sup> Ernout & Thomas (1953) call these mediopassives and cite as major classes verbs relating to bodily activities and movement. Some of these, as already noted, would not readily be thought of as reflexive by, e.g., an English speaker. *Lauari* 'to wash (oneself)' (Fr. *se laver*) and *accingi* 'to dress (oneself)' (Fr. *se vêtir*) are such cases. On the other hand, *tergeri* 'to wipe oneself' (Fr. *s'essuyer*) does correspond to an English reflexive 'to dry oneself'. Furthermore, there is variation between some passives and the corresponding reflexives in Latin itself: according to Ernout & Thomas, *se dedere*, *se exercere* and *se tegere* are actually more common than *dedi*, *exerceri* and *tegi* in a reflexive sense while *se ferre* and *ferri*, *sese excruciare* and *excruciari*, *se continere* and *contineri* are used together. The complete list given is: *accingi* 'se vêtir', *adsimulari* 'se rendre semblable à, simuler', *amici* 'se vêtir', *cingi* 'se vêtir', *colligi* 'se rassembler', *dedi* 'se rendre', *excruciari* 'se tourmenter', *exerceri* 's'exercer', *ferri* 'se porter (se diriger) vers', *indui* 'se vêtir', *insterni* 'se vêtir', *lauari* 'se laver', *moueri* 'se mouvoir', *ornari* 'se parer', *purgari* 'se justifier', *simulari* 'se rendre semblable à, simuler', *uix teneri quin* 'se retenir à peine de', *tergeri* 's'essuyer', *uehi* 'se transporter', *uertii* 'se tourner', *ungui* 'se parfumer', *uolui* 'se rouler'.

<sup>2</sup> The complete list given by Ernout & Thomas (1953) is: *gigni* 'provenir de', *uideri* 'sembler, paraître', *effundi* 'se répandre', *frangi* 'se briser', *minui* 'diminuer', *mutari* 'changer', *uertii* 'tourner; dépendre de'.

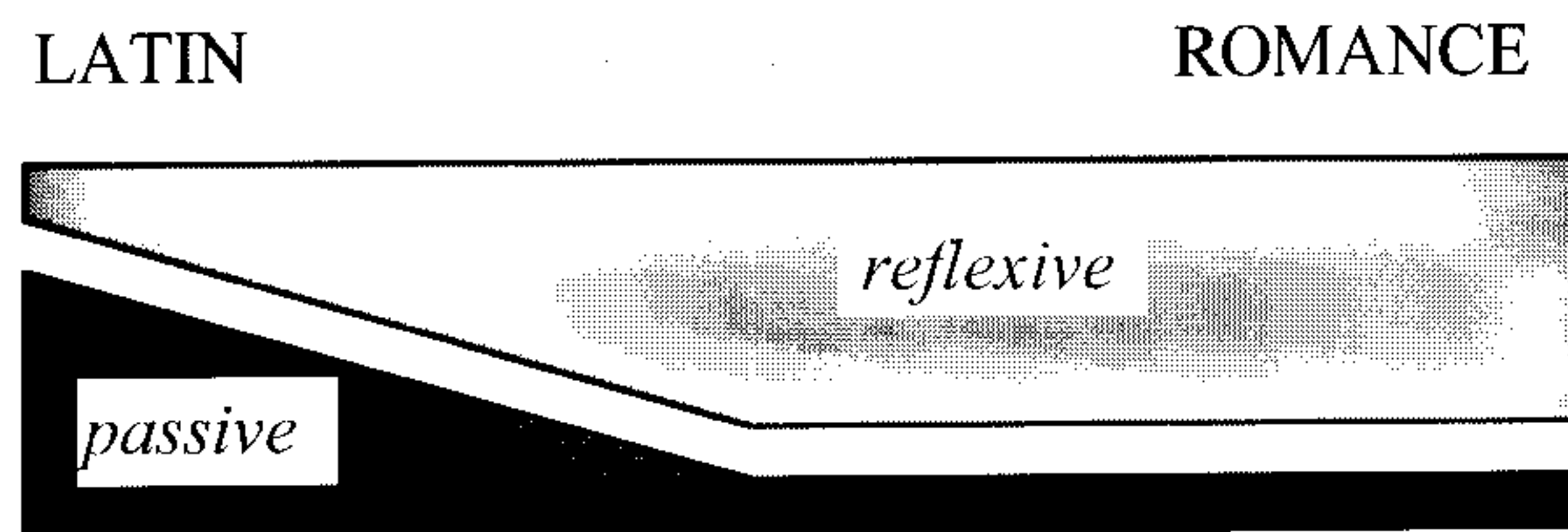


FIGURE 2: The relative functional load of passive and reflexive in Latin and Romance

grammatical tradition, coupled with an over-emphasis on the written register of language, would persuade us otherwise (see also in this vein Lyons 1995: 78).

## 2.2 Functions in the evolutionary hierarchy<sup>3</sup>

### 2.2.1 Accusative functions

#### 2.2.1.1 Referential reflexives

I begin with what might be thought of as 'genuine' or 'literal' use of the reflexive, which I will denote *referential*. In *dynamic non-reciprocal referential reflexives* the reflexive pronoun denotes a full noun phrase or personal pronoun and is reinforceable in Romance by a tonic reflexive (Fr. *-même*, Sp. *mismo*, It. *stesso*, etc.). The argument represented by the reflexive may be either direct object (*accusative*) or indirect object (*dative*). The agent is typically animate. It is scarcely necessary to exemplify this function, which may be taken as the central function of the Latin reflexive, and presumably as the oldest. It is present in all the Romance languages, though accusative and dative are not always distinguished in the pronoun (Romanian is the only one of the standards to do so systematically). We can imagine that to this function was quickly added the *reciprocal* use of the third person reflexive, which was strictly rendered in the classical language by *inter se* rather than plain *se*. Reciprocity in modern Romance is usually not formally distinguished from non-reciprocity, though it may be explicitly marked by the such periphrastic additions as *uno a otro* in modern Spanish,<sup>4</sup> *les uns les autres* in modern French, etc. Pragmatic factors readily explain both the lack of case-distinction in the reflexive and the absence of an obligatorily-encoded reciprocal/non-reciprocal contrast. The lack of accusative/dative case distinction is most striking in the third person since the uniquely reflexive pronoun (Fr., Sp. *se*, It. *si*) contrasts with the often sharply distinguished non-reflexive third person (Fr. *le/lui*, Sp. *lo/le*,<sup>5</sup> Ptg. *o/lhe*, It. *lo/gli*, etc.). The distinction between direct and indirect object in the non-reflexive third person is of great importance, since there are many verbs which have both direct and indirect object arguments, both of which are most frequently filled by third persons.

<sup>3</sup> I have been inspired in some of what follows by Fagan (1992), though the categories she identifies for German, French, and English are not exhaustive for Spanish.

<sup>4</sup> Modern Spanish also incipiently has another means, represented by such verbs as *besarse con* 'to kiss', *escribirse con* 'to write', *encontrarse con* 'to meet' and *hablarse con* 'to talk' which can only have a reciprocal reading, by contrast with the plain reflexives *besarse*, etc., which can be either non-reciprocal or reciprocal (at least in principle, though the apparent choice is mostly pragmatically conditioned — *besarse* and *escribirse* are usually reciprocal, for example).

<sup>5</sup> At least generally in Latin-American Spanish. The basis for the distinction in the standard Peninsular language is different and has to do with 'personal' reference as well as case.

But such direct and indirect arguments are necessarily non-coreferential, and so the need for distinction is not as acute when a combination of different persons is used in these functions. Now in the case of the reflexive, not only would it be pragmatically unlikely for a verb to have direct and indirect object arguments which were coreferential with each other, but they would also have to be coreferential with the subject, i.e. of the form 'he offered himself to himself' (I do not know how to express this in any Romance language with which I am familiar simply using clitic pronouns — nor do I need to). I say 'pragmatically' unlikely, because such a concept is not impossible to envisage (or even to express by a suitable paraphrase); the point — and this is precisely where semantics becomes pragmatics — is that it is not usual and hence not expected. As regards the reciprocal/non-reciprocal distinction, it is again for the most part pragmatically obvious which value is intended, as the relative infrequency of the disambiguating formulae mentioned shows. Take the sentences of (2):

- (2) a. Los estudiantes *se suelen preguntar* por qué la inscripción es tan cara  
 i. 'The students usually wonder why the fee is so high' (non-reciprocal)  
 ii. 'The students usually ask each other why the fee is so high' (reciprocal)
- b. Los estudiantes *se escribían* durante las vacaciones  
 i. 'The students write to themselves during the holidays' (non-reciprocal)  
 ii. 'The students write to one another during the holidays' (reciprocal)

(2a) is most likely pragmatically to be non-reciprocal (i.): it is unlikely that students would ask one another this question, which can presumably only be answered by the authorities, and therefore the meaning of English 'wonder' is the normal one here. On the other hand, (2b) is most likely to be reciprocal (ii.), since we pragmatically expect that people do not as a rule write to themselves.<sup>6</sup>

### 2.2.1.2 Non-dynamic

I now introduce a distinction between DYNAMIC and NON-DYNAMIC. There are some reflexive verbs which can still appropriately be described as REFERENTIAL, but which do not involve a high degree of transitivity or dynamic impact of the subject on the object. An example is Sp. *moverse* (3a):

- (3) a. Juan *se movió*  
 'Juan moved (intransitive)'
- b. ??Juan *se movió a sí mismo*  
 ('Juan moved himself')

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Babcock (1970: 69): 'practically, there is seldom any difficulty in understanding the reference [of a Spanish reciprocal construction]. Thus *Juan y María se miraron* would almost inevitably [my italics] be understood as *Juan y María se miraron uno a otro*.'

There clearly is a sense here, when the subject is animate, in which the subject could be construed, figuratively perhaps, as causing him or herself to make movement (in making this observation I avoid the valency-ambiguous English verb 'move'); but the actual lack of dynamicity is clearly revealed by the failure of reinforcement by a tonic pronoun (3b). The NON-DYNAMIC REFERENTIAL ACCUSATIVE may therefore be seen as a semantically weakened form of the DYNAMIC. Wonder (1990: 402) calls such reflexives 'metaphorical', exemplifying a process of 'deactivation'; Lyons (1982: 177), describing the French data, observes that in (4a) the act of throwing is more 'literal' than in (4b).

- (4) a. Elle l'a jeté par la fenêtre  
'She threw him out of the window'
- b. Elle s'est jetée par la fenêtre  
'She threw herself out of the window'

Many of these verbs indeed appear to have moved away in meaning from their non-reflexive counterparts until they are significantly different semantically, taking on a specialized or conventionalized meaning (though once again we must be careful not to be misled in such conclusions by translation-equivalents): a clear example is Sp *levantar* 'to raise' vs. *levantarse* 'to get up (from a lying or sitting position)' (not generally 'to raise oneself'). All this is a well-attested direction of semantic change which does not raise an eyebrow if we think of the evolution of these verbs as straightforward lexical histories. But why does it affect some verbs and not others? The answer lies in the pragmatics of the verbs concerned: although they normally imply the external agency of the subject on the object, use of the REFERENTIAL reflexive automatically denies such external agency, since subject and object are not distinct. The REFERENTIAL reflexive of such verbs is therefore interpretable as involving internal agency, such as automobility in the case of *moverse* and *levantarse*, for example. It is also important to notice that precisely because of such pragmatic considerations there is no ambiguity possible in *moverse* between a DYNAMIC and a NON-DYNAMIC reading: only in exceptional circumstances do people apply an external force to themselves in order to move or rise. The creation of a reflexive with *mover* and *levantar* hence does not present any conflict or inconsistency, but is simply an expansion of the reflexive to a verb that had no reflexive form before, with a pragmatically entirely predictable effect, as Alcina & Blecua (1975: 912 cited in Wonder 1990: 402) put it: 'no hay cambio de significado, pero el proceso de la acción no se realiza de la misma manera *por su propia naturaleza* [my italics]'. Alcina & Blecua identify such verbs as those of action or process (*acercar, acostar, esconder*, etc.) or those of personal care (*lavar, peinar, vestir*, etc.); I add the observation that these are all verbs which, like DYNAMIC REFERENTIAL reflexives, have animate subjects.

Latin in fact already shows some evidence of such NON-DYNAMIC REFERENTIAL reflexives:

- (5) a. *recipe te ad nos* (Cic. At. 4.15.2)  
'come back (lit. draw yourself back) to us'

- b. *omnis sese multitudo ad cognoscendum effudit* (Caes. B.C., 2,7,3)  
 'the whole crowd poured forth (lit. poured itself forth) to know' (Ernout & Thomas (1953: 214)

and such an extension of reflexive functions is indeed general in the Romance languages.

### 2.2.1.3 Personal middle ~ ergative

The next perceptible stage in the hierarchy of reflexive development is the use of the reflexive with an inanimate subject to create a PERSONAL MIDDLE reflexive or an ERGATIVE reflexive, to use Fagan's (1992) terminology. Fagan makes a distinction in terms of the understood nature of the agent, the verbal aspect and the typical modality.

- (6) a. *El libro se lee fácilmente* (PERSONAL MIDDLE)  
 'The book can be read easily'  
 b. *La puerta se abrió* (ERGATIVE)  
 'The door opened'

A PERSONAL MIDDLE reflexive can be created from a verb like Spanish *leer*: in (6a) an agent is necessarily involved even though it is not explicitly expressed; the sentence is stative in aspect and expresses a modality of ability. By contrast, the ERGATIVE reflexive of *abrir* in (6b) does not necessarily involve an agent (the door could have opened on its own); the sentence is non-stative and modally unmarked.<sup>7</sup> Now, all these properties constitute part of our pragmatic knowledge about the nature of these activities: we often think of doors opening on their own because we cannot readily identify an agent, though there must always be one (if not human, then the wind or heat causing a change in the dimensions of the wood or the hinges of the door, etc.); on the other hand, it is difficult to conceive of a book as reading of its own accord, since reading is an activity that can only be carried out by an intelligent being. The difference between PERSONAL MIDDLE and ERGATIVE is therefore in my

<sup>7</sup> I reproduce Fagan's characterization here, though I think only the first property mentioned, i.e. the implied involvement of an agent or otherwise, is important in Spanish (see also Lyons 1995: 78-9). In fact in the Spanish 'PERSONAL MIDDLE' *leerse*, such aspectual and modal properties seem to be closely allied to tense usage, and not to be invariable: *El libro se leyó en cinco minutos* has neither stative aspect nor 'ability' modality.

There is an associated issue here, beyond the immediate scope of this paper, concerning the non-availability of the personal middle reflexive in the perfective tenses in French, mentioned by Lyons (1982). Lyons observes that 'there is no obvious necessity for middle *se* to be excluded from punctual tenses rather than from habitual ones' (178-79) and concludes that it is the interaction with the *on* construction and the passive that restricts middle *se* in French. As I suggested in Pountain (1993: 173, note 4), the French exclusion of middle *se* from perfective tenses may have to do with the more implicit involvement of an agent in perfective action. It may also be the collision in French with *être* as both a reflexive perfect auxiliary and a passive auxiliary, a situation which is quite different in Spanish, where *haber* is found very early on as a reflexive auxiliary (PCG: *que se auien alçado*), a factor which clearly played an inhibiting role in the early stages of the perfect reflexive in Italian (Maiden 1996: 164, and, for a rather different view, Brambilla Ageno 1964: 200). Further properties of middles are explored in Lyons (1995: 83 ff.).



view primarily pragmatic. Lyons (1982: 178) comes to a very similar conclusion discussing virtually the same distinction (labelled 'middle' and 'neutral') in French when he says:

Whether or not there is understood to be an unexpressed agent depends on the semantics of the verbs concerned; some verbs permit an agentless interpretation while most do not.

Discrimination of the **ERGATIVE** is, however, of importance in seeing the link between the **REFERENTIAL NON-DYNAMIC REFLEXIVE** and the **PERSONAL MIDDLE REFLEXIVE**. Characteristic of the **ERGATIVE** is that an external agent is not envisaged as being involved in the verbal action; hence it is appropriate to think of a door as opening itself in (6b) in much the same way as Juan moving himself in *Juan se movió* (3a). The only difference is that the supposed agent of *La puerta se abrió* is inanimate. This, however, is a crucial difference, since once the possibility of an inanimate subject for a reflexive is established, the way is paved for a generalization of this possibility to all transitive verbs which have an inanimate patient in their argument structure. Of fundamental importance in permitting this expansion is that there is no risk of ambiguity between **REFERENTIAL reflexives** and **PERSONAL MIDDLE ~ ERGATIVE reflexives**, since a literal referential reflexive reading for the latter is pragmatically excluded when they take an inanimate subject.

Examples of the reflexive in **PERSONAL MIDDLE ~ ERGATIVE use** are already attested in Latin: within **ERGATIVE** we may include such instances as

- (7) a. *multas [. . .] causas aestimo [. . .] se sanare* (*Mul. Chir.*, 13, 28–9)  
 'I judge that many things get cured'
- b. *ita se nervi, qui laxaverint, constringunt* (*Mul. Chir.*, 203, 26)  
 'thus the nerves, which will have enlarged, bind together' (examples from Brambilla Ageno 1964: 200)

and within **PERSONAL MIDDLE**

- (8) a. *Myrina quae Sebastopolim se uocat* (Pliny, *Nat.*, 5.121)  
 'Myrina which is called Sebastopol'
- b. *mala rotunda [. . .] toto anno seruare se possunt* (Pallad., 3, 25, 18)  
 'round apples can be kept for the whole year'

Another extension which we can see as structurally expected is that **PERSONAL MIDDLES** should have not only inanimate but also animate subjects, e.g.

- (9) *Me crié en casa de mis abuelos*  
 'I was brought in my grandparents' home'

(9) cannot be thought of as a **NON-DYNAMIC ACCUSATIVE** like *moverse* and *escondarse* since it does not imply the active involvement of the subject in the action. Yet once again there is no pragmatic difficulty. The kind of verbs which form **PERSONAL MIDDLES** with animate subjects are precisely those which are pragmatically unlikely to be **REFERENTIAL reflexives**: people do not normally bring themselves up. (Once

again: they *may*, and then such a REFERENTIAL notion can be made explicit by the use of *a sí mismo(s)*; but the normal expectation is that they do not.)

#### 2.2.1.4 Towards the passive

The PERSONAL MIDDLE function we have been describing is quite far removed from any REFERENTIAL notion of the reflexive, even of a metaphorical nature, and it would seem that there is now only a short step to be taken towards the use of a PERSONAL MIDDLE reflexive as an AGENTLESS PASSIVE. This is the step we can imagine for (10) in Spanish:

- (10) La actriz, que llegó a fotografiarse ataviada con un casco norvietnamita durante la guerra (*El País Internacional*, 20 June, 88, cited in Pountain 1993: 174)  
 'The actress, who managed to get herself photographed adorned in a North Vietnamese helmet during the war'

Yet there remain clear (even if traditionally not well described) differences between the reflexive PERSONAL MIDDLE and the agentless *be*-passive in modern Romance. The difference between (11a) and (11b)

- (11) a. Las naranjas *se venden* en el mercado  
 'Oranges are sold / get sold in the market'  
 b. Las naranjas son vendidas en el mercado  
 'Oranges are [regularly] sold / are being sold in the market'

is partly aspectual (11b) can be interpreted only dynamically and progressively as 'oranges are being sold' or habitually as 'oranges are [regularly] sold', never as stative 'oranges are sold [cheaply here]'), and partly to do with the nature of the covert agent, it often being asserted that the *ser*-passive implies that an agent, even if covert, is dynamically involved in the verbal event while the PERSONAL MIDDLE reflexive makes no such implication.<sup>8</sup> Thus (11a) focuses on the activity of selling oranges whereas (11b) brings to mind the person or persons unknown who are selling oranges. There is also an associated nuance of contribution to the activity concerned: thus by introducing an adverb such as *fácilmente* there could be an implication in (11a) that the ease in selling the oranges was due to the quality of the oranges themselves, whereas in (11b) the ease would be attributable to the skill of those selling them.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See Pountain 1993: 172–74. The notion of 'necessary involvement, will, however, have to be construed differently from that already observed in the *personal middle reflexive*. While the 'necessary involvement' of the agent in a personal middle is a function of the pragmatic expectations on the verb (here, that oranges are incapable of selling themselves literally, but must have an external agent selling them), the 'necessary involvement' of the agent in a Romance *be*-passive is to be construed as a dynamic involvement — precisely the difference between the middle voice and the passive voice in their traditional definitions.

<sup>9</sup> Renzi (1988: 108) says that the difference between *Questi libri si vendono agevolmente* and *Questi libri sono venduti agevolmente* is that the former is to do with the books, the latter to do with the booksellers.

These facts are important in understanding the *passive* function. The *PASSIVE* either has an agent which is overt (*AGENTIVE*) or an agent which is necessarily specific and cannot be indefinite (*AGENTLESS*). A clear example in Spanish is (12a); this notion cannot be expressed by the reflexive (12b):

- (12) a. El radio fue descubierto (por los Curie) en 1898  
'Radium was discovered (by the Curies) in 1898'  
b. \*El radio *se descubrió* en 1898  
'(Radium was discovered in 1898)'

Even if *por los Curie*, the agent, is omitted, it is necessary to understand radium as having been discovered by someone, and (12b) is generally considered not to be acceptable in Spanish. Conversely, when no specific agent can be involved in a verbal event, the *ser*-passive is impossible:

- (13) a. \*Fueron producidos incidentes  
b. *Se produjeron* incidentes  
'Incidents occurred' (example from Gómez 1988: 186, cited in Pountain 1993: 173)

Again we must beware of terminology: '*pasiva refleja*' in Spanish has been used by many (including myself) to indicate functions of the morphological reflexive which resemble the *ser*-passive; however, in the terms I am using here, the '*passive reflexive*' is in fact a *PERSONAL MIDDLE* in which, as already stated, an agent is implied, but is not '*necessarily involved*' and certainly not overt. The achievement of a full *PASSIVE* function by the reflexive only occurs unequivocally when the reflexive has the option of taking an overt agent, therefore, and this is a position which so far is rare in Romance. It occurs at its clearest in Romanian:

- (14) O asemenea cercetare *s-a făcut* de mulți erudiți  
'Such research has been done by many scholars'

and is quite unambiguously attested in Spanish, from at least the sixteenth century, as the examples of 15 (deliberately numerous) show, although there is normative disapproval of the construction:

- (15) a. sabiendo que esta mi pena y flutuoso dolor no *se rige* por razón (*Celestina*, late fifteenth century)  
'knowing that this my sorrow and raging grief is not ruled by reason'  
b. Si os queréis *governar* por mí (example from Keniston 1937: 341, sixteenth century)  
'If you will be ruled by me'  
c. Calidades que *se comprenden, se sienten y se admiran* por el inteligente lector (Galdós, cited in Fernández Ramírez 1951: 419, nineteenth century)  
'Qualities which are understood, felt and admired by the intelligent reader'

- d. *Diose* la sentencia por el juez (example from Salvá 1867: 157, nineteenth century)  
 'The sentence was given by the judge'
- e. en el curioso uso peyorativo que *se da* a este término por nuestros bisoños descubridores de Europa (*El País*, 17 June 85, twentieth century)  
 'in the curious pejorative use given to this term by our naive discoverers of Europe'

Once again, I think pragmatic factors may be seen to allow such an extension. As we have seen, it is difficult to distinguish between a PERSONAL MIDDLE and an AGENTLESS PASSIVE, let alone think of a sentence which is actually ambiguous between such readings. If an agent is overtly expressed, as in (15), then an AGENTIVE PASSIVE reading is forced. If an agent is not overtly expressed, then generally the knowledge as to whether an agent is 'necessarily implied' (AGENTLESS PASSIVE) or not (PERSONAL MIDDLE) is deducible pragmatically from the overall context. In sentence (10), for example, we know pragmatically that an agent must be involved in the taking of a photograph; in sentence (9), on the other hand, we view bringing up a child as an essentially natural process, and in (13b), we are prepared to admit that incidents 'just happen'. (At least, such are my pragmatic judgments; if others have different judgments, then for them the formal categories I have proposed would be automatically changed.) So this is once again a similar phenomenon to the one I observed in establishing the complementary nature of PERSONAL MIDDLE and ERGATIVE reflexives. It shows us that the extension of the reflexive to *passive* function is pragmatically understandable, even if there may be other constraints which do not favour it. One such constraint is that an AGENTLESS PASSIVE with an animate subject, such as (10), may also have a REFERENTIAL reading, and it is possible that this perceived basis of ambiguity has restricted the use of the reflexive as a passive in Romance. However, there is ample evidence that such an extension has taken place quite widely in the Romance languages, even if it has sometimes subsequently been reversed. In French and Portuguese, an AGENTIVE PASSIVE function of the reflexive is attested in the classical language (16a–b); for Italian Maiden (1996: 164) describes it as attested 'occasionally'; we may also compare Old Provençal (16d):

(16) Agentive passive reflexives in Romance

French:

- a. Ce prétérit *se conjugue* par la plupart de cette sorte (example from Vaugelas, *Rem.*, I, 196, cited in Haase 1925: 172)  
 'This preterite is conjugated this way by the majority'

Portuguese:

- b. Aqui *se escreverão* novas histórias, por gentes estrangeiras (example from Camões, *Lus.*, VII, 55, cited in Naro 1976: 781)  
 'New histories will be written here by foreign peoples'

Italian:

- c. Il vino *si beve* dai ragazzi (example from Maiden 1996: 164)  
 'The wine is drunk by the boys'

Old Provençal:

- d. Volc que la patz *si fezes* de Raol, son nebot, ab los quatre fills N'Albert  
 (example from *Vidas*, XVII, R,12, cited in Jensen 1986: 216)  
 'He wanted peace to be concluded between [=by] Raoul, his nephew, and  
 Lord Albert's four sons'

### 2.2.1.5 The impersonal reflexives

Subsequent developments involve syntactic reanalysis, and once again I would contend that pragmatic factors allow this.

A PERSONAL MIDDLE reflexive may be expressed in Spanish with verb-second (17a) or verb-first (17b) order:

- (17) a. El libro *se lee*  
 b. *Se lee* el libro  
 'The book is read'

From (17b) it is a short step to the reanalysis of *el libro* as object rather than subject of *leer* (it after all continues to have the semantic function of patient). Some have gone so far as to claim that the reflexive pronoun *se* is also re-analysed as a subject, though in fact syntactically it retains many object functions. The construction within Romance seems to be fully productive in Spanish and Italian, which are both 'pro-drop' languages, and there is no inconvenience in seeing *se* simply as the marker of an indefinite and obligatorily non-overt subject. However, this is not an issue I wish to pursue here.<sup>10</sup> From the pragmatic point of view, it does not much matter whether (17a) is construed as a PERSONAL MIDDLE or an IMPERSONAL, since the relation of *el libro* to *leer* is always pragmatically clear. But the reanalysis permits other possibilities. The invariably singular verb and the marking of so-called 'personal' direct objects with the preposition *a* leads in Spanish to such possibilities as 18(a), which is significantly different from the REFERENTIAL (18b):

- (18) a. *Se admiraba* a los conquistadores  
 'The conquistadores were admired'  
 b. *Se admiraban* los conquistadores = Los conquistadores *se admiraban*  
 'The conquistadores admired themselves / each other'

(18a) is a very satisfactory means of rendering the PERSONAL MIDDLE ~ ERGATIVE notion with a human patient, which otherwise was restricted because of potential collision with the REFERENTIAL reflexive (18b). The development is therefore of

<sup>10</sup> Rizzi (1976) proposes this for Italian; Naro (1976: 783) for Portuguese. French does have an impersonal construction, but formed with *il*: *Il se brûle par an dans la cathédrale mille livres de cire* (Gautier, cited in Grevisse 1964: 542), 'Every year in the cathedral a thousand pounds of candles are burned'. The construction is, however, relatively rare and restricted to formal register. Naro (1976: 803) points out that it is well-established that the indefinite *homem* disappeared definitively from Portuguese and *hombre* from Spanish at just about the time that the IMPERSONAL reflexive first appeared. (For Spanish see also Brown 1931.)

pragmatic advantage to the language and allows impersonals which without the *a* would have offered problems of interpretation.<sup>11</sup> Having said that, the reanalysis also leads to another possibility: the generalization of *se* as an indefinite subject marker to all verbs, intransitive as well as transitive, a process which has been thoroughly carried out in Spanish, subject only to the limitation that the indefinite subject must be construed as animate, a feature which is entirely consistent with the evolutionary hierarchy as here described, since it is only with animate subjects that the construction is unequivocally different in nature from the PERSONAL MIDDLE ~ ERGATIVE. This last development, relatively late in the historical trajectory of the Romance reflexive,<sup>12</sup> again offers no pragmatic difficulty, since a reflexive pronoun attached to an intransitive verb cannot possibly be construed as having a referential reading.

## 2.2.2 Dative functions

### 2.2.2.1 Benefactive

The BENEFACTIVE is a dative function already familiar in Latin in usages traditionally termed 'dative of advantage', 'ethic dative', 'dative of the possessor', etc. It may be that BENEFACTIVE is too broad a term (the Latin dative case has many case-functions), but there seems no need to subdivide it for present purposes. Used reflexively, it indicates the involvement of the coreferential subject in some indirect way (i.e. not as patient) with the action of the verb (19a). In Romance, this benefactive use of the indirect object has extended to denote a relation between the subject and another verbal argument. One of its most frequently-encountered functions is the expression of 'inalienable possession' of parts of the body (19b); such use of the benefactive indirect object non-reflexively is very versatile in Spanish, and is often not easily rendered in English translation (19c):

#### (19) Benefactive datives

Latin:

- a. Sic vos non *vobis mellificatis*, apes! (Virgil)  
'Thus you do not make honey for yourselves, bees!'

Spanish:

- b. Me lavo la cara  
'I wash my face'
- c. ¡No me lo pongas allí!  
'Don't put it there!' (implying it's mine, or it will be in my way or will affect me in some other way)

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Keniston (1937: 340-41). Keniston's assumption that *se imita* was ambiguous with a personal subject should be treated with some suspicion. Many cases of theoretical ambiguity were not ambiguous in practice because of discourse contextual factors (cf. Conclusion of this paper): thus *se catibaron judios* was pragmatically unlikely to have meant 'Jews captured themselves' but only 'Jews were captured', and when Santa Teresa writes *se pueden imitar los santos*, it is pragmatically unlikely that she would have meant 'the Saints may imitate themselves', only, 'the Saints may be imitated'.

<sup>12</sup> Keniston (1937: 340-4), dates it at late sixteenth century in Spain. It seems to be earlier in Italian (see Maiden 1996: 165).

### 2.2.2.2 Nuance reflexives

Such versatility helps us to see the basis of the next stage in the development of the BENEFACTIVE function of the dative, which is its use with intransitive verbs in a much less obviously identifiable semantic function (see Väänänen 1981: 123–24). As with the expansion from DYNAMIC to NON-DYNAMIC ACCUSATIVES, we need to envisage a process of semantic weakening to arrive at the next stage in the hierarchy, which I have labelled the NUANCE INTRANSITIVE reflexive, following Moreira Rodríguez & Butt's (1996) term '*se de matización*'. What this label implies is that the reflexive pronoun has ceased to have any obvious semantic referentiality, as a consequence of which it cannot be construed as a verbal argument; it is therefore most readily construable as a part of the verb itself. This rather radical development is amply attested in late Latin:

- (20) a. *ambulauimus nobis per heremum* (Ant. Placent., *Itin.*, 36)  
 'we went through the desert'  
 b. *statim fugiet sibi* (*Mul. Chir.*, 681)  
 'it will immediately flee away'  
 c. *sedete uobis* (*Peregr. Aeth.*, 36,5)  
 'sit down' (examples from Ernout & Thomas 1953: 214)

There are also examples of apparently the same phenomenon with the accusative form of the reflexive pronoun:

- (21) a. *recipit se episcopus et vadent (vadunt) se unusquisque* (*Peregr. Aeth.*)  
 'the bishop retired and each one went away'  
 b. *humor sudoris [. . .] se desidat* (*Mul. Chir.*, 220)  
 'the moisture of sweat settles'  
 c. *quod extra digitum se eminebit* (*Mul. Chir.*, 565)  
 'which will project outside the finger' (examples from Ernout & Thomas 1953: 214)

Once again, a pragmatically-based account of this change can be offered. The intransitive verbs in question are those which cannot be construed pragmatically as taking a referential dative or benefactive argument, so there is no question of ambiguity of interpretation between NUANCE INTRANSITIVE and REFERENTIAL REFLEXIVE. The distinction between dative and accusative form of the reflexive pronoun is also unimportant, since it has no referential semantic import and is not an argument of the verb.

We have now reached a stage where on both the accusative and dative sides of reflexive development the reflexive pronoun is either weakly referential (the NON-DYNAMIC REFERENTIAL ACCUSATIVE, the ERGATIVE), metaphorically referential (the PERSONAL MIDDLE) or not referential at all (the NUANCE INTRANSITIVE). Such constructions therefore do not have a fully referential object, and in this they are like intransitive verbs. In a way, then, the reflexive can be construed as a marker of intransitivity. In fact, there is evidence in early Romance and in later Spanish to

suggest that the morphological reflexive comes to be strongly associated with intransitivity. First, all the Romance languages have verbs which are 'inherently reflexive', i.e. which exist only in reflexive form: such verbs are typically inherently intransitive pragmatically too.<sup>13</sup> The verb *arrepentirse* is such a verb, as are its cognates. Many commentators point out the syntactic unacceptability of such a construction as *\*arrepentir algo*. But it is not just a case of *\*arrepentir algo* being syntactically unacceptable: it is pragmatically impossible, since the notion of 'to repent' does not admit the possibility of a patient. A second fact suggesting the formal association of reflexivity with intransitivity is that in Latin-American Spanish, there appears to be a trend to reflexivize a number of verbs which are usually intransitive in the Peninsula, e.g. *regresarse* corresponding to Peninsular *regresar* 'to go back' (see Kany 1951: 186–96).

Despite the possibility that the reflexive may be construed as an intransitive marker in these ways, it is not impossible for a NUANCE INTRANSITIVE reflexive and a non-reflexive intransitive to coexist in Spanish — maybe because the reflexive is neither uniquely a marker of intransitivity nor is intransitivity uniquely marked by the reflexive. Indeed, there are even 'dereflexive' intransitives like *parar*, which evolved from Lat *parare* 'to prepare' → *parar* 'to place', whence *pararse* 'to place oneself (referential)' → 'to stop', whence in turn *parar* 'to stop (transitive) ~ 'to stop (intransitive)'. A more recent example is *entrenar* from *entrenarse* (see Butt & Benjamin 1994: 355).<sup>14</sup>

However, what we might have been tempted to see as an inexorable tendency to associate the reflexive with intransitivity is prevented by one of the most intriguing aspects of the capitalization process. In Spanish, there is always a difference in meaning of some kind between formally corresponding reflexive and non-reflexive intransitives. Charting this difference is one of the most problematic areas of the description of Spanish. Take, for example, Moreira Rodríguez & Butt's (1996: 249–55) description (here given in digest form) of the difference between the latterly-created intransitive *parar* and the intransitive reflexive *pararse* 'to stop':

(Inanimate subjects) When the halt is expected or planned or natural the non-pronominal form is normally used. In the case of vehicles like buses, trains, the non-pronominal form refers to scheduled halts at recognized stops.

(Animate subjects) The non-pronominal form suggests that the subject is in a car [...] (Imperative) [...] indicates either motion in a vehicle or the idea of ceasing to do something. . .

(Inanimate subjects) As far as vehicles are concerned, the pronominal form suggests a spontaneous or unscheduled stop – this includes stopping at traffic lights, which is not scheduled [...] Similarly, the pronominal form indicates unexpected, abnormal stops, e.g., of machinery. It may also indicate spontaneous stops. The non-pronominal form is also accepted, but by a minority.

<sup>13</sup> More research surely needs to be done on the evolutionary trajectory of such verbs. It is notable that few derive directly from Latin: *arrepentirse* itself is derivable from Lat *repenitere* based on *poenitere*, though the syntax of the latter in Latin was impersonal (*poenitet aliquem alicuius rei*).

<sup>14</sup> Dereflexivization of course has happened extensively in English, similarly for pragmatic reasons. Cf. Ogura (1989: 1), who speaks of a tendency in Modern English 'to avoid reflexive pronouns *when the meaning is clear* [my italics] (e.g. *I wash* instead of *I wash myself*).



(Animate subjects) The pronominal form suggests that the subject is on foot [. . .]  
 Spontaneous cessation of activity also takes the pronominal form [. . .] (Imperative)  
 [. . .] indicates the person was in motion [. . .]

(We note, as expected, that while *parar* is both transitive or intransitive in Spanish, *pararse* is uniquely intransitive.) What appears to be happening, therefore, is that Spanish is capitalizing on the possibility of extending the reflexive and as a result hewing out new nuances of meaning based on the opposition between reflexive and non-reflexive forms of the same verb. The process has gone still further to embrace transitives too. Again I give Moreira Rodríguez & Butt's (1996: 131–2) account of *creer* and *creerse*:

The non-pronominal form [. . .] translates 'to believe' or 'to hold an opinion'. The usual – but not the necessary – implication is that the subject considers his/her belief reasonable or well-founded.

The pronominal form is the preferred *option* when we want to indicate that the belief is unfounded. It is less formal than the non-pronominal form and usually stresses incredulity, annoyance or ingenuousness on the part of the speaker.

Thus:

- (22) a. *Creo que ya ha llegado*  
 'I think he has arrived'
- b. *Me creía todo lo que me decías*  
 'I believed everything you were telling me' (example from Moreira Rodríguez & Butt 1989: 132)

Such NUANCE TRANSITIVE reflexives behave like ordinary transitive verbs as regards their argument structure (though they are unlike most transitives in not accepting, as is to be expected, passivization, or reflexivization), so we might reasonably ask why the reflexive pronoun is not interpretable as their patient, or why an overt direct object with such verbs does not cause difficulty in interpretation. Again the answer lies partly in the pragmatics of the verb itself. A clear example is *comer*. In

- (23) *(Me) comí dos filetes*  
 'I ate two steaks'

*comer* apparently has two objects, *dos filetes* and *me*. However, while eating steaks and eating oneself are both possibilities, it is plain that eating steaks is the normal and expected possibility, whereas eating oneself would be very unusual. Of course, there is also the structural difficulty here that if *me* were to be interpreted as the patient, *dos filetes* would be left without a plausible argument rôle. Once again, therefore, I suggest that pragmatic factors are involved in allowing the extension of the reflexive in this way.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> In this light the example quoted by Moreira Rodríguez & Butt (1989: 349) is unusual: *Y me veo llegar a rastras al capitán* 'And I saw the captain dragging himself along'. The multivalency of *verse* is discussed below.

### 2.3 The hierarchy disturbed

There have been reversals in the expansion of the reflexive, though these result simply in the retreat to a former state of development, and appear not to compromise the hierarchy. We have seen, for example, how in pre-modern French, a reflexive AGENTIVE PASSIVE is attested, though this is not available in the modern language. In Old Tuscan, a NUANCE INTRANSITIVE seems to have been created (*andarsi, venirsi, essersi*), though it has now largely been abandoned (Maiden 1996: 164). But generally, the hierarchy proposed in Figure 1 appears to hold except in one case of which I am aware, which interestingly is widespread. In Spanish, Portuguese and Italian there is a marked tendency to prefer the PERSONAL MIDDLE (24c) to the IMPERSONAL TRANSITIVE (24b) when the patient is plural (the consequence of this is that the verb appears to agree with its patient as subject). In Spanish, an IMPERSONAL can still be used if the patient is personal, when, as we have seen, it is marked by the 'personal *a*' (24d), and the PERSONAL MIDDLE, though encountered in some speakers, is puristically castigated in such cases (24g). (Without the personal *a* (24f), a plural animate noun is construed as the subject of the verb and the sentence has a REFERENTIAL reflexive reading.) Thus:

- (24) a. *Se vende un coche pequeño*  
 b. <sup>⊗</sup>*Se vende coches* (cf. Ptg <sup>⊗</sup>*Vende-se estas casas* (example from Naro 1976: 780), It <sup>⊗</sup>*si legge i libri* (example from Maiden 1996: 165) and *Si è evitato una tragedia* (example from Stéfani 1982: 99, cited in Kemmer 1993: 179))  
 c. *Se venden coches*  
 d. *Se critica al profesor*  
 e. *Se critica a los profesores*  
 f. (*Se critican los profesores* [referential])  
 g. <sup>⊗</sup>*Se critican a los profesores* (See Schrotten 1972: 17)

(<sup>⊗</sup>denotes a lack of puristic acceptability, though such sentences are in fact attested in actual usage.)

It is difficult to say whether this is motivated structurally by the attraction of the verb to the patient — the only verbal argument and hence the only one with which it can agree — or whether it is simply a casual preference in the educated norm. Nevertheless, the IMPERSONAL INTRANSITIVE, which, being obligatorily singular, is not affected by this process (presumably since there is no patient to demand agreement), continues. This means that to a certain extent the stage in the pragmatic hierarchy that is intermediate between IMPERSONAL INTRANSITIVE and PERSONAL MIDDLE ~ ERGATIVE is missing in these languages.

### 3 Conclusion

What I have hoped to show in the foregoing is that the development of the reflexive in Romance follows a trajectory which may broadly be understood as a pragmatically allowable extension which maximizes, or capitalizes upon, the structural

possibilities of the language (i.e. in simple terms, creates reflexive forms for all verbs). The developments can be understood too as pragmatically ordered according to the hierarchy in Figure 1, so that, for instance, I would predict that an IMPERSONAL INTRANSITIVE use of the reflexive would not be found in any Romance language which does not also have an ERGATIVE reflexive.

I have further effectively implied that the various values of the reflexive will not, for pragmatic reasons, overlap. This is not to say that in the modern Romance languages there are no areas of potential ambiguity of reflexive usage; indeed, several have been latched on to by syntacticians — see Babcock's (1970: 35–38) discussion of causatively used reflexives such as

(25) El médico va a *operarse* mañana

'The doctor is going to be operated on (PERSONAL MIDDLE) / operate on himself (REFERENTIAL ACCUSATIVE DYNAMIC) tomorrow'

Another similar potential source of ambiguity occurs when reflexives used as REFERENTIAL DYNAMIC accusatives develop a NON-DYNAMIC or PERSONAL MIDDLE value but without abandoning the REFERENTIAL DYNAMIC meaning, such as *verse* 'to see oneself':

(26) a. Juan *se vio* en el espejo

'Juan saw himself in the mirror' (REFERENTIAL DYNAMIC)

b. Juan *se vio* en dificultades

'Juan was in difficulties' (REFERENTIAL NON-DYNAMIC)

Some verbs also develop idiomatic, very specific meanings, such as *mojarse*:

(27) a. Carlitos *se mojó* (REFERENTIAL ACCUSATIVE NON-DYNAMIC)

'Carlitos wet himself'

b. *Me mojé* con la lluvia (PERSONAL MIDDLE)

'I got wet in the rain'

c. *¿Nos vamos a mojar?* (REFERENTIAL ACCUSATIVE DYNAMIC)

'Shall we go for a dip?' (examples based on Martin 1979: 120)

Overlying the basic development outlined in 2 above, then, there have been various opportunistic moves within the reflexive scheme. However, despite wishful thinking by the syntacticians, such sentences are generally not ambiguous. As Butt & Benjamin (1994: 342) put it: 'Such ambiguities are almost always resolved by reference to the background of the sentence or by appealing to common sense'. Involved here, however, are pragmatic factors of a rather different sort: the pragmatics of the discourse and situational context rather than the pragmatics of the verb itself, and these await further study.

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*El reflexivo ha experimentado un incremento de funciones notable en todas las lenguas románicas, y sobre todo en el español. En este artículo se arguye que la trayectoria histórica del reflexivo sigue una jerarquía evolutiva que está ordenada según criterios semánticos y pragmáticos, y que las lenguas románicas se distinguen según la fase de la jerarquía que han alcanzado, aunque de vez en cuando la intervención purística puede estorbar lo que se puede considerar su evolución natural.*

*Hay que distinguir el pronombre reflexivo en función de complemento directo de su valor como complemento indirecto. Cuando la forma reflexiva de ciertos verbos no admite la posibilidad de una interpretación REFERENCIAL, se presta a una interpretación metafórica, que en el caso de los reflexivos de complemento directo es el punto de origen de los valores de MEDIO, ERGATIVO y PASIVO. A esta secuencia evolutiva pertenece también el reflexivo impersonal, que para los verbos transitivos tiene su origen en un reanálisis del reflexivo medio y pronto se extiende, por analogía, a los verbos intransitivos. Los reflexivos de complemento indirecto dan lugar al valor BENEFACTIVO, del que procede el reflexivo dicho de MATIZACIÓN. Se ve que cada etapa de la extensión funcional del reflexivo está conforme con las expectativas pragmáticas y aprovecha las posibilidades sintácticas del idioma. Finalmente se estudia muy rápidamente hasta qué punto cabe hablar de ambigüedad entre los múltiples valores del reflexivo que se han establecido en el idioma actual.*