

# Possessives in Old Italian<sup>1</sup>

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## 0. Preliminaries

The aim of this paper is twofold, as most linguistic work. From the empirical point of view it wants to contribute a description of the syntax of possessive adjectives and their pronominal counterparts in Old Italian to the more general ItalAnt project for a comprehensive description of Old Italian Grammar. The Old Italian data is taken from the ITALNET DATABASE of the OPERA DEL VOCABOLARIO ITALIANO – ARTFL PROJECT – NOTRE DAME UNIVERSITY.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>. This paper is an elaboration of a draft section for ItalAnt (a grammar of Old Italian), a project created and directed by Lorenzo Renzi. I could never enumerate in a short footnote the many ways in which I am indebted to Cino Renzi both as a teacher and as a research director. I also thank Giampaolo Salvi for comments on the ItalAnt draft. This paper was read at the giornata Italant, Padua Oct. 23<sup>rd</sup> 2002. I wish to thank the audience among whom Giuliano Bernini, Verner Egerland, Cecilia Poletto, Giampaolo Salvi, Laura Vanelli, Nigel Vincent and the organizers, Paola Benincà, Nicoletta Penello and Lorenzo Renzi for comments and discussion. Particular thanks go to Laura Brugè and Anna Cardinaletti who have extensively commented on the paper and whose work largely inspired it and to Mila Dimitrova-Vulchanova for in-depth discussion. It is clear that this line of theoretical research has been developed, directed, and promoted at the University Ca' Foscari of Venice by Guglielmo Cinque. At this point, the usual disclaimers necessarily apply.

<sup>2</sup>. The OPERA DEL VOCABOLARIO ITALIANO is an institute of the CNR located at the Accademia della Crusca in Florence. I wish to thank all the people who work there for the invaluable tool of research they provide the research community with.

From the theoretical point of view, it aims to providing an analysis of possessive modifiers tracked on the leading ideas of the minimalist program (Chomsky 1995, 1998 and much other work inspired by it). In this paper, I will support the following claims:

- Possessive adjectives (and their pronominal counterparts) are complex (namely XP) modifiers of the noun. They are not merged as heads, since they can have a branching structure.
- Possessive adjectives (and their pronominal counterparts) are at the same time referential and predicative. This hybrid nature of theirs can derive a number of properties that differentiate them on the one hand from possessor noun phrases and on the other hand from other types of adjectives.

A research based on a corpus of a language with no native speakers alive has particular demands. It presents the challenge to work on data that cannot undergo further scrutiny by a native speaker. As a consequence, arguments cannot be built on judgements of (a)grammaticality, so that logically possible but unattested cases cannot be necessarily considered as (a)grammatical given the finite nature of the corpus. Also the status of rare occurrences is not straightforward, given the possibility of performance errors (including inaccurate copying), marginal acceptability, or (again) just chance, due to the finite nature of the corpus. These and other issues will be apparent in the course of the discussion.

## 1. Some basic facts

The syntactic description of Old Italian (OI) will often make reference to comparison with Modern Italian (MI) which is a well-known and well-studied language in the generative framework. There is a major parallelism and a major difference in the distribution of possessives in OI w.r.t. MI. The similarity is that possessives in the two stages of Italian can be found both in prenominal and in postnominal position, as shown in (1)-(3):

- (1) a. *ch' io solo intesi il nome nel mio core*; (Dante, Vita nuova 23.100)  
'that I alone heard the name **in-the my heart**'

- b. e pareami che lietamente mi dicesse nel **cor mio**: (Dante, Vita nuova 24.106)  
'and seemed-to-me that happily [s/he] said **in-the heart my**'
- (2) a. ove **la mia donna** fue posta da l' altissimo sire, (Dante, Vita nuova 06.22)  
'where **the my woman** was put by the very high king [GOD]'
- b. ricordarmi de **la gentilissima donna mia**, (Dante, Vita nuova 38.152)  
'remind me of **the very gentle woman my**'
- (3) a. e molto ho già udito predicare dell' **opere loro**-. (...)  
b. **Le loro opere** son tutte perfette, (Bono Giamboni, Vizi e Virtudi, 32.56)  
'And much I have heard **of-the works theirs**. (...) **The their works** are all perfect'

Notice that *loro* is a weak pronoun, at least in MI, as analysed by Cardinaletti (1991) for sentence structure and Cardinaletti (1998) for noun phrase structure. The common position with the possessive adjective provides evidence for the hypothesis that both possessive adjectives and possessive noun phrases are first merged in the same position and can also compete for the same intermediate (weak) prenominal position.

The difference between MI and OI is the fact that the presence of the possessive appears to make the article optional in a well-attested minority of cases in OI.<sup>3</sup> In (4)-(5), I give a couple of the many quasi-minimal pairs:

- (4) a. Lo re, per non rimanere scoperto, prese **la sua partita** e teneva. (Novellino 18.169)  
'The king .... took **the his party** and kept'
- b. (...) io difenderò **mia partita** sì come un altro cavaliere, (Novellino 81.315)  
'I will defend **my party** ...'
- (5) a. Come li capitani possano adunare **loro** consiglio (Stat. Fior. p. 667)  
'How the captain can gather **their council**'

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<sup>3</sup>. The possibility for the definite article to be missing in the presence of a possessive in older stages of Italian, is treated in Renzi (1988). It is difficult to find the semantic value of the missing article, or to explain the optionality of it. But we must reckon that this is not a performance mistake.

- b. Possano li capitani fare richiedere e adunare **il loro** consiglio (...)  
 (Stat. Fior. p. 667)
- 'Can the captains .... and gather **the their council**'

Given this basic empirical background, I now proceed to review some recent proposals on the structure of possessive phrases and discuss the relevance of OI data to them. In section 2, I focus on the internal structure of the possessive adjective, which I claim to be rather complex. In section 3, I focus on possessive movements inside the noun phrase. Section 4 is devoted to possessives occurring with kinship terms.

## 2. The complex structure of possessive constituents

### 2.1. *Previous analyses*

Cardinaletti (1998) extends to possessive adjectives (and pronouns) the tripartition proposed by Cardinaletti e Starke (1999) for pronominal elements. She provides some diagnostics to decide what kind of pronominal a given element belongs to, as in (6):

- (6) a. **Clitic** possessives can occur in a “doubling” construction.  
 b. **Weak** possessives cannot occur in a “doubling” construction or be modified by a PP.  
 c. **Strong** possessives can be modified by a PP.

The generalization in (6) hinges on two different assumptions:

- clitic, but not weak or strong pronouns can be related to overt argument positions (in clitic doubling languages),
- strong, but not deficient<sup>4</sup> pronouns can have a full-fledged structure containing modifiers.

Cardinaletti gives Paduan as a sample language in which the tripartition across possessive elements is fully represented, as shown in (7):

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<sup>4</sup>. In Cardinaletti's terminology “deficient” refers to weak and clitic pronouns as opposed to strong pronouns.

- (7) a. **clitic** so pare (de Toni)  
 b. **weak** el so libro (\*de Toni)  
 c. **strong** el libro suo (de ju)

The clitic pronoun in (7a) is an  $X^{\circ}$  (at least at the final point of the derivation), related to an argument position which can be realized by an overt PP. Weak and strong pronouns in (7b-c) cannot be related to an overt PP. This correctly predicts the ungrammaticality of (7b) but leaves the grammaticality of (7c) unexplained. According to Cardinaletti, in (7c) *suo de ju* is a strong pronoun modified by a PP. The possessive and the PP build a constituent, contrary to (7a) in which the possessive is coindexed with the PP but never build a constituent at any point of the derivation.<sup>5</sup>

Although very elegant, Cardinaletti's analysis misses to capture an apparent parallelism between (7a) and (7c), namely that in both cases the PP-modifier has basically the same semantic function of disambiguating among possible referents for the possessive.<sup>6</sup>

A possible way out of this, which I want to pursue here, is to extend to these cases a proposal made by Brugè (1996, 2000) for the syntactic structure of demonstratives. Brugè claims that when a postnominal demonstrative is modified by a locative, as in (8a), it builds a constituent with it. She also convincingly claims that the demonstrative can move out of the complex constituent, leaving the locative in place, as in (8b):

- (8) a. ?el libro viejo *este de aquí* de sintaxis  
 b. *este* libro viejo \_\_\_ *de aquí* de sintaxis

In (8a) the demonstrative is a maximal element and remains as such after movement to SpecDP in (8b). Movement to SpecDP of the demonstrative was also argued in Giusti

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<sup>5</sup>. For the analysis of possessive doubling constructions in a clitic doubling language cf. Dimitrova-Vulchanova and Giusti (1999) on Bulgarian. Notice that in Bulgarian the clitic possessive cooccurs with the definite article. This is also the case in other Balkan languages, as in Rumanian and Modern Greek. The complementary distribution of the possessive and the article is therefore neither necessary nor sufficient condition of the clitic status of the possessive.

<sup>6</sup>. This is related to the fact that in Paduan (as well as in many Italian variants), the third person possessive is ambiguous in number as well as in gender.

(1993) on the basis of Rumanian data. Parallel to Spanish, the demonstrative can be postnominal in Rumanian, but differently from Spanish it is never the rightmost modifier; on the contrary it is the leftmost of the specifiers of the noun. In Giusti (1993), I observed the postnominal demonstrative in Rumanian as a “second” position, cf. (9b):

- (9) a. acest {frumos} băiat {frumos}  
 b. băiatul acesta ~~băiat~~ (frumos) ~~băiat~~  
 c. frumosul (\*acesta) ~~frumos~~ băiat  
 d. băiatul [[DemP acesta] [băiat [[AP frumos] [băiat [[DemP acesta] [băiat]]]]]]]

(9a) is parallel to Italian (*questo bel ragazzo simpatico*). The contrast between (9b) and (9c) is evidence in favour of the XP nature of the demonstrative that can be crossed over by N-movement but not by AP movement. (9d) gives the derivation of (9b) in terms of bare phrase structure (the labels being inserted only for expository reasons).<sup>7</sup>

## 2.2. An alternative analysis

If Brugè is correct, XP-movement inside the noun phrase is possible leaving a remnant in the basic position (in a stranded fashion à la Sportiche (1988)), we can unify cases such as (7a) and (7c) above in the following fashion. I propose that (7c) displays the basic position of the possessive, as in (10a). From this position the clitic possessive in (7a) moves to D°, as in (10b). In this analysis, it is unexpected that the weak possessive in (7b) cannot move out of PossP to reach the position immediately following the article, as in (10c):

- (10) a. [DP [D° el] [libro [PossP suo [PP de ju/Toni]] [pare]]]  
 b. [DP [D° so] [pare [PossP ~~so~~ [PP de Toni]] [pare]]]  
 c. # [DP [D° el] so [libro [PossP ~~so~~ [PP de ju/Toni]] [pare]]]

<sup>7</sup>. If the demonstrative is very low in the hierarchy of nominal modifiers, how can it be so high in Rumanian? A possible solution is given in Giusti (2002), where I suggest that the postnominal position in (9b) is derived by movement of the demonstrative in the high field of the noun phrase (where the referential properties of the noun phrase are computed at the LF interface) and that Rumanian allows a further move of N°.

According to Cardinaletti, Italian also shows the tripartition found in Paduan. The only difference is that in MI they are (partially) homophonous, in that they only differ in the strength of the syllabic structure which does not carry stress in the weak and clitic items:<sup>8</sup>

- (11) a. **clitic** suo padre (\*di Toni)  
 b. **weak** il suo libro (\*di Toni)  
 c. **strong** il libro suo (di lui)

In Cardinaletti's (1998) proposal the ungrammaticality of (10a) in MI is expected since MI does not display clitic doubling in the clause. The ungrammaticality of (10b) is therefore irrelevant to decide whether the possessive is weak or clitic, but contrasts with the possible (10c) where the strong possessive cooccurs with a disambiguating pronoun in the PP.

Old Italian comes into the discussion here in that it shows that there is nothing that prevents a prenominal (arguably weak) possessive to be related to a disambiguating pronoun embedded in the PP. Examples like (12)-(13) are solidly attested.

- (12) a. **a' suoi succiessori di lui** nella seggia di Roma (p. 308)  
 'to his successors of him to the chair of Rome'  
 b. così aversanti **sua possanza di lui** (idem 438)  
 'so opposing his might of him'  
 c. contra **i suoi vichari di lui** e ffedeli sugietti, (idem, p. 442)  
 'against the his vichars of him and faithful subjects'  
 (Il Libro del difenditore della pace e tranquillità volgarizzato, Marsilio da Padova, Defensor pacis, nella traduzione in volgare fiorentino del 1363)

In (12a) and (12c) the article is missing, but this makes no difference with respect to the cooccurrence of the possessive adjective with the PP *di lui*. Notice also that the presence of the PP could be due to a context requiring disambiguation (*cuore* is masculine while *carne* is feminine), as in (13a) or to stylistic reasons. In (13b) the pronoun is emphatic:

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<sup>8</sup>. The examples are mine but they can be inferred from Cardinaletti's discussion.

- (13) a. s'egli aviene che il cuore pecchi alcuna volta, per ciò no de' tu credere che ciò sia **per sua natura di lui**, ma ciò gl'aviene per la grande fragelità de la carne, di ch'egl'è caricato e coperto.  
 'if it happens that the heart.MASC sins some time, for that you should not believe that this is for his nature of him[=the heart], but it happens for the great fragility of the flesh.FEMM, of which he [=the heart] is loaded and covered. (La storia del San Gradale. Volgarizzamento toscano dell'Estoire del Saint Graal p. 205)
- b. E servirà a lui ogni gente, e al suo figliuolo, e al figliuolo del suo figliuolo, d' insino a tanto che venga il tempo **della sua terra di lui**;  
 'And all people will serve him, and his son, and the son of his son, until the time comes **of-the his world of him**' (Anonimo, La Bibbia volgare p. G137.)

### 2.3. *Covert possessives in Old Italian*

The corpus provides no case of *suo di lui*, *suo di lei*, or *suo di loro*, in any position, contrary to what is found in Paduan and MI. I do not believe this is evidence that such sequences are agrammatical in OI, but only that the corpus (for historical, contingent reasons) does not include the colloquial register in which such forms are attested in MI. What we find in the corpus is a postnominal possessive PP modified by a title such as *Capitano* in (14a). I suppose that in (14a) the postnominal possessive is covert and what we actually have is [[*sue*] [*di lui Capitano*]]. In the same pages of the corpus we have abundant evidence of the postnominal position of a possessive as shown in (14b):

- (14) a. se alcuno sbandito da messer la Podestà dei Pisani perverrà alle mani **di lui Capitano**,  
 'If anybody banned by Master the Podesta of the Pisans falls in the hands of him Captain,'
- b. Si ancora che, se alcuno sbandito da messer lo Capitano del populo perverrà **alle mani sue**, sia tenuto et debbially ponere et consegnare in forsa di messer lo Capitano del populo di Pisa, che debbia essere punito da quel messer Capitano per l' **ufficio suo** (Breve del Popolo e delle Compagne del Comune di Pisa (Statuti inediti della città di Pisa dal XII al XIV secolo, vol. II, p. 582)



Notice that the use of the personal pronoun appears to be a stylistic choice as in (15a), which would be semantically equivalent with a possessive (cf. *l'anima sua*, or *la sua anima*) and the case in (15b) in which *di me* is interpreted as Theme of “love”. This would not be possible for the possessive adjective which could only be interpreted as the Experiencer of “love”:<sup>9</sup>

- (15) a. **perochè l' anima di lui** non avrebbe niuno prò, ma danno (...)  
       'since the soul of him would not have any pro, but damage (...)'  
       b. **perochè per l' amore di me** è morto il mio Signore  
       'since for **the love of me** died the my Lord'  
       (Anonimo [1300], *Il Libro dei Sette Savj di Roma* p. 68)

The possibility of a covert possessive is attested in several Romance languages including MI and OI, as well as French and Spanish as studied by Vergnaud and Zubizarreta (1992). The examples in (16) show that the possessive adjective can be covert in OI with kinship terms or body parts:

- (16) a. Ben sapemo quante ruine fece ardendo Roma, tagliando **i parenti** et uccidendo il **fratello** e sparando **la madre**. (Brunetto Latini, *Rettorica* p. 181)  
       'We know well how many disasters [he] did burning Rome, cutting **the relatives** and killing **the brother** and sparing **the mother**'  
       b. l' arcivescovo senti che 'l medico avea dato commiato **alla nepote**. (Novellino 49.234)  
       'the bishop heard that the doctor had given **the niece** leave to depart'
- (17) a. se non fosse uno che 'l tenne per **lo braccio**. (Novellino 96.343)  
       'if [there] wasn't one who held him on **the arm**'  
       b. ed a messer Guido de' Galli fu moçço **il naso** con tutto **il labro**, e fessa **la bocca** da ciascuno lato insino **alli orecchi**. (*Cronica fiorentina*, p. 119)  
       'and to mr. Guido de' Galli was cut off the nose with all the lip, and split the

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<sup>9</sup>. For the thematic properties of possessives cf. Cinque (1980) and Giorgi and Longobardi (1991). I have not checked if these generalizations apply in OI. It is rather safe to suppose they do, since they are quite generally found in unrelated languages. Cf., as an example, Bulgarian as analysed by Dimitrova-Vulchanova and Giusti (1999).

mouth on each side till the ears'

In both cases (17) the possessor is present in the interpretation of the noun phrase and is interpreted as anaphoric to an antecedent in the clause. Its behaviour is that of a (small) *pro*, which is present in other positions in OI and MI, and is absent in other languages, e.g. English. This may be the reason why in English the possessive is obligatory precisely with these nouns, while it is regularly missing in Italian.

#### 2.4. “*Suo proprio*”

Further indirect evidence to assume that a postnominal possessive adjective can be modified by a different constituent in OI is the robust occurrence of the complex possessive *suo proprio* (“his own”) which is another means of emphasizing the possessor (parallel to *di lui stesso* “of himself”). *Suo proprio* can occur in postnominal position in (18a), in prenominal position in (18b) and in discontinuous position in (18c):

- (18) a. **la vertude sua propia** (Dante, *Convivio*, p. 393)  
       'the virtue his own'
- b. **lo suo proprio strumento** (Brunetto Latini, *Rettorica*, [Parte non numerata 1 page 4])  
       'its own instrument'
- c. **la sua vertude propia** (Dante, *Convivio*, p. 368)  
       'its virtue own'

(18a) and (18c) build a minimal pair taken from the same text, given slightly more extensively in (19a-b) to show that the prenominal or postnominal position of the possessive, also in this case, is a matter of stylistic choice determined both by the informational structure and by the prosody of the whole sentence.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>. It is plausible that the prosodic structure of the sentence is particularly relevant in the elaborate prose that was conceived to be a model for the newly born literary language of Old Italian.

- (19) a. E in questa cotale anima è **la vertude sua propria**, e la intellettuale, e la divina,  
(Dante, Convivio, p. 393)  
'And in this such soul is the virtue his own, and the intellectual, and the devine,
- b. aggiugne **la sua vertude propria**, e allora è massimamente secondo sua natura;  
(Dante, Convivio, p. 368)  
[it] adds the its virtue own, and then [it] is maximally according to its nature'

(20) gives the context of (18b), which is particularly telling in that it conjoins noun phrases with possessive adjectives of different kinds: a prenominal possessive with no article such as *sua materia*, prenominal possessives preceded by an article such as *lo suo officio*, *le sue parti* and *lo suo artefice*, the prenominal position of the entire constituent *suo proprio* as in *lo suo proprio strumento*, and a covert possessive in *la fine*, which is clearly to be interpreted as “la sua fine”:

- (20) Di fuori s' insegna dimostrando che è rettorica e di che generazione, e quale **sua materia e lo suo officio e le sue parti e lo suo proprio strumento e la fine e lo suo artefice**; (Brunetto Latini, Rettorica, [Parte non numerata 1, p. 4])  
'Externally it is taught showing what is Rhetorics and of what generation, and which [is] **its topic and the its duty and the its parts and the its own instrument and the goal and the its creator**'

*Proprio* can also modify a demonstrative as in (21), with the interpretation of “exactly that” (cf. It. *proprio quella*):

- (21) La prima si è teorica, ed è **quella propria scienza** che a noi insegna la prima questione di sapere e di conoscere la natura delle cose celestiali terrene.  
(Tesoro volg. L. 1, cap. 3, p. a011)  
'The first is Rhetoric, and [it] is **that own science** that to us teaches the first question of knowing and learning the nature of the things celestial and earthly'

The discussion to this point leads us to extend Brugè's proposal for demonstratives given in (22a) to other cases of complex demonstratives such as (22b) and to complex possessives as in (23):

- (22) a. [ [DemP questo] [X° [AdvP qui] ] ]  
b. [ [DemP quella] [Agr° [AP propria] ] ]

- (23) a. [ [POSSP suo] [X° [PP di lui] ] ]  
 b. [ [POSSP suo] [Agr° [AP proprio] ] ]

There is a striking parallelism between (22) and (23). Both the demonstrative and the possessive can either be modified by an element that does not agree with it, or by an AP such as *proprio* which shares nominal features with it. Following Giusti (2002) I propose that the complex constituents given in (22)-(23) are merged very early in the bottom up structure building mechanism, immediately higher than the NP-shell where the thematic structure of the noun is projected.<sup>11</sup> This position is always postnominal in Italian assuming that the noun moves across its low modifiers as proposed by the seminal work of Cinque (1994) and much other work inspired by it. According to this proposal, prenominal possessives are moved from this low position to a higher one.

### 2.5. *Phonologically reduced forms*

Reduced forms of possessives are present in Old Italian. However, they do not have a distribution which is different from their full fledged counterparts. We observe some examples in (24). In (24a) we see that the reduced form may appear with or without a preceding definite article. In (24b) we see that a preposition may precede a reduced or a full form:

- (24) a. se **per tu' conforto** / **il su'** dispende a torto / e torna in basso stato, / tu ne sarai biasmato. (Latini, Brunetto, *Il Tesoretto* pag 235, l. 1700-1702)  
 'if for **the your comfort** / **the his** [you] wrongly lower / and [he] goes back in low state, / you of-it will be blamed'
- b. Et advegna che ti parli così **di sue lusinghe**, e ravolgasi **cun su' parole** composte; (Andrea da Grosseto, *Dei Trattati morali di Albertano da Brescia volgarizzati* p. 283)  
 'And it [may] happen that [he] speaks to-you so **of his flatters**, and approaches [you] **with his words kind**'

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<sup>11</sup>. This is claimed by Cinque (1994) on independent reasons and Brugè (1996).

The reduced form never appears to be obligatory or impossible. It cooccurs with full forms in the same text and it even appears in the pronominal form *il su'* in (24a). So, although it would be tempting to analyse the full forms in (25a) as triggered by the presence of the reinforcer *propie*, I think that it is safe to apply the benefit of the doubt and leave the reduced – strong usages in (24a) to a matter of personal choice of the author, as the contrast in (25b) immediately shows:

- (25) a. tenean **sue propie mene**, / ed avean **su' legnaggio**, / **su' corso e su' viaggio**, / e  
'n sua **propria** magione / tenean corte e ragione: (Latini, Brunetto, *Il Tesoretto*  
p. 220, l.1254-1258)
- b. la ragione perfetta si è **il su' propio bene**. (Pistole di Seneca, 76 p. 192)  
'the reason perfect is **the his own good**'

These short observations are certainly not sufficient to exclude that reduced possessives have syntactic properties that distinguish them from full possessive, but we can safely claim that the reduced vs. full forms in OI cannot be straightforwardly related to the deficient / strong distinction that appears to hold in Paduan. For this reason, I will disregard this (phonological) distinction in OI.

### 3. The landing position(s)

At this point, we must inquire why the possessive adjective moves and to what position. Following Giusti (2002), I take the landing position of the possessive adjective to be a very high one in the functional structure of the noun phrase. It is the position immediately following the article, which in turn is the head of the highest projection of the noun phrase. In other words the position of the prenominal possessive in Italian is the same as the “second” position found for the postnominal demonstrative in Rumanian in (9) above. I briefly review some evidence for this proposal.

The prenominal possessive tends to precede all other modifiers in OI, as in (26):<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup>. Apparent evidence to the contrary can be dealt with in terms of A-bar movement of the adjective to a Topic/Focus position in the left periphery of the noun phrase, as argued for in Giusti (1996). In this

- (26) a. Quando serai vecchio, non per natura né per ragione viverai con nettezza, ma per **la tua bella, piacevole e lunga usanza** ch' avrai fatta. (Novellino, 68. 285)  
'When [you] are old, not because of nature neither because of rationality you will live with cleanness, but because of **the your nice, pleasant and long habit** that you'll have had'
- b. L' ora che **lo suo dolcissimo salutare** mi giunse, (Dante, Vita nuova, 03.12)  
'The hour that **the her sweetest farewell** reached me'
- c. «Proporremo dinanzi da te **le nostre ragionevoli ragioni**, (Novellino, 061.260)  
'[We] Will show you **the our reasonable reasons**'
- d. e non sappiamo **i vostri mali intendimenti**, (Bono Giamboni, Vizi e Virtudi, 67.106)  
'and [we] do not know **the your bad intentions**'

Although the definite article appears to be formed in OI, with a syntax that generally parallels the MI usage of the definite article, the presence of a prenominal possessive appears to favour the absence of the definite article, as in the cases in (27)-(28):

- (27) a. che le saprà contar **mia ragion bona**: (Dante, Vita nuova 12.50)  
'that to-her will tall **my reason good**'
- b. di dimostrar con li occhi **mia viltate**. (Dante, Vita nuova 35.142)  
'to show with the eyes **my cowardliness**'
- c. (...) che consolasse **mia vita dolente**: (Guido Cavalcanti, 33 p. 538)  
'which comforted **my life painful**'

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perspective, it is not chance that in (i)-(iii) the adjectives that precede the prenominal possessive are “great” and “unique” that are intrinsically emphatic:

- (i) perché era **grande suo amico** (...) (Novellino, 088.330)  
'because [he] was **great his friend**'
- (ii) Qualuse vedesse li spirti fuggir via, / **di grande sua pietate** piangeria. (Cavalcanti 07.498)  
'Whoever would see the souls fly away / **of great his pity** would weep'
- (iii) E in Gesù Cristo **unico suo figliuolo**, (Bono Giamboni, Vizi e Virtudi, 17.36)  
'And in Jesus Christ **unique his son**'

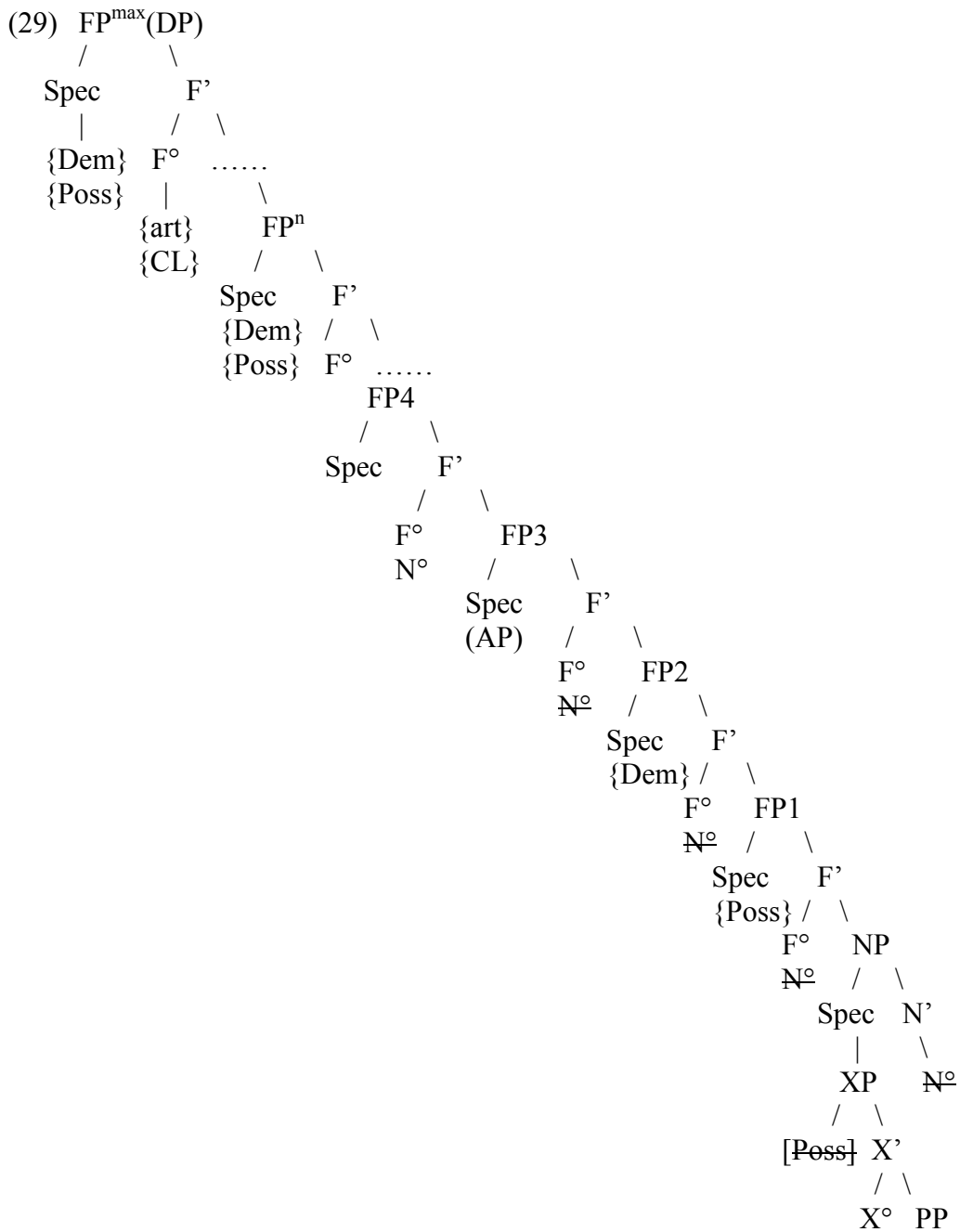
- (28) a. quando saldamo **nostra ragione** (...) (Doc. fior., p. 545)  
 'when [we] fix **our reason**'
- b. perciò che **mia limosina** ritenesti (...) (Novellino 17b.165 )  
 'because that **my charity** [you] kept'
- c. (...) è da menare inn altra parte **loro abitamento?** (Brunetto Latini, Rettorica, 51.122)  
 'Is to bring to another part **their housing**'
- d. per compiere **nostra giornata**, (Bono Giamboni, Vizi e Virtudi 15.32)  
 'to complete **our day**'
- e. senza **tuo perverso adoperamento**. (Rinuccino, Rime, p. 134)  
 'without **your perverse intervention**'

All occurrences of the possessive in (28) are prenominal. I did not find occurrence of postnominal possessors in OI with missing articles.<sup>13</sup> Running the risks mentioned above with respect to the interpretation of the unattested occurrences, I claim that this is evidence for the possibility that the possessive adjective in OI is in SpecDP (here indicated as SpecFP<sup>max</sup>, as I proposed for Germanic languages in Giusti (1993, 2002).

Up to now, we have established that the possessive adjective can either be in a low position and in this case it is postnominal, or it can be in a high position preceded or not by a determiner. To capture this behaviour in a unified way, I assume the structure in (31) motivated in detail in Giusti (2002). In (31) the possessor is merged in SpecNP where it receives its  $\theta$ -role from the noun. It is then moved to an immediately higher position where it checks its  $\phi$ -features against the  $\phi$ -features of the noun that I assume to be all merged in a bundle in F1. At that point it may either stay in SpecFP1, or it can be moved to a high Specifier, here labelled SpecFP<sup>n</sup> or Spec FP<sup>max</sup>:

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<sup>13</sup>. Unless they could be reduced to the general possibility of having an indefinite plural noun phrase in object position without an article (cf. It.: *ho da risolvere problemi miei* "[I] have to solve problems of mine") and are therefore independent of the presence of the possessive.



In structure (31) numbers and superscript letters only serve to distinguish one functional projection from the other. From what I understand of the spirit of bare phrase structure, it is the numeration of each given instance of linguistic items that is crucial to decide how many functional projections end up being merged in a structure. The lesser the more optimal, provided all uninterpretable features are checked and deleted at the relevant level of representation (before Spell-Out) and that all semantic features are merged in the relevant position. I propose that the highest specifier is the position



visible to interpretive rules at the interface level. This position can be filled with the relevant material before or after Spell-Out according to language specific requirements. In OI, as well as in MI, the possessor does not have to move to SpecFP<sup>max</sup>, this is why it can cooccur with another determiner, including demonstratives (which must be obligatorily merged in Spec FP<sup>max</sup>), and existential quantifiers (which select an indefinite noun phrase as their complement),<sup>14</sup> as shown in (32):

- (30) a. ella dea compiere **questo suo viaggio**, Restoro d'Arezzo, (L. II, dist. 8, cap. 21, p. 237)  
'She had to make **this her travel**'
- b. ke **un suo destrieri** non potea stare nella sua stalla (Questioni filosofiche, L. IV, pt. 4, cap. 3, p. 3)  
'that **a/one his horse** could not be in the his stable'
- c. poi ch' ebbe parlato e contato **molte sue perfezioni**, (Cavalca, Specchio di croce, cap. 9 p. 39)  
'after he had spoken and told **many his perfections**'

Given that in bare phrase structure the number of functional heads merged depends on the numeration of the given structure, the high position in which the demonstrative is moved is indicated as SpecFP<sup>n</sup> in (29). If the specifier position in which the possessive is inserted is not FP<sup>max</sup>, namely the final projection which completes the nominal “phase”, then a definite article can be inserted. In this way, the Specifier of FP<sup>max</sup> becomes available for covert movement of the possessive at LF. Alternatively, the numeration does not contain the article and the possessor is merged in the highest Specifier and the structure building procedure ends with the possessive in SpecFP<sup>max</sup>.

This movement occurs also when the possessive is part of a larger projection, as in (31). Movement of the possessor will leave a remnant in the basic position:

- (31) a. la [[<sub>AP</sub> sua] [terra [[<sub>AP</sub> ~~sua~~] [X° [<sub>PP</sub> di lui]]]]]]  
b. la [vertude [[<sub>AP</sub> sua] [X° [<sub>PP</sub> propria]]]]  
c. la [[<sub>AP</sub> sua] [[vertude [[<sub>AP</sub> ~~sua~~] [X° [<sub>PP</sub> propria]]]]]]  
d. lo [[<sub>AP</sub> suo [X° [<sub>PP</sub> proprio]]] [strumento [[<sub>AP</sub> ~~suo~~] [X° [<sub>PP</sub> ~~proprio~~]]]]

<sup>14</sup>. For the position of the demonstrative cf. Giusti (1993, 1994), and Brugè (1996, 2000). For the selection of quantifiers cf. Giusti (1991, 1993), Cardinaletti and Giusti (1992, 2002).

Let me summarize the proposals and assumptions made so far.

- Following Cinque (1980, 1994), I assume that possessives are first merged in SpecNP where they are assigned a  $\theta$ -role. In case of a complex event nominal the  $\theta$ -roles to be assigned are more than one and in that case I assume that an NP-shell à la Larson (1988) is projected.
- Following Cinque (1994), I assume that the postnominal position of the modifiers of the noun is derived by N-movement to higher functional heads.
- In languages where possessives have adjectival form (not genitival pronominal form) I assume that they are further moved to a low functional specifier. I proposed this is SpecFP1, the first specifier merged in a bottom-up fashion (for this proposal cf. Giusti 1993 and Brugè 1996)
- Possessives may (and in some languages must) be computed by the interpretive component in order to attribute referential properties to the noun phrase. Following Giusti (2002), I assume that they move to the DP (FP<sup>max</sup>) area, but they are not necessarily heads, on the contrary they can be merged as XPs into SpecFP<sup>max</sup>. This amounts to saying that possessives that are in complementary distribution with articles are not necessarily clitics.
- If possessives are merged in F<sup>max</sup> because they are clitics, I propose that they have an empty operator in its specifier, which is computed as a strong possessive by the interpretive component.
- In languages in which possessives do not have to reach SpecFP<sup>max</sup> before Spell-Out, as in Modern and Old Italian, possessives appear to move to a high specifier (the highest immediately preceding FP<sup>max</sup> in the bottom-up procedure. This is the “weak” position of Cardinaletti (1998).
- Any movement of the possessive can leave a modifier of the possessive stranded in the base position, not in the intermediate position if this is weak.

#### 4. Kinship terms

Let us check our general framework with a recalcitrant empirical field such as kinship terms as they are modified by (c)overt possessive modifiers. Giorgi and Longobardi (1991) claim that in (Modern) Italian, possessive adjectives are in D with kinship terms, as in (32), on the basis of their complementary distribution with the definite article:

- (32) a. (\*il) tuo padre  
 b. (\*il) suo fratello  
 c. (\*il) mio cugino

Cardinaletti (1998) also shows that a weak, non clitic possessive such as *loro* cannot precede kinship nouns if not cooccurring with a definite article as shown in (33a, b).

- (33) a. \*loro padre, \*loro madre, \*loro nonno, etc.  
 b. il loro padre, il loro madre, il loro nonno, etc.  
 c. papà loro, mamma loro, nonno loro

The contrast in (33) is related by Cardinaletti to a particular property of kinship terms to have a clitic possessive in D. In (33c) the noun can move across the weak pronoun confirming the hypothesis that the possessive *loro* is not in a head position.

Cardinaletti applies the test of focussing to possessives modifying kinship terms with the results in (34):

- (34) a. \*È MIO padre che ci ha salvato non TUO.  
 b. È papà MIO che ci ha salvato non il TUO.

In (34a) the clitic is prenominal and cannot bear contrastive focus, while in (34b) it is postnominal and can be contrastively focussed. This is given as evidence for the deficient status of the possessive in (34a). However, the ungrammaticality of (34a) can be due to the last part of the example which shows the impossibility of pronominalizing a bare possessive adjective. If the last part of (34a) is left out, my judgement is of perfect acceptability, as in (34a). In (35b) I also give a different context of contrastive focus which is perfectly acceptable to me:

- (35) a. È MIO padre che ci ha salvato.  
 b. È MIO non TUO padre che ci ha salvato.

The examples in (35) to show that lack of the definite article with kinship terms in Italian is not necessarily evidence for the clitic status of the possessive. I take kinship terms to attract the possessive directly to SpecFP<sup>max</sup>, as I already proposed in (1993), where I had no motivation for this movement.

An explanation for this property of kinship terms is provided by Penello (2001) who proposes a feature [+R] (relational) in the DP area. It is this feature that is related to the referential properties of the kinship term that forces the possessive in the highest Specifier, which in my framework is the position where the referential features of the noun phrase are computed at LF.

Let us now turn to kinship terms in OI. Since it is possible for possessive adjectives to occur in the SpecFP<sup>max</sup> of common nouns, one would expect the feature [+R] to be obligatorily checked in that position. However this is not the case. Kinship terms in OI often occur with a possessive and an article, as in (36), although lack of article is also found, in (37) below:

- (36) a. «Io proverò che giustamente uccisi **la mia madre**, (Brunetto Latini, Rettorica, p. 191)  
'I will prove that rightly [I] killed **the my mother**'
- b. «Io l' uccisi giustamente, perciò ch' ella uccise **il mio padre**». (Brunetto Latini, Rettorica, p. 108)  
'I her-killed rightly, because she killed **the my father**'
- (37) a. Vogliolo sapere da **mia madre**; (Novellino, 2 p.128)  
'[I] want-it to know from **my mother**'
- b. onde **mio padre** ha offeriti duomila marchi ( Novellino, 18.167)  
'for this **my father** has offered two-thousand marks'

Like MI, kinship terms may occur with a definite article and no possessor; in that case the possessive is understood, as seen in 2.3. above and in (38):

- (38) a. «Ben sapemo quante ruine fece ardendo Roma, tagliando **i parenti** et uccidendo **il fratello** e sparando **la madre**». (Brunetto Latini, Rettorica p.181)  
'[We] well know how-many ruins [he] did burning Rome, cutting **the relatives** and killing **the brother** and saving **the mother**'
- b. l' arcivescovo senti che 'l medico avea dato commiato **alla nepote**. (Novellino 49.234)  
'the archbishop heard that the physician had given leave to **the niece**'

In (38a), “the relatives”, “the brother” and “the mother” are related to the subject; in (38b) “the niece” is the bishop’s niece, although the structure may have also allowed for

the doctor to be a possible antecedent for the null possessive. This shows that the missing element has pronominal properties and can refer freely outside the nominal domain.

In (Giusti 1993), I noticed that kinship terms appear to lose the property of attracting possessives in SpecDP when they are modified by an adjective as in (39a), or morphologically complex, as in the inflectional diminutive in (39b):

- (39) a. *il tuo amato padre*  
b. *il tuo paparino*

Since Penello's [+R]-feature is a semantic feature that must be interpreted at LF, we expect its checking to be subject to lexical as well as parametric variation, contrary to uninterpretable features that must be deleted before Spell-Out. I therefore propose that the [+R]-feature is present in SpecFP<sup>max</sup> in (39) and it is checked at LF.

Movement of the possessive to SpecFP<sup>max</sup> appears to be restricted to bare kinship terms, which are bare nouns of a special kind and, as such, have a minimal bare phrase structure.

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