Same origin, different outcomes. The use of converbial forms with perception verbs in Italian and in the varieties of Northern Italy

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1. Introduction[1]

In most Romance languages there are three non-finite verb forms, which are traditionally defined as gerunds, participles and infinitives. This terminology was influenced by the Latin grammaticography, although in Romance these categories behave quite differently than their Latin counterpart (see e.g. the discussion in Vangaever 2021, this volume). In particular, Romance gerunds are mainly used as converbs, i.e. with adverbial function (Haspelmath 1995; Nedjalkov 1998; Ylikoski 2003). However, in some varieties infinitives can also be used as converbs when they are preceded by a preposition (usually the preposition *a*):[2]

(1) Italian vs. Noneso[3] (Northern Italy)
    a. *Mangiando e bevendo, abbiamo trascorso un bel pomeriggio.* (Italian)
       eat.GER   and   drink.GER have.1PL   spent   a   nice   afternoon
    b. *A maŋˈar e a ˈbever en paˈsa en bɛl dopodizˈnar.* (Noneso)
       to   eat.INF and to   drink.INF have.1PL spent a   nice   afternoon
       'We spent a nice afternoon, eating and drinking.'
       (ALD2, p. 49, 516-518)

By contrast, bare infinitives are used as arguments of a predicate or in "restructuring" contexts (Rizzi 1982; Cinque 2006), therefore one of their main functions is that of verbal nouns (*masdars* in Haspelmath's 1995 terminology, *infinitives* in Nedjalkov 1998). Finally, present participles are verbal adjectives used as adnominal modifiers, while other typical functions of adjectives, such as their use

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[2] Cf. Haspelmath (1995: 3): "A converb is defined here as *a nonfinite verb form whose main function is to mark adverbial subordination*." [in italics in the original text, JC]. Note that Romance gerunds and prepositional infinitives can also be used in aspectual periphrases; since these periphrases lie outside the scope of the present chapter, I do not consider them here.
[3] Noneso is a regional language spoken in the Trento province. Note that the ALD uses a transcription system that was traditionally developed for the Romance varieties; I cite the example in IPA to make it more readily understandable.

in secondary predication ('copredicative participles' in Haspelmath 1995), are quite restricted.[4] Past participles, which are outside the scope of this article, can be used as adjectives and secondary predicates, as well as in verbal periphrases (to express compound tenses and passive verb forms).

As far as the converbial forms are concerned, in some languages like present-day Italian they are only used with their prototypical functions, namely as free adverbials ("strict" converbs in Nedjalkov's 1998 terms). However, there are several Romance languages in which gerunds or prepositional infinitives are also used as secondary predicates, e.g. with perception verbs (cf. Ramat & Da Milano 2011; Casalicchio 2013; Casalicchio & Migliori 2018). This contrast is visible if we compare Italian to Spanish (2):

(2) Spanish vs. Italian
    a. *Lo   veo   cantando.*   (Spanish)
    b. *#Lo   vedo   cantando.*   (Italian)
        him.CL   see.1SG   sing.GER
        'I see him sing/singing.'

In Spanish, the most spontaneous interpretation is that the gerund *cantando* refers to the object of *ver* 'see', thus it is a secondary predicate.[5] In Italian, on the other hand, the only possible interpretation of (2) is adverbial; as a consequence, the subject of the gerund can only be coreferent with the subject of the perception verb (yielding an interpretation like 'I see him while I am singing').

There is another peculiarity concerning the use of converbs with perception verbs: while they are used as secondary predicates in a language like Spanish, in some Northern Italian varieties they are used as verbal nouns. A language in which the difference to Spanish is particularly evident is Dolomitic Ladin (spoken in the Italian Alps):[6]

(3) Northern Ladin vs. Spanish
    a. *Aude   ciantan   na   ciantia   te   verzon.*   (Northern Ladin)
    b. **Oigo   cantando   una   canción   en   el   jardin.*   (Spanish)
        hear.1SG   sing.GER   a   song   in   the garden
        'I hear someone sing a song in the garden.'

In (3), the gerund has no logical subject, because the agent of 'sing' is either unknown, or the speaker does not consider this information important in the context. In Spanish this configuration is ungrammatical, because the gerund, being predicative, requires its subject to be coreferent with an argument of the main clause. In Northern Ladin, on the other hand, this is not the case: perceptive

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[4] I use the term "secondary predicate" to refer to an expression that predicates about one argument of the main clause, but that does not form a verbal complex with the main verb. Note that Haspelmath's (1995) copredicative participles have a wider definition, since they also encompass the Latin *participium coniunctum*.

[5] I use the term "predicative gerund" to refer to the gerund used as second predicate, a translation of the term *gerundio predicativo* used in the Spanish grammatical tradition. Note that the distribution of "gerunds" and infinitives with perception verbs is different in Romance and English, therefore the choice of the verb form in the English translation is not related to the use of a specific verb from in the Romance examples.

[6] Gerunds are only used in the Northern varieties of Dolomitic Ladin (Casalicchio 2013, 2016; Živojinović 2021), which encompasses the varieties spoken in the Gardena and Badia valleys. The examples of Northern Ladin given in this chapter come from the Gardenese variety and where collected through fieldwork.

gerunds are used in a way similar to that of *masdars*, although they retain the possibility to assign accusative to their object.[7]

A behaviour similar to that of Northern Ladin is found in other Northern Italian varieties, such as Friulian or the Southern Ladin variety of Fodom (Livinallongo): in this case, however, a prepositional infinitive is used instead of the gerund:

(4)   Central Friulian
       Luche   *al*   *sint*   *(il*   *coro)*   *a*   *cjantâ*   *una*   *cjante.*
       Luca   he.CL   hears   the   choir   to   sing   a   song
       'Luca hears someone/the choir singing a song.'

This example of Friulian is grammatical both when the direct object of the perception verb is silent and when it is realized. In the first case, the prepositional infinitive is clearly used as a *masdar*, while the presence of the overt subject *il coro* 'the choir' makes this sentence ambiguous, because the prepositional infinitive could be either a *masdar* or a secondary predicate related to the direct object. Another example of a prepositional infinitive used as a secondary predicate is (5), from the Lombard dialect spoken in Switzerland:

(5)   Lombard (Ticinese)
       La foto   da la Maria a fa   i   biscòtt l'   evi   mai   viscta.
       the picture of the Maria to make.INF the cookies it.OBJ.CL had.1SG never seen
       'I had never seen the picture of Maria making cookies.'

In conclusion, this picture has shown that, in Romance, a verb form that is prototypically used as a converb can also fulfil the functions of a secondary predicate, of a *masdar*, or both. Note that the converb can be used as a *masdar* only in perception constructions, because in all the other contexts requiring a *masdar* a bare infinitive is used.

This paper deals precisely with these non-prototypical cases in which a converbial form (gerund or prepositional infinitive) is used as a secondary predicate or *masdar*, addressing two questions: how these uses emerged, considering that neither gerunds nor prepositional infinitives were used in these contexts in any stage of Latin, and how the variation in the non-prototypical functions attributed to these *masdar* forms can be accounted for. To investigate the diachronic path that led to these changes, I focus on the varieties of Florence and Northern Italy, discussing data from the OVI corpus (texts from the origins until the year 1400) and from a second corpus that I have formed with texts from various periods (see bibliography). For present-day varieties, I use data that I have collected myself through fieldwork.

I propose that the non-adverbial uses of converbs are due to the interplay of two factors: first, in Old Italian the gerunds' functions were less constrained than today, and there was a significant overlap with the uses of the infinitive (cf. De Roberto 2013). The second factor is an innovation that replaced gerunds with prepositional infinitives in the whole area (except for Northern Ladin). In Standard Italian, however, the converbial forms used with perception verbs were replaced by a competing

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[7] Note that Northern Ladin has a bare infinitive, which is used as a *masdar* in all other cases in which the non-finite form is an argument of the verb. Perception verbs are thus an exception, because here gerunds are used instead of infinitives.

construction: an inflected subordinate clause headed by the complementizer *che* 'that', which is usually called 'Pseudo-relative clause' (see e.g. Kayne 1975 for French; Guasti 1988, 1993; Cinque 1992; Scarano 2002; Rizzi 1992 for Italian). By contrast, in several Northern Italian dialects we still find both the converbial form and Pseudo-relatives.

This chapter is structured as follows: Section 2 describes the existence of two types of perception constructions, in which either a concrete object of an event is perceived. I call the first type "Individual Perception Construction" (IPC), the second "Event Perception Construction" (EPC). Section 3 describes the use of present participles and infinitives with verbs of perception in Classical and Late Latin, and discusses briefly the functions of the gerund. The following section deals with the use of infinitives and gerunds with perception verbs in Old Italian and in Medieval Northern Italy, and with the development of predicative infinitives (§ 4). Sections 5 and 6 deal with the evolution of perception constructions after the Middle Ages, showing that in Florentine both predicative gerunds and prepositional infinitives were banned from perception constructions (§ 5), while the latter survived in most varieties of Northern Italy, where they are used still today (§ 6). In addition, Section 6 also discusses the hypothetical evolution of these constructions in Northern Ladin. Finally, section 7 contains the conclusions.

2. Two complements of perception verbs

Perception verbs describe a physical phenomenon whereby we perceive something through our senses. In principle, we perceive either a concrete object (6a) or an event (6b):

(6) a. *The Romans saw Brutus.*
     b. *The Romans saw Brutus' killing of Caesar.*

The situation described by the perception verb in these two examples may be the same. However, in (6a) the focus is on Brutus, an individual (i.e., a concrete object), in (6b) on the event of killing. Thus, in (6b) Brutus is perceived as agent of the event, but the perception is not about Brutus himself. I refer to the first case with the term "Individual Perception Construction" ('IPC'), to the second with "Event Perception Construction" ('EPC'), cf. Di Tullio (1998) and Casalicchio (2016). In IPCs, the prototypical object of a perception verb is a nominal phrase (headed by a noun or pronoun), in EPCs it is a verbal noun or a complement clause. The examples in (7) show prototypical cases in Spanish:

(7) Spanish
     a. | *Los* | *troyanos* | | *vieron* | *un* | | *caballo* | *de* | *madera.* | (IPC) |
        | the | Troyans | | saw.3PL | a | | horse | of | wood | |

        'The Troyans saw a wooden horse.'
     b. | *Los* | *troyanos* | *vieron* | *la* | *destrucción* | *de* | | *su* | *ciudad.* | (EPC) |
        | the | Troyans | saw.3PL | the | destruction | of | | their | city | |

        'The Troyans saw the destruction of their city.'

The example (7a) shows the use of the nominal phrase *caballo de madera* 'wooden horse', which is a concrete object (thus, it constitutes an IPC). In (7b), on the other hand, the Troyans perceive an

event, which consists in the destruction of their city. Note that EPCs like (7b) can also be expressed through an infinitive (8):

(8) Spanish
Los   troyanos   vieron   destruir   su   ciudad.
the   Troyans   saw.3PL   destroy.INF their   city
'The Troyans saw their city being destroyed.'

By contrast, an IPC like (7a) can occur with a secondary predicate; in Spanish, this predicate can be realized through a predicative gerund or a Pseudo-relative clause ('PR'), as in (9). It is important to note that in these examples the argument of the perception verb is the noun *Odiseo*, while the gerund or PR describes an event in which Odysseus is involved while he is perceived by the Troyans, see Di Tullio (1998) and Fernández Lagunilla (1999) for gerunds, Rafel (2000) and Casalicchio & Herbeck (2024) for PRs.

(9) Spanish
   a. *Los   troyanos   vieron   a   Odiseo   destruyendo   su   ciudad.*
      the   Troyans   saw.3PL   DOM   Odysseus   destroy.GER   their   city
   b. *Los   troyanos   vieron   a   Odiseo   que   estaba   destruyendo   su   ciudad.*
      the   Troyans   saw.3PL   DOM   Odysseus   that was   destroying   their city
      'The Troyans saw Odysseus destroying their city.'

Syntactically, IPCs and EPCs differ because in the former the secondary predicate is not a complement of the perception verb (thus, it is not its argument), while the embedded clause in EPCs is. In addition, since IPCs are a type of secondary predication, their logical subject must be overtly realised in the clause. Conversely, in EPCs there is no need to express the logical subject, because the focus of the perception is on the event as a whole, as the contrast in (10) shows (see also the Spanish example (3b)):

(10) Spanish
   a. *Los   troyanos   vieron   __   {*destruyendo   /   destruir}   su   ciudad.*
      the   Troyans   saw.3SG   destroy.GER   destroy.INF their   city
      'The Troyans saw their city being destroyed.'
   b. *Los   troyanos   vieron   {*lloviendo   /   llover}.*
      the   Troyans   saw.3SG   rain.GER   rain.INF
      'The Troyans saw it rain/raining.'

IPCs are incompatible both with generic null subjects, as in (10a), and with weather verbs, which do not have a referential subject (10b). On the other hand, EPCs are compatible in both configurations. Table 1 illustrates the forms used for IPCs and EPCs in various Romance languages.

Table 1: The constructions used in IPCs and EPCs in some Romance varieties		
	IPC/Secondary predicate	**EPC/complement of perc. verb**
Spanish	PR/gerund	infinitive

Italian	PR	infinitive
Modern Northern Italian varieties	PR/prep. infinitive	infinitive/prep. infinitive
Northern Ladin	PR	gerund

3. The evolution of gerunds in Latin

3.1 Classical Latin

Classical Latin disposes of various non-finite verb forms: some of them have mainly adjectival value (participles and gerundives), others nominal value (infinitives, gerunds and supines). Gerundives and gerunds share the suffix *-nd-*, whose etymology is still not completely clear (see Živojinović 2021: 32-34 for an overview on the debate about the origin of this form). In general, these two forms show a completely different syntax: gerunds are mainly used as verbal nouns (as the oblique forms of the infinitive), although they can also fulfil an adverbial function, when they are used in the ablative; on the other hand, gerundives are verbal adjectives. But gerunds also differ from infinitives: gerunds usually do not assign accusative to their object, even if the verb in the gerund is transitive (Bauer 1993, 2005); when an object is present, they assign genitive to it, coherently with their function as verbal noun. Alternatively, a gerundival construction is used (Bauer 1993). According to Bauer (2005), the occurrence of a gerund with an object in the accusative is rare in Early and Classical Latin, and becomes more frequent only in Late Latin (see below).

With perception verbs, gerunds are never found. What we find is infinitives (in the so-called *Accusativus cum Infinitivo* construction, henceforth 'AcI') and present participles (*Accusativus cum Participio*, 'AcP'). The AcI is a widespread construction in Latin, and it fulfils the syntactic functions of an argument (as subject or object of a selecting verb, see Pinkster 2021: 157). On the other hand, present participles are used in various constructions; in particular, they can have adnominal and adverbial function, and they can be used as secondary predicates. Examples (11a-b) illustrate the use of infinitives and present participles with perception verbs.

(11) Latin
    a. *Audivisti'n   tu   me   narrare   haec   hodie?*
        hear.2SG=Q   you.NOM me.ACC   tell.INF   this   today
        'Have you heard me telling this today?'
        (Plautus, *Amphitruo* 747, taken from Pinkster 2021: 163)

    b. *... neque   tibicinam   cantantem   neque alium quemquam audio.*
        neither flautist.ACC play.PTCP.ACC nor   anyone else   hear.1SG
        '… and I can't hear a flautist playing or anyone else.'
        (Plautus, *Mostellaria* 934, taken from Pinkster 2021: 163)

It is important to note that while the AcP always expresses a direct perception, the AcI can express both a direct and an indirect (i.e., epistemic perception): in principle, (11a) can express that the event

is perceivd by the subject himself, or that it is known by the subject on the basis of some evidence, e.g. through a hearsay (just as in the English sentence *He heard that I was singing*.).[8]

As far as the syntactic function of the non-finite form is concerned, scholars have expressed various opinions. According to Ernout and Thomas (1953), AcIs and AcPs have the same structure, because both are the complement of the matrix perception verb. Hofmann and Szantyr (1965) express the opinion that the participle is used predicatively in the AcPs, while AcIs focus on the embedded event (putting the matrix perception verb in the background).[9] Maraldi (1980) and Pinkster (2021) both consider the participle with perception verbs as a secondary predicate; in particular, Maraldi (1980) analyses AcPs as complex nouns, with an incorporated participle as secondary predicate.[10] As far as AcIs are concerned, Maraldi assigns them a control structure when they express direct perception: the infinitive is an argument of the perception verb, and its PRO subject is coindexed with the object of the perception verb.[11] More recently, Vangaever (2021) proposes that AcPs can be assigned two structures: either they are secondary predicates, as in Pinkster's (2021) analysis, or they are presentative structures. In this case, the perception verb is grammaticalized as a presentative marker, and it acts as introducer of a thetic (i.e., all new) complement (Vangaever 2021: 101).[12] In this paper, I follow Pinkster's (2021) position that AcPs are secondary predicates in Classical Latin.[13]

3.2 Late Latin

In Late Latin, we observe a restructuring of the system of non-finite verb forms. One notable change concerns the possibility for gerunds to assign accusative to their direct object. This shows that "the gerund evolved from an abstract deverbal noun, via a nominal (gerundive) construction to a fully verbal item" (Bauer 1993: 65). This change made the gerund not only more similar to the infinitive, which could regularly assign accusative, but it was also the essential prerequisite for the gradual replacement of present participles with gerunds in the ablative, in particular when they had adverbial value.[14]

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[8] On the difference between direct and indirect (epistemic) perception see Dretske (1969) and, for Latin, Maraldi (1980) and Pinkster (2021) a.o.; for French see Willems (1983) and Guasti (1988).

[9] Note that Ernout and Thomas (1953), although they consider AcP as complements of the perception verb, observe that theoretically AcPs should focus on the development of the event they express, corresponding to the French PR (which are secondary predicates). Infinitives, on the other hand, are a "*simple constatation du fait*" (Ernout and Thomas 1953: 283). They add, however, that this difference is often blurred in the examples from the literature, so that the two forms seem to be interchangeable.

[10] Note that Maraldi's theoretical analysis of secondary predicates is in line with some later accounts in the generative framework: Burzio (1986), for example, assigns a complex NP structure to Italian PRs embedded under perception verbs.

[11] Future developments within generative theory have shown that assigning a control structure to infinitival complements of perception verbs is problematic, in particular because this requires that perception verbs change their argument structure (from bivalent to trivalent) when they select an infinitival clause, a change that is improbable both on semantic and on typological grounds. For a discussion of the arguments against a control structure of perceptive infinitives see Raposo (1989): he focuses on European Portuguese, but his main arguments can be extended to other Romance languages and to Latin.

[12] Note that there is good evidence for the fact that perception verbs grammaticalize in some languages (although they also retain their original value as full verbs expressing a perception): Cinque (2006) suggests that cross-linguistically perception verbs can be semi-functional verbs.

[13] As far as the AcI is concerned, since it is not the topic of this paper I remain agnostic with respect to its structure. For future work, I think that a preliminary point that has to be made clear before proposing an analysis is whether the bare infinitive can have a non-overt subject when it occurs with perception verbs in Latin (as it can in Romance, see (10)).

[14] For the replacement of present participles by gerunds in the ablative see Škerlj (1926), Adams (2014), Cotticelli *et al.* (this volume), Vangaever (2021; this volume), a.o.

An early example in which a gerund is not used with its usual values (i.e., instrumental or causal) comes from Tacitus (cf. Adams 2014), where the gerund's function can be described as the description of a concomitant event:

(12) Latin
exturbabant   agris,   captivos,   servos   appellando.
evicted.3PL   estates.ABL   captives.ACC   slaves.ACC   call.GER.ABL
'They evicted them from their estates, calling them captives and slaves.'
(Tacitus, *Ann*. XIV 31,3, taken from Adams 2014: 734)

As far as perception verbs are concerned, we do not find any change concerning the use of AcIs and AcPs throughout the history of Latin: even in the Late Latin data, perception verbs never occur with a gerund. The literature reports just some sparse occurrences of predicative gerunds whose logical subject is coreferent with the subject of the main clause. Two notorious examples come from Philastrius (4th c.) and Gregory of Tours (6th c.): in the first, King David is described in the act of fighting (*pugnando*) against the enemies (13); in the example (14), the angels are singing while they lead Saint Martin to the paradise (Škerlj 1926).

(13) Latin
[*David*]   *contra Allophylum pugnando disseritur*
David.NOM against enemy.ACC fight.GER describe.3SG.PASS
'King David is described as/while fighting against the enemy.'
(Philastrius, *De haeresibus* 130,2)

(14) Latin
Et   nunc angeli   canendo eum   deferent in excelsum.
and now angels.NOM   sing.GER him.ACC bring   in heaven
'And now the Angels bring him to the Heaven with songs.'
(Gregory of Tours, *De miraculis S. Martini* I 4)

4. Gerunds and prepositional infinitives in Florence and Northern Italy

In the passage from Latin to Romance, the present participle form was not maintained, except for its purely adjectival uses, which survived in some varieties (e.g. Italian); some of its functions were taken over by the gerund, for example its use as a secondary predicate.[15]

In Old Romance, predicative gerunds are attested since the oldest texts. For Spanish, Lyer (1933) attests this use since the 12th c.: until the half of the 13th c., the overwhelming majority of occurrences contains the verb *fallar* 'find' as matrix verb. In his corpus, gerunds with perception verbs show up

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[15] A partial exception is Old French, which differs from the other Romance languages because the ending of gerunds and participles was conflated in *-ant.* As stated by P. Cuzzolin, "the interchangeability and the eventual merging of the forms was possible because they were very close to one another not only from a formal, but also functional viewpoint" (Cuzzolin 2005:177). On this topic, see also Bauer (1993, 2005), Vangaever (2018, 2021, this volume), Vangaever and Carlier (2020), Živojinović (2021), a.o.

later, in the first half of the 13th c., where they are still a minority of occurrences (10%).[16] Since 1250, the occurrences of gerunds with perception verbs steadily increase.

In Italy, predicative gerunds were used in several *volgari* (see also Škerlj 1926): examples (15—16) illustrate the use of gerunds in perception constructions, while in (17—18) the predicative gerund refers to the complement of a preposition and to the subject of the main clause.[17]

(15) Old Milanese (second half of the 13th c.)
    Quand hav intes Pillato | lo popul zo digando ...
    when has heard Pilatus the people this say.GER
    'When Pilate heard the people saying this…'
    (Bonvesin de la Riva, *De scriptura rubra* 41, taken from OVI)

(16) Old Italian (1347)
    Tutta la città, ville, castella e fortezze sentire si poterono piangendo
    all the town villages castles and fortresses hear IMP.CL could cry.GER
    ciascuno uno morto della sua famillia.
    each a dead from=the their family
    'The whole town, the villages, castles and fortresses could be heard mourning each one dead from their family.'
    (D. Benzi, *Specchio umano* 320, 18, taken from OVI)

(17) Old Milanese (first part of the 14th c.)
    Eva fo creada in paradixo de l'homo dormiando
    Eve was created in paradise from the man sleep.GER
    'Eve was created in the Paradise from the man, while he was sleeping.'
    (*Elucidario* 1,70 105.13. taken from OVI)

(18) Old Venetan (Paduan, last part of the 14th c.)
    Sara sì se stava drio la porta aldando queste parole.
    Sara so was staying behind the door, hear.GER these words
    'Sara was staying behind the door, listening to these words.'
    (*Bibbia istoriata padovana*, Gen. 18,73, taken from OVI)

At the same time, bare infinitives are also attested since the oldest texts. The infinitival construction resembles the Latin AcI because in some cases it describes an indirect perception (especially in translations from Latin), as in (19), in others a direct perception (20):

(19) Old Italian (1316)
    Ma la saturna Juno vide lui non poter durare ...
    but the Saturnian Juno saw.3SG he not be.able last
    'But the Saturnian Juno saw that he couldn't last […]'

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[16] See also Muñío Valverde (1995).

[17] For Old Italian (i.e., Old Florentine spoken before 1400), some scholars consider the use of gerunds with perception verbs (found e.g. in Dante and Boccaccio) "a probable Gallicism or Latinism" (Egerland 2010: 920 [my translation]). However, the fact that predicative gerunds are widespread in the whole Center-North of Italy (at least), and that they occurred not only with perception verbs, but in a series of contexts typical for secondary predicates, makes it probable that predicative gerunds were present in those authors' native grammars. Egerland (2010) himself admits that in Old Italian gerunds could be used with "attributive" function (i.e., they were used as secondary predicates).

(A. Lancia, *Eneide volgarizzata*, IX 506,4, taken from OVI)

(20) Old Lombard (second half of the 14th c.)

E quisti ki parlaveno con questo bono priore avevano molte volte olzuto
and those that talked.3PL with this good prior had.3PL many times heard.PTCP

cantare li anzeli in la soa incela.
sing.INF the angels in the his cell

'And those that talked to this good prior had heard many times the angels singing in his cell.'
(Purgatorio di San Patrizio VIII 26,3, taken from OVI)

As far as the logical subject of the embedded verb is concerned, it can be silent both with gerunds and with infinitives. This fact is attested both in Tuscany (21) and in Northern Italy (22):

(21) Old Italian (1321 and 1292)

a. *"Summae Deus clementiae" nel seno al grande ardore allora udi' cantando*
in-the bosom to-the great ardour than heard.1SG sing.GER

'I heard someone singing "Summae Deus clementiae" in the bosom of the great ardour.'
(Dante, *Purgatorio* 25 121--122, taken from OVI)

b. *E quando Maommetti si udì fare queste impromesse ...*
and when Muhammad him heard.3SG make these promises

'And when Muhammad heard that they made him such a promise...'
(Bono Giamboni, *Il Libro de' Vizî e de le Virtudi* 45, 80.15, taken from OVI)

(22) Old Lombard (around 1275, and second half of the 14th c.)

a. *Quent dulz versi eo olzo / dri angeli cantando.*
what sweet verses I hear.1SG by-the angels sing.GER

'What sweet verses do I hear the angels singing!
' (Bonvesin, *De Scriptura Aurea* 164)

b. *... e quando elo fo apreso de la maxone elo odì*
and when he was close to the house he heard

pianze e lomentà molto doloroxamente
cry.INF and lament.INF very painfully

'… and when he arrived close to the house he heard [the people] crying and lamenting very painfully.'
(Purgatorio di San Patrizio XX 35, 16, taken from OVI)

This shows that both gerunds and infinitives could be used in EPCs. Note that the partial overlap of these two forms is not surprising, because, as shown by De Roberto (2013), it is attested in other uses of these verb forms as well. I come back to the use of gerunds in EPCs in § 6.

While gerunds and infinitives could thus both be used in EPCs, there are no unambiguous examples of infinitives used as secondary predicates: in this case, we find only predicative gerunds. This picture is thus partially different from what we find in Modern Standard Italian, were predicative gerunds do not exist, while infinitives are still used in EPCs only. My proposal is that the change leading to the gerund's ungrammaticality was triggered by an innovation that lead predicative gerunds

to be replaced by prepositional infinitives. Later, these prepositional infinitives were also excluded from predicative contexts because in Standard Italian a restriction on infinitives emerged. This restriction requires that the overt subject of an infinitive be coreferent with the matrix subject. In perception constructions the logical subject of the embedded verb is of course coreferent with the object of the matrix clause, not with the subject; so, prepositional infinitives were banned from these contexts. This ban was probably made possible by the fact that in Tuscany and Northern Italy a new construction had emerged, which was a direct competitor of predicative gerunds: Pseudo-relative clauses ('PRs'; also called predicative relative clauses; cf. De Roberto 2008). In Modern Romance, this type of clause fulfils the same functions of predicative gerunds, and its logical subject can be coreferent with the subject of the clause (23), but also with another element, such as the direct object in (24).[18]

(23)   Old Venetan (or Venetian?, 1312)
    El è   enter eo bosco ch'   el   taia   legne.
    he is   in   the forest that he   cuts   wood
    'He is in the forest and cuts wood.'
    (*Lio Mazor* 44.1, taken from OVI)

(24)   Old Italian (1370)
    si vide   due che verso   di lui con una lanterna in mano venieno.
    so saw.3SG two that towards of him with a   lantern   in hand   came
    'He saw two man coming towards him with a lantern.'
    (Boccaccio, *Decameron* II 5 105.4, taken from OVI)

While these clauses introduced by *che* have clearly the function of secondary predicates, in many occurrences the exact structure of the relative clause is ambiguous between a PR reading and a reading as an ordinary clause: usually, the main property that characterises PRs is the fact that their antecedent is a clitic pronoun. Examples of this type are well attested (see De Roberto 2008), so we can be sure that PRs were a possibility in the grammar of the Old Italian speakers:[19]

(25) Old Italian (1370)
    [*Gulfardo*] *se n'*   *andò a casa della donna; e trovatala   che l' aspettava ...*
    Gulfardo REFL.CL=LOC.CL went to home of-the woman and found.PTCP=her that him awaited
    '[Gulfardo] went to the woman's home; and having found her waiting for him, ...'
    (Boccaccio, *Decameron* VIII, I, 12, taken from De Roberto 2008: 637)

Regarding the change from gerunds to prepositional infinitives, the first occurrence that I could find in the OVI comes from Lucca (Tuscany) in the late 13th c.:

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[18] Note that PRs are used in most Romance varieties, but only in Italian they have completely replaced predicative gerunds: in Spanish, they do not cover all the contexts in which predicative gerunds are used (cf. Fernández Lagunilla 1999). In French, on the other hand, Kleiber (1988) claims that the *participe présent* (i.e., the non-prepositional gerund) is in aspectual opposition to PRs: the former describes a point of the event (a "stative" view), the latter a progressive reading.
[19] Note that due to the extremely high number of ambiguous cases, it makes no sense to offer a percentage of the (limited) cases in which the *che*-clause is unambiguously a PR. In a qualitative approach like that of the present chapter, what matters is that PRs are indeed attested, at least in some examples, since the 14th c.

(26) Old Tuscan (Lucchese, 1296)

noi no(n) volemo   perché   vedemo a ffarla   la   morte nostra.
we   not   want.1PL because see.1PL to make=her the death our
'We don't want [to write the letter] because this would mean our death (*lit.* we see our death doing it).'
(*Lett. lucch.* 34.19, taken from OVI)

In the following century (14th c.), there are some more occurrences in the OVI, both in Tuscany and in Northern Italy, but they are still limited to a handful examples; at the same time, gerunds are still used in the whole area.

(27) Old Tuscan (Senese, 1358)

Po'   vidi   Orfeo   a   lusingar   gl'inferni
then   saw.1SG Orpheus   to entice.INF the hells
'Then I saw Orpheus enticing the hells.'
(Dom. da Monticchiello, *Rime* 52.2, taken from OVI)

(28) Old Emilian (Modenese, 1335)

… quando illi   oldiranno   a sonare   la campana de l'   oratione
   when   they hear.3PL.FUT to ring.INF the bell   of the oration
'… when they will hear the bell of the oration ringing'
(*Stat. moden.* 386.14, taken from OVI)

In Florence, a major turning point is the following century (15th c.): at this point, in the texts I have consulted there are no predicative gerunds, and there is just one occurrence of a prepositional infinitive (29a).[20] All other examples of IPCs are built with a PR, a construction whose use continues for the following centuries and reaches current Italian (29b):

(29)   Florentine (15th c.)

a. *O Bartolino, chi   vegg'io a sedere, […] lá   presso al   Romituzzo?*
    oh Bartolino who   see=I   to sit   there close   to-the Romituzzo
    'Oh Bartolino, who am I seeing sitting there, close to Romituzzo?'
    (Lorenzo de' Medici, *Simposio ovvero i beoni* I 64-65)

b. *per   tutta   Toscana   si   disse   essere sentite   in   aria e*
    over   whole   Tuscany   one   said   be.INF heard.PTCP   in   air   and
    vedute   genti   d'armi   sopra   Arezzo, che si   azzuffavano insieme.
    seen.PTCP people of-arms above   Arezzo   that REFL   fight.3PL   together
    'all over Tuscany there were people saying that they had heard and seen armed people, above Arezzo, fighting against each other.'
    (N. Machiavelli, *Discorsi sopra la prima Deca di Tito Livio* I 56)

In Northern Italy, the picture is different: notwithstanding the scarcity of texts written in Northern Italian varieties in the 15th c., in the Northern Italian texts of Migliorini & Folena's (1953) anthology

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[20] For 15th century Florentine, I have consulted the complete collection of Lorenzo de Medici's works, the *Morgante* by Luigi Pulci, and the *Mandragola*, *Clizia* and *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio* by Niccolò Machiavelli.

I could find two examples of predicative gerunds (not with perception verbs); I did not find any example of prepositional infinitive, but due to the limited number of texts we cannot exclude that this is due to accidental gaps:

(30) Emilian (Bolognese, second half of the 15th c.)
Rechordo   chome adì   10 de dessembre, fo   un viènire aparve   la nostra
remember.1SG how   today   of December   was.3SG a Friday appeared the our
Dona madere de messer Iessù a uno puto chontadino povereto andando per aqua a Ren;
Lady mother of Lord   Jesus to a   child peasant   poor   go.GER   for water to Reno
'I remember that the 10th of December, it was a Friday, our Lady, Mother of Jesus, appeared to a poor peasant child while he was going to the river Reno for water.'
(Migliorini & Folena 1953: 43.36--38)

(31) Ligurian (Genoan, 1435)
erano   le galee soe dale   coste, refrescando le lor   navi de homini
were.3PL the galeas his by-the coasts refresh.GER the their ships of men
'His galeas were docked, and they filled the ships with fresh crew.'
(Migliorini & Folena 1953: 30.43--44)

In Northern Italy, the picture changes later than in Tuscany, namely starting from the 16th century: from this period on, we find only prepositional infinitives (especially with perception verbs), while gerunds are never used as secondary predicates (neither with perception verbs nor in other contexts):[21]

(32) Pavano (1527-1531)
a'   no so   mi, a'   vezo   a lusere   no so   que.
SBJ.CL.1SG NEG know.1SG I   SBJ.CL.1SG see.1SG to shine.INF not know.1SG what
'I don't know what it is, but I see something shine.'
(Ruzante, *Moscheta* V 2,66)

(33) Milanese (1688)
Quand mì sera marœ v'   han   vist a piansc.
When I   was ill   you.OBJ.CL.2PL have.3PL seen to cry.INF
'When I was ill you were seen crying.'
(Maggi, *Rime* XI 43)

(34) Venetian (1750)
V.S.   l'   ho   vista a nasser, e   ghe   voio   ben.
Your Lordship OBJ.CL.3SG have.1SG seen to be.born and DAT.CL want.1SG well
'I have seen Your Lordship as he was born, and I care about you.'
(Goldoni, *Il Bugiardo* I 1)

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[21] In Friulian, gerunds are still used in the 16th c. (i), and the change to prepositional infinitives took place a century later:

(i)   Friulian (second half of the 16th century)
Busdilèche smuzà vie| Tuest   che vedè   'l soldāt vignint   pe vie.
Busdilèche flew   away as.soon as   saw.3SG the soldier come.GER on way
'Busdilèche run away as soon as she saw a soldier coming on her way.'
(Anonymous, *Travestimento dell'Orlando Furioso*, in Joppi 1878: 239)

(35) Piedmontese (Viola, Cuneo, 2012)

    e   l'æ   višt Giórz   a mangé 'r mæ

    SBJ.CL.1SG have.1SG seen Giorgio to eat.INF the apple

    'I have seen Giorgio eating the apple.'

Therefore, the change from predicative gerunds to prepositional infinitives seems to be an evolution that fully developed in Northern Italy, while in Tuscany it was aborted shortly after its first uses (documented especially in the 14th c.). In section 5 I focus on Florentine and Modern Italian, while in Section 6 I come back to Northern Italy.

5. The loss of prepositional infinitives in Florentine (and Italian)

As we have seen in the previous section, it is clear why Italian has no predicative gerunds: these evolved into prepositional infinitives in Florence/Tuscany and in Northern Italy. Such a change is not surprising, because it has a parallel in European Portuguese, where it started presumably in the 18th c. (cf. Cunha 1986; Barbosa 1999, Pereira 2015), reaching the central and Northern area of the country, but not Southern Portugal, where predicative gerunds are still used. The change did not affect Brazilian Portuguese either (cf. Duarte & Gonçalves 2002, Mothé 2004):

(36) Portuguese

  a. *Eu vi   os miudos a devorar(em) o   gelado.*   (Europ. Port.)

       I   saw the children to eat.INF(3.PL) the ice-cream

  b. *Eu vi   os miudos devorando o   gelado.*   (Braz. Port.)

       I   saw the children eat.GER   the ice-cream

    'I saw the children devouring the ice-cream.'

    (Duarte & Gonçalves 2002: 161--162)

However, modern Standard Italian differs from European Portuguese because it accepts neither prepositional infinitives nor gerunds:[22]

(37) Italian

    *Ho   visto Gianni { a mangiare / mangiando} il gelato.

    have.1SG seen Gianni   to eat.INF   eat.GER   the ice-cream

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[22] Note that examples like (37) are grammatical in some regional varieties of Italian, in particular when the correspondent dialect has prepositional infinitives. Consider the literary example (i), taken from a Piedmontese author of the 20th c. This use of the prepositional infinitive is probably due to cross-linguistic influence from the Piedmontese dialect, on which see § 6.

(i)   Regional Italian (Piedmont)

Si	*pentì*	*a*	*vedere*	*sua*	*madre*	*con*	*la*	*sua*	*epatite*	*a*	*faticare*
REFL.CL	regretted.3SG	to	see	his	mother	with	the	her	hepatitis	to	toil

a	*preparare*	*il*	*letto*	*anche*	*per*	*lui.*
to	prepare	the	bed	also	for	him

'He felt guilty when he saw his mother, with her hepatitis, toiling to prepare his bed as well.'

(B. Fenoglio, *Il partigiano Johnny*, cited in Skytte 1983: 234)

My proposal is that sentences like (37) are ungrammatical because Standard Italian developed a restriction on the subject of infinitives: when this subject is overt, it has to be coindexed with the subject of the main verb, as in (38).[23] This is a language-specific rule of Italian: in Spanish, for example, it does not exist, as the contrast in (39) shows (see Mensching 2000 for an analysis of overt subjects of infinitives in Romance):

(38) Italian
   Gianni$_i$ ha deciso di andarci LUI$_{i/*j}$.
   Gianni *has* decided of go.INF-LOC.CL he
   'Gianni decided that he would go there himself.'

(39) Spanish vs. Italian
   a. *Antes de actuar Caballé, el público estaba expectante.* (Spanish)
   b. **Prima di esibirsi la Caballé, il pubblico era in fibrillazione* (Italian)
      before of act.INF the Caballé the audience was expectant
      'Before Caballé began her exhibition, the audience was expectant.'
      (Rigau 1995: 173 [Spanish example])

As far as I can tell, this ban is already found in Old Italian. Note that gerunds, on the other hand, do not display this ban, neither in the Middle Ages nor in the present time (cf. Lonzi 1991):

(40) Old and Modern Italian
   a. *Stando l'assedio di Troia, sì fue morto il buon Achilles.*
      stay.GER the-siege of Troy so was.3SG dead the good Achilles
      'During the siege of troy, the valiant Achilles was killed.
      (B. Latini, *Rettorica* 93, 14, taken from OVI)
   b. *Spingendola Giovanni, la macchina forse ripartirebbe.*
      push.GER=it.CL Giovanni the car maybe restart.COND
      'If Giovanni pushed it, the car would maybe restart.'
      (Lonzi 1991: 572)

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[23] This restriction does not hold for PRO (null) subjects, which can be either coindexed with different arguments of the main clause, or arbitrary (see Salvi and Skytte 1991). With overt subjects, there is just one exception to this rule, in so-called Aux-to-Comp constructions (Rizzi 1982). However, these cases are highly restricted, first because they are only possible in a very formal register, and, second, because they are only possible when the infinitive is an auxiliary or modal verb – these are exactly the verbs that cannot be used in perception constructions. Aux-to-Comp constructions are already attested in N. Machiavelli, as an anonymous reviewer kindly pointed out:

(i) Italian (1513-14)
   chi perde, non ti riceve, per non aver tu voluto con l'
   who loses not you.CL receives for not have.INF you.NOM have.PTCP with the
   armi in mano correre la fortuna sua.
   weapons in hand run the fortune his
   '[The powerful] who loses does not receive you, for you did not want to help his fortune with weapons in hand.'
   (N. Machiavelli, *Il Principe* XXI: 111)

This explains why Old Italian allowed predicative gerunds; in the 14th c., when the innovation that led gerunds to become prepositional infinitives began, this evolution conflicted with the rule that requires the overt subject of a prepositional infinitives to be coreferent with the matrix subject (cf. Casalicchio 2016), and since there was an alternative available (the PR), prepositional infinitives were eliminated from the system of perceptive constructions. This does not imply that PRs were necessarily the cause for the ungrammaticality of prepositional infinitives in this context, but that their elimination did not affect the possibility to express IPCs, since there were PRs available for that purpose.[24]

6. Gerunds as EPCs in Northern Ladin

The second area under investigation is Northern Italy. As we have seen in the introduction, in Ladin these gerunds behave differently than in Spanish, because they can occur without a logical subject (3). Moreover, they cannot be used in any other context that allows a secondary predicate. This points to the fact that Northern Ladin gerunds are not used in IPCs, but in EPCs. Further evidence for this interpretation comes from sentences like (41), in which the gerund occurs in a so-called *faire par* construction: in these clauses, the logical subject occurs in an optional *by*-phrase, if there is another argument marked with accusative in the clause. In Romance, this construction is found with causative, and in some cases with perception, verbs, but generally the embedded verb is an infinitive, not a gerund (cf. the Ladin example (41a) with the Italian (41b), where an infinitive is used), see e.g. Guasti (1993) for an overview:
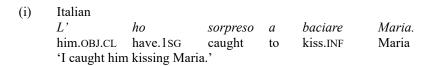
(41) Northern Ladin (Gardenese) vs. Italian

    a. *La*   *vëije*   *ciacian*   *dal*   *giat.*
       her.OBJ.CL   see.1SG   hunt.GER   by-the   cat

    b. *La*   *vedo*   *cacciare*   *dal*   *gatto.*
       her.OBJ.CL   see.1SG   hunt.INF   by-the   cat
       'I saw it being hunted by the cat./I saw the cat hunting it.'

While the synchronic data are clear-cut, the diachronic path that led Ladin to this exceptional and peculiar situation is obscure. One major problem is that the oldest documents in Ladin date back to the beginning of the 19th c. (with the exception of a handful of short documents written in the centuries before): at that time, the situation appears to be the same as today. Therefore, the change must have been completed before. Since there is no direct evidence available, my proposal is that we should try

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[24] Note that there are some cases in which a prepositional infinitive can still be used as secondary predicate (e.g. with the verb *sorprendere*):

(i)   Italian
     L'   *ho*   *sorpreso*   *a*   *baciare*   *Maria.*
     him.OBJ.CL   have.1SG   caught   to   kiss.INF   Maria
     'I caught him kissing Maria.'

It is unclear what makes these verbs different from perception verbs, where this construction in ungrammatical. I will come back to this issue in future research.

to enlarge the picture to include the evidence coming from Northern Italy and Tuscany for the centuries that are not covered by documents in Ladin.

As a point of departure, consider that the gerund was quite a flexible form in Old Italian, as mentioned in § 4. De Roberto (2013) shows that there is an overlap between infinitives and gerunds in various syntactic contexts. One of them is the perception construction, where gerunds and infinitives could be juxtaposed (42):

(42) Old Italian (1335—1336)
      Quivi rider la   vidi   lietamente, quivi la   vidi   verso me guardando
      here laugh her.OBJ.CL saw.1SG happily   here her.OBJ.CL saw.1SG towards me looking
      'Here I saw her laugh happily, here I saw her looking at me.'
      (Boccaccio, *Filostrato* 171, 4, taken from OVI)

In addition, De Roberto observes that in some examples the gerund is used as complement of the perception verb (i.e., in EPCs), a typical context for infinitives in Romance. One notorious example cited in her paper comes from Dante Alighieri (example (21) in § 4), but I have also found an example with with a null subject, by Boccaccio (36b):

(43) Old Italian (1370)
      … quando il giovane   vi   sentiva faccendo cader pietruzze e   cotali fuscellini…
         when   the young.man there.CL heard   make.GER fall.INF pebbles   and such   twigs
      '… when the young man heard that somebody made fall pebbles and such twigs…'
      (Boccaccio, *Decameron* 7, 5, taken from OVI)

In these cases, the gerund cannot be predicative because there is no overt nominal element to which it may refer. In Dante's example (21), the author does just indicate that a song is heard, but without mentioning who is singing (because he doesn't know it himself at this point). In (43), the young man hears that somebody is walking behind the wall. The reader knows that the responsible is a young lady that is in love with him, but in this sentence the point of view of the young man (who does not know yet) is represented.

Similar examples are found, although rarely, in Northern Italy as well: see example (22b), repeated here as (44), and example (45).

(44) Old Milanese (second half of the 13th c.)
      Quent dulz versi eo olze   / dri   angeli cantando.
      what sweet verses I hear.1SG   by-the angels sing.GER
      'What sweet verses do I hear the angels singing!
      ' (Bonvesin, *De Scriptura Aurea* 164)

(45) Friulian (second half of the 16th c.)
      ... ch'   in   Indie uldì   par vēr   e   ciart disint
           that in   India heard.3SG for real and sure say.GER
      chu la   polzette fin   in Spagne zeve
      that the   young.lady until to Spain went
      '… that in India he was told that without doubt the young lady was going to Spain'

(taken from Joppi 1878, 233--252)

The example in (44) is a *faire par* construction written in Old Milanese (13th c.): the subject is realised in a *by*-phrase. In (45), which is written in Friulian (16th c.), the subject is absent, because a hearsaying is reported. Note that there is a difference between Old Italian and Northern Italian varieties: in the former the overlap of gerunds and infinitives in the EPC lasts only for a couple of centuries, because it is lost in the 14th c. In Northern Italy, on the other hand, this overlap has been maintained after gerunds were replaced by prepositional infinitives, as the following examples show:

(46) Pavano (1527—1531)
A'   faghe   anche que co'   'l   sente a dir   de mi
SBJ.CL.3SG   make.SBJV   also   that what he.CL hears to say.INF by me
'Make what you hear me saying.'
(Ruzante, *Moscheta* I 4, 54)

(47) Milanese (1688)
Mì n'   ho   mœi   sentù a dì   …
I   NEG have.1SG   never heard to say
'I have never heared somebody say…'
(Maggi, *Rime* IX 7)

(48) Friulian (19th c.)
si   sint   a   tal sit   dal   Chiastel a sapà,   a brundlà …
IMP.CL hears   in   that place from-the   castle   to cry.INF to sigh.INF
'In that place you hear some crying and sighing coming from the castle.'
(Joppi 1878: 316--318)

(49) Venetian (1586)
Quel pincon de quel re   [...] se   resentì sentandose   a ponzer   da questa donna...
that idiot   of that king   REFL offended hear.GER=REFL at sting.INF by this   woman
'That stupid king took offense as he felt getting stung by this woman…'
(Papanti 1875: 45)

(50) Venetian (1750)
Da chi avì   sentido   a dir sta cossa?
by who have.2SG heard.PTCP to say that thing
'Whom have you heard saying that thing?'
(Goldoni, *Il bugiardo* II 14)

(51) Lombard (Ticinese, 2012)
Al Luca l   la   sent (a) cantà dal   coro
the Luca SBJ.CL 3SG.OBJ.CL hears to sing.INF by-the choir
'Luca hears the choir sing it.'

All these examples are EPCs in which a prepositional infinitive is used: in (46-48) the subject is null, while the last three examples (49-51) host a *faire par* construction.[25] Note that the prepositional

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[25] Today, prepositional infinitives are ungrammatical in Venetan, which only uses PRs as secondary predicates (like Standard Italian). This must be a recent innovation, since we find prepositional infinitives used at least until the end of the 18th c. (see below); this ungrammaticality might be related to the drop of the preposition *a* in a series of contexts (e.g.

infinitive is also used in clearly predicative contexts, which shows that it has maintained the flexibility it had in the Middle Ages (52-53), see also example (5) above:[26]

(52) Lombard (Ticinese, 2012)
La Gina l' è in gesa a parlà cul prèvat.
the Gina SUB.CL is in church to speak.INF with-the priest
'Gina has gone to the church to talk to the priest.'

(53) Central Friulian (2012)
La foto di Marie, a cusinâ i biscots, jo no le vevi mai viodude!
the picture of Maria to cook.INF the cookies I NEG it.CL had.1SG never seen
'I had never seen the picture of Maria making cookies.'

In (52a), the matrix subject *Gina* is coreferent with the logical subject of the prepositional infinitive, while in (52b), its logical subject is the complement of a preposition. In both examples the prepositional infinitive is a secondary predicate, as can be verified if we translate these sentences in Spanish or Italian: Spanish would use a predicative gerund here, Italian a PR.

In conclusion, Northern Italian varieties have maintained the medieval pattern, in which a single verb form can be used both as secondary predicate and as complement of the perception verb. What has changed is the morphology of the verb form, but not its functions. Note that these varieties usually also use PRs (as secondary predicates) and bare infinitives (in EPCs), as Table 2 shows.

Table 2: The constructions used in IPCs and EPCs in Tuscany and Northern Italy		
	IPC/Secondary predicate	**EPC/complement of perc. verb**
Old Italian, and Old North Italian varieties	PR/gerund (or prep. inf.)	infinitive/gerund (or prep. inf.)
Modern Italian	PR	infinitive
Modern North Italian varieties	PR/prep. infinitive	infinitive/prep. infinitive
Northern Ladin	PR	gerund

Table 2 also illustrates the peculiar system of Northern Ladin, where the gerund is used only as EPC, while infinitives are never allowed. If we consider the broader diachronic picture, it seems reasonable to posit that Northern Ladin must have gone through a stage in which gerunds were used both in EPCs and in IPCs (as secondary predicates), similarly to what is attested in the other varieties. Unlike these varieties, however, Northern Ladin never adopted the innovation that replaced gerunds with prepositional infinitives (as did Fodom, a Southern Ladin variety), probably due to its peripheral position in the Romance area.

To explain the current pattern, we need to posit that at some point the use of gerunds as secondary predicates declined, while it remained stable in EPCs. An educated guess is that the trigger for this change might have been the presence of PRs, which are well attested in Ladin. Therefore, gerunds might have been "pushed" to the other pole (EPCs), for a need to avoid ambiguity (as happens in

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Vao Padova lit. "I go Padua", meaning 'I go to Padua'). More research is needed to investigate the loss of prepositional infinitives in Venetan.
[26] Note that (52a) is grammatical in Standard Italian as well: this is expected because the subject of the prepositional infinitive is coreferent with the matrix subject.

Northern Italy with prepositional infinitives). In turn, gerunds might have expelled bare infinitives from EPCs, since there was no need to keep two different forms for a single function.[27]

Thus, the current Northern Ladin picture is the result of a series of changes that led, probably in various phases, to a pattern that is unattested in other Romance varieties and that assigns gerunds a role that is usually precluded to them in other languages, like Spanish or French. This new system is more economic than that of Northern Italy, because in Northern Ladin to each form corresponds one construction, and there is no ambiguous form, unlike prepositional infinitives in Northern Ladin.

7. Conclusions

In this chapter I have tried to individuate the diachronic path that led Italian and the varieties of Northern Italy to the current peculiar distribution of perception constructions, which differs not only from that of other Romance languages, but also internally. My proposal is that all varieties under investigation, except for Northern Ladin, have shared an innovation that led predicative gerunds to be replaced by prepositional infinitives. In Florence, this construction conflicted with a general rule of the language, which requires an overt subject of infinitives headed by a preposition to be coreferent with the subject of the main clause. Therefore, prepositional infinitives were eliminated from perception constructions, and this led to a simplification of the system. In Northern Italy, on the other hand, prepositional infinitives are still used, and the constructions in which they occur are ambiguous between an IPC and an EPC. Finally, the innovation that replaced gerunds with prepositional infinitives has never reached Northern Ladin. Thus, gerunds are still in use, but they are used only in EPCs, so that they are in opposition with PRs. The systems of Italian and Northern Ladin are thus more economic and rational, while the Northern Italian varieties have remained more similar to the original conditions.

This research shows that the comparison with genetically related varieties that are well documented diachronically allows us to make hypotheses on other varieties, for which we do not have a long history of documentation. In addition, a precise analysis of the documentation allows us to better understand the role and whole range of functions that gerunds have had in the history of Italian, when they were less "converbial" (i.e., adverbial) than today. A crucial factor in this picture appears to be the wide distribution of PRs, whose emergence must have affected the whole system, although their impact is difficult to grasp at the current state of knowledge. Future research will be devoted to investigating in more detail the relationship between PRs and gerunds in Tuscany and Northern Italy.

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[27] Note that the precise timing of the different changes, and the possible role of PRs as triggers for a restructuring of the system, must remain a speculation due to the lack of documentation of older stages of Ladin.

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