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"Null-subjects, expletives, and locatives in Romance"

Georg A. Kaiser & Eva-Maria Remberger (eds.)

Fachbereich Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Konstanz

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE WORKSHOP "NULL-SUBJECTS, EXPLETIVES, AND LOCATIVES IN ROMANCE"

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Preface

Preface

This volume is a collection of papers given at the workshop *Null-subjects, expletives, and locatives in Romance* at the University of Konstanz in March 2008. This workshop was a joint conference organised by the projects A-19 (Evolution and Variation of Expletive and Neuter Pronouns in Romance Languages / Georg Kaiser) and A-27 (Romance Auxiliary Verbs: Status – Development – Variation / Eva-Maria Remberger) within the SFB 471 "Variation and Development in the Lexicon", funded by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*.

The aim of the workshop was to bring together different views on the interpretation of null subjects, expletives and locatives in order to explore the syntactic, semantic and morphological correlations of these pronouns in Romance. The authors of the papers given at this workshop analysed empty and phonologically realised elements that show the typical behaviour and characteristics of expletives in all Romance languages, i.e. Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, Catalan, Occitan, Sardinian and Raeto-Romance, and frequently also in their regional or diachronic varieties.

The correlation between non-null subjects and obligatory expletive pronouns is one of the best established parametrisations in Generative Grammar. However, it has been shown that both the null subject parameter as well as the presence or absence of overt expletives do not just depend on a simple binary parameter setting, but must be seen in a more complex system of interdependencies involving conditions such as deixis, topicality, person, referentiality, movement etc. The first seven papers published in this volume (Hinzelin, Oliviéri, Palasis-Jourdan, Zimmermann, Rinke & Meisel, Kaiser, Hack & Gaglia) adopt an analysis of null subjects and subject expletives from this point of view.

Yet, as far as overt expletive pronouns are concerned, there are (at least) two categorial types, one stemming from the form of a neuter pronoun (like English *it*, German *es*, French *il*, Dominican Spanish *ello*, Catalan *ell* etc.) and one having a clear locative origin (like English *there*, German *da*, Sardinian *bi*, Italian *ci*, French *y* etc.). Locative elements also play a role in existential as well as impersonal auxiliary constructions in several Romance languages and varieties, i.e. these constructions often show overt locative and expletive elements; however, where they do not (e.g. in Romanian), null or implicit locatives can be assumed. The elements of locative origin among the expletives, the role of locative features in existential and certain impersonal constructions, and the auxiliary selection involved are discussed in the last three papers (Ciconte, Cornilescu, Remberger).

Unfortunately, four papers presented at the workshop have not been included in this volume, either because they were published elsewhere or due to other purely technical reasons. These are the talks given by Gabriela Alboiu (*Null Expletives and Case Values*), Julie Auger (*Two neuter pronouns in Picard*), Maria José Ezeizabarrena (*Null and non-null subjects in the early acquisition of some pro-drop languages*), and Barbara Vance (*The evolution of subject pronoun systems in Medieval Occitan*). These talks were also extremely pertinent to the overall topic of our workshop.

The proceedings of the workshop will also be available online at the following URL:

http://ling.uni-konstanz.de/pages/publ/arbeitspapiere.html
or
http://www.ub.uni-konstanz.de/kops/schriftenreihen_ebene2.php?sr_id=1&la=de

Konstanz, March 2009

Georg A. Kaiser
Eva-Maria Remberger

Pro-forms in existential constructions of early Italo-Romance vernaculars[1]

Francesco Maria Ciconte

1. Introduction

I consider existential constructions in a fairly large corpus of early Italo-Romance texts, dating from C13[th] to C16[th]. In particular, I analyse the pro-forms, as their function within the existential construction seems to vary diatopically and diachronically. I claim that not all existential pro-forms are locative by definition.

In thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Tuscan the pro-form occurs in complementary distribution with a locative phrase, e.g.: "*Uno re fu nelle parti d'Egitto*", 'A king was in some parts of Egypt' (*Novellino*, V, p. 19) vs. "*Egli ci sono delle altre donne*", '(Expletive) there are some other women' (Boccaccio, *Decameron*, III, 3,13); the results of the scrutiny of the Tuscan existential constructions would seem to corroborate Freeze's (1992) idea that all existential pro-forms are invariably locative, as existentials are locatives, assuming that, in the variety under consideration, a locative pro-form cannot co-occur with a locative phrase within the clause (La Fauci and Loporcaro 1993, 1997). The Tuscan data are compared with findings from the analysis of fourteenth-century Sicilian texts, where, as is the case with Modern Italian, the pro-form and the locative phrase do not occur in complementary distribution, e.g.: "*chi fu in Sicilia grandi fami*", 'There was in Sicily great hunger' (*La conquesta di Sichilia*, 18:25). The contrast between, on the one hand, the early-Tuscan data and, on the other hand, the early-Sicilian and Modern Italian data suggests that existential pro-forms are not necessarily locative, and thus the locative analysis of existential constructions must be reconsidered. The analysis is then expanded to include other early Italo-Romance varieties: Campanian, Roman, Venetian, Venetan and Lombard. The available evidence suggests that, in the early stages of the history of Italo-Romance, the existential pro-form exhibits diatopic discrepancies: whereas in Tuscan and in the northern varieties the pro-form appears to encode a locative argument, in Sicilian and in the southern vernaculars, as well as in Modern Italian, it can be said to be a marker of existentiality which joins with the copula to spell out an existential predicate (Bentley, 2006). Finally, some theoretical observations on the nature of the pro-forms are advanced. Tuscan and the southern varieties display the pro-forms *ci/vi*, whose etymological value, from the clearly locative HECCE HIC and IBI in Latin, seems to be preserved in early Tuscan, but lost in the other southern varieties. In contrast, the northern varieties display the pro-forms *ghe/gh/ge/g'*, whose etymological value can be traced in derivational contexts which are not necessarily locative (Benincà, 2007).

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2. Tuscan

In the thirteenth-century Tuscan text *Novellino*, existential constructions display the complementary distribution of the pro-form and the locative phrase. Observe the following construction:

(1) a. Era   una guasca   in Cipri
          be.3.SG.PAST a   Gascon.FEM.SG in Cyprus
          '(There) was a woman from Gascony in Cyprus'
          [Copula + Noun phrase + **Locative phrase**]
          [– Pro-form]   (*Novellino*, LI, p. 60)

The structure in (1a) contrasts with:

(1) b. V'   è   questo costume
          PRO-FORM be.3.SG this   habit
          'There is this habit'
          [**Pro-form** + Copula + Noun phrase]
          [– Locative phrase]   (*Novellino*, LXII, p. 70)

Later evidence is found in the fourteenth-century Tuscan text *Decameron*, where existential constructions appear not to allow the co-occurrence of the pro-form and the locative phrase within the same clause. Observe the structure in (2a):

(2) a. Fu   già   nella nostra città un cavaliere
          be.3.SG.PAST already in.the our   town a   knight
          '(There) already was a knight in our town)
          [Copula + **Locative phrase** + Noun phrase]
          [– Pro-form]   (*Decameron*, II, 3, 6, p. 105)

This, again, contrasts with:

(2) b. V'   è   la copia   maggiore
          PRO-FORM be.3.SG the quantity major
          'There is the major quantity'
          [**Pro-form** + Copula + Noun phrase]
          [– Locative phrase]   (*Decameron*, I, Intr., p.24)

The contrast between the (a) examples and the (b) ones would seem to corroborate the view that the existential pro-forms in (1b) and (2b) are locative, assuming that a locative pro-form encodes a locative argument and thus cannot occur with a locative phrase within the same clause. In fact, in the data collected from the Tuscan texts[2], there are no examples of existential constructions displaying both the pro-form and the locative phrase within the same clause. It can thus be assumed that (1a) and (1b) with, respectively, the pro-form *ci* in (1a) and any locative phrase in (1b) would be ungrammatical in thirteenth- and fourteenth-

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[2]   Further evidence of the complementary distribution of the pro-form and the locative phrase is also found in the vast collection of thirteenth-century Tuscan texts edited by Castellani (1952).

century Tuscan, i.e.: (*c') *era una guasca in Cipri* and *v'è questo costume* (*in Firenze*).

Significantly, the order of the constituents does not seem to pose any constraint to the existential construction. Thus, the position of both the pro-form, be it proclitic or enclitic, and of the locative phrase does not alter the complementary distribution. The examples in (3a-d) illustrate various word-order possibilities in existential constructions with a locative phrase:

(3)   a.   Nelle   parti di Grecia ebbe[3]   un signore
           in.the   parts of Greece have.3.SG.PAST a   sir
           'Somewhere in Greece (there) was a sir'
           [**Locative phrase** + Copula + Noun phrase]   (*Novellino*, III, p. 15)

      b.   Era   in costui signoria
           be.3.SG.PAST in him   lordship
           '(There) was lordship in him'
           [Copula + **Locative phrase** + Noun phrase]   (*Novellino*, IX, p. 26)

      c.   Era   una   guasca   in Cipri
           be.3.SG.PAST a   Gascon.FEM.SG in Cyprus
           '(There) was a woman from Gascony in Cyprus'
           [Copula + Noun phrase + **Locative phrase**]   (*Novellino*, LI, p. 60)

      d.   Uno   re   fu   nelle   parti d' Egitto
           one   king be.3.SG.PAST in.the   parts of Egypt
           '(There) was a king somewhere in Egypt'
           [Noun phrase + Copula + **Locative phrase**]   (*Novellino*, V, p. 19)

Contrastingly, the examples in (3e-f) display the pro-form, which occurs in pre- and post-copular position:

(3)   e.   V'   è   questo costume
           PRO-FORM be.3.SG this   habit
           'There is this habit'
           [**Pro-form** + Copula + Noun phrase]   (*Novellino*, LXII, p. 70)

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[3]   For the purposes of this paper, which mainly focuses on the role of the pro-forms, I will not investigate whether there is any significant reason for the selection of either *essere* or *avere* in the existential constructions. In fact, it seems that neither *essere* nor *avere* pose any particular constraint to the complementary distribution. On the contrary, the selection of either *essere* or *avere* does seem to correlate with the type of pivot found in the existential constructions, i.e. whether the pivot is definite or indefinite.

f. Vi   sarà,   e   saravvi   tanta buona
    PRO-FORM be.3.SG.FUT. and be.3.SG.FUT.PRO-FORM many   good
    gente
    people
    '(There) are, and (there) will be many good people'
    [**Pro-form** + Copula][Copula + **Pro-form** + Noun phrase]
                                                    (*Novellino*, LXIV, p. 75)

As a result of the complementary distribution of the pro-form and the locative phrase, it can be said that thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Tuscan only allows three variants in the existential constructions:

[+ Pro-form][– Locative phrase]:
(4) a. V'   era   la   via
        PRO-FORM be.3.SG.PAST   the road
        'There was the road'   (Castellani)

[– Pro-form][+ Locative phrase]:
(4) b. Fu   in Perugia un   giovane
        be.3.SG.PAST in Perugia a   young.man
        '(There) was a young man in Perugia' (*Decameron*, II, 5, 3, p.120)

[– Pro-form][– Locative phrase]:
(4) c. Uno medico fu,   lo quale…
        a   doctor   be.3.SG.PAST who
        '(There) was a doctor, who…'   (*Novellino*, XI, p.27)

The variant [+ Pro-form][+ Locative phrase], which characterizes the existential constructions of Modern Italian (e.g., *c'è un gatto in giardino*, 'there is a cat in the garden'), is not found in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Tuscan. Therefore, at this early stage, Tuscan seems to be rather conservative, both because it adheres to the Latin-type of existentials, (where the pro-form never occurs, e.g.: *est puellă in viā*), and because, in contrast with Modern Italian, the pro-form is exclusively locative, as it cannot co-occur with a locative phrase. This finding challenges somewhat the view of a Tuscan-centred formation of Modern Italian, at least insofar as existential constructions are concerned; the illustrious and literary model of thirteenth-century Florentine does not seem to have played a crucial role in the configuration of the existential construction as it appears nowadays in Modern Italian. It therefore remains to be ascertained if and when, in Tuscan, the pro-form has lost its exclusively deictic function to be reanalysed as a marker of existentiality, which is the role it has in Modern Italian.

In a sixteenth-century Tuscan text, which is a transcription into Tuscan from a Venetian *volgarizzamento* of the Latin *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis*, it can be noted that not only does the pro-form start to occur increasingly in almost all existential constructions, but also, and most importantly, it can occur even in those existentials which display a locative phrase. In the Tuscan version, the types of existential construction [– Pro-form][+ Locative Phrase] and [– Pro-form][–

Locative phrase] are decreasingly attested. The type [+ Pro-form][– Locative phrase] is still attested, as indicated by the example below:

(5)   a.   V'   era   la   stanza di San Brandano
           PRO-FORM be.3.SG.PAST the room   of Saint Brendan
           'There was the room of Saint Brendan'
                                                    (*Tuscan Navigatio*, 3, p. 51)

Crucially, the existential type [+ Pro-form][+ Locative phrase] is finally found:

(5)   b.   E   non v'   era   erba   in niuno luogo
           and NEG PRO-FORM be.3.SG.PAST grass in no   place
           'And there was no grass in any place'   (*Tuscan Navigatio*, 7, p.73)

Diachronically, the data available suggest that, in Tuscan, the pro-form, which was exclusively locative in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, was later reanalysed as a marker of existentiality. Although cautiously, the period of time from the C14th to the C16th can thus be fixed as the crucial moment in which the Tuscan pro-form underwent 'existentialization'. As is the case with Modern Italian (e.g., *ci vado*, 'There I go'), the same form can still have a deictic function:

(5)   c.   La terra la quale dice Barinto […], ò proposto nel mio cuore
           d'andarvi
           'The land Barinto is talking about, I in my heart decided to go
           there'   (*Tuscan Navigatio*, 2, pp. 47-49)

      d.   Ch'io vi sarò
           'That I will be there'   (*Tuscan Navigatio*, 2, p. 49)

The diachronic stage identified by our investigation, therefore, is that in which the pro-form ceased to be exclusively locative in all constructions and uses.

The existential constructions of Modern Italian display the co-occurrence of the pro-form and the locative phrase. If thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Tuscan is characterised by the complementary distribution, it remains to be ascertained where else, if anywhere, the pro-form was reanalysed as a marker of existentiality at an earlier stage than in Tuscan.

3. Sicilian

Fourteenth-century Sicilian already displays the co-occurrence of the pro-form and the locative phrase within the same existential construction:

(6)   a.   Chi   fu   in Sicilia grandi fami
           PRO-FORM be.3.SG.PAST in Sicily great   hunger
           'There was great hunger in Sicily'   (*Conquesta*, XVIII, 29, p. 85)

      b.   In deo non ch'   è   magis et minus
              in God NEG PRO-FORM be.3.SG most and least
              'In God there is not most and least'   (*Sposizione*, II, 32, 15)

Synchronically, it can be noted that, in contrast with thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Tuscan, the complementary distribution of the pro-form and the locative phrase is not found in early Sicilian. This has significant consequences on the status of the Sicilian pro-form, that is to say whether it is locative or, as is the case with (6a-b), it already exhibits a distinctive existential markedness.

    Fourteenth-century Sicilian data also provide examples of existential constructions in which the pro-form does not occur, if there is a locative phrase:

(7)   a.   In Syragusa era   unu grandi Sarrachinu
           in Syracuse be.3.SG.PAST one great   Saracen
           '(There) was a great Saracen in Syracuse'
                                       (*Conquesta*, XXI, 13, p. 96)

      b.   In li   tenebri   foru   chinqui miraculi
           in the darkness be.3.PL.PAST five   miracles
           '(There) were five miracles in the Darkness'
                                       (Sposizione, Prol., 27, p. 7)

It must be noted, however, that the type of existential construction illustrated in (7a-b) ([− Pro-form][+ Locative phrase]), is scarcely attested in early Sicilian. This variety thus contrasts with early Tuscan, revealing a tendency towards the use of the type of existential [+ Pro-form][+ Locative phrase], which is the norm in Modern Italian.

    In the existential construction without a locative phrase, early Sicilian can, but need not, display the pro-form. This is seen in the contrast between (8a-b), on the one hand, and (8c-d), on the other:

(8)   a.   Erachi   unu signuri chi havia   nomu…
           be.3.SG.PAST.PRO-FORM one sir   who have.3.SG.PAST name
           '(There) was a sir, whose name was…'
           [+ Pro-form]   (*Conquesta*, V, 6, p. 10)

      b.   Non ch'   è   Deu
           NEG PRO-FORM be.3.SG God
           '(There) is not God'
           [+ Pro-form]   (*Sposizione*, I, 8, p. 14)

      c.   Era   unu Sarrachinu, chi havia   nomu…
           be.3.SG.PAST one Saracen,   who have.3.SG.PAST   name
           '(There) was a Saracen, whose name was…'
           [− Pro-form]   (*Conquesta*, XIX, 15, p. 85)

     d.   Sunu   alcuni poeti
         be.3.SG some   poets
         '(There) are some poets'
         [– Pro-form]   (*Sposizione*, V, 23, p. 21)

This is also the case with Tuscan, whose existential constructions without a locative phrase, can but do not have to, display the pro-form:

(9)   a.   Se pure alcuni ce   ne   sono
         if even any   PRO-FORM PARTITIVE (of them) be.3.PL
         'Even if there are some of them'
         [+ Pro-form]   (*Decameron*, I, Intr., p. 23)

     b.   Un medico fu,   lo quale…
         a   doctor be.3.SG.PAST who
         '(There) was a doctor, who…'
         [– Pro-form]   (*Novellino*, XI, p. 27)

The order of the constituents, and particularly the position of the locative phrase, do not pose any constraint on the co-occurrence of the pro-form, be it proclitic or enclitic, and the locative phrase within the same clause:

(10) a.   In quilli paysi   chi   fu   unu grandi gintilomu
         in those countries PRO-FORM be.3.SG.PAST one great   gentleman
         'In those countries there was a great gentleman'
         [**Locative phrase** + Pro-form + Copula + Noun phrase]
                                 (*Conquesta*, I, 12, p. 4)

     b.   In Rigiu   erachi   unu grandi giganti
         in Reggio be.3.SG.PAST.PRO-FORM one great   giant
         'In Reggio there was a great giant'
         [**Locative phrase** + Copula + Pro-form + Noun phrase]
                               (*Conquesta*, VII, 7, p. 22)

     c.   Chi   fu   in Sicilia grandi fami
         PRO-FORM be.3.SG.PAST in Sicily great   hunger
         'There was great hunger in Sicily'
         [Pro-form + Copula + **Locative phrase** + Noun phrase]
                              (*Conquesta*, XVIII, 29, p. 85)

     d.   Erachi   in Castruiohanni unu   grandi Sarrachinu
         be.3.SG.PAST.PRO-FORM in Castroianni   one   great   Saracen
         'There was a great Saracen in Castroianni'
         [Copula + Pro-form + **Locative phrase** + Noun phrase]
                               (*Conquesta*, XVII, 9, p. 76)

e. Lo conti non ci   era   in la citati
   the count NEG PRO-FORM be.3.SG.PAST in the town
   'The Count (there) was not in town'
   [Noun phrase + Pro-form + Copula + **Locative phrase**]
                                         (*Conquesta*, XI, 11, p. 46)

At this early stage, Sicilian appears to be more progressive than Tuscan, in that it shows the syntactic pattern which is the norm in the existential construction of Modern Italian, where the existential pro-form can co-occur with a locative phrase. By contrast with the existential pro-form of Modern Italian, however, that of early Sicilian is not obligatory, as witnessed by the examples in (8c-d).

The synchronic contrast between early-Tuscan and early-Sicilian allows a significant diachronic observation: at this early stage of Italo-Romance, it can be said that Tuscan, which displays the complementary distribution of the pro-form and the locative phrase, seems to be rather conservative and to contrast with Sicilian. This, turning out to be more progressive than Tuscan, already exhibits the patterns of the existential constructions of Modern Italian: it allows the co-occurrence of the pro-form and the locative phrase.

4. The 'North-South divide': other Italo-Romance varieties

As thirteenth- and fourteenth century Tuscan, on the one hand, and fourteenth-century Sicilian, on the other hand, seem to display two different paradigms of the existential construction – the former being rather conservative and the latter already showing the patterns of the existentials of Modern Italian, it is worth expanding the analysis to other Italo-Romance varieties. Campanian, Roman, Venetian, Venetan and Lombard will be considered in the following sections. The scrutiny of the data available reveals a clear divide between the southern and the northern varieties: whereas Campanian and Roman seem to align with Sicilian and thus, progressively, with Modern Italian, Venetan, Venetian and Lombard appear to preserve the complementary distribution of the pro-form and the locative phrase which is noted in Tuscan.

4.1 Campanian and Roman

Two fourteenth- and fifteenth-century texts from Campania, respectively *Libro de la desrtuctione de Troya* and *Ricordi de Loise de Rosa,* and one fourteenth-century Roman text, *Cronica,* offer examples of existential constructions in which the pro-form can co-occur with a locative phrase:

(11) a. Dentro a quillo palazzo […] nce   fo   una sala
         Inside at that   palace […] PRO-FORM be.3.SG.PAST a   hall
         'Inside that palace […] there was a hall'   (*Libro*, V, 37, p. 80)

     b.   Infra   lle   alter   ince   nd'   era   una che…
          among the others PRO-FORM PARTITIVE be.3.SG.PAST one who
          'Among the others there was one (of them) who…'

                                                  (*Ricordi*, 13-14, p. 632)

     c.   Anche ce   erano   fra   essi moiti armati
          also   PRO-FORM be.3.PL.PAST among them many armed
          'Also there were many armed men among them'
                                                  (*Cronica*, XIII, p. 78)

It must be noted that in these three texts the type of existential construction [+ Pro-form][+ Locative phrase] is much less frequently attested than in the Sicilian ones. In fact, (11c) is the only example found in *Cronica*. The pro-form, however, be it proclitic or enclitic, occurs in a great deal of existential constructions without a locative phrase:

(11) d.   Certamente nce   erano   multe caverne
           surely   PRO-FORM be.3.SG.PAST many caves
           'Surely there were many caves'   (*Libro*, XXXIV, 18, p. 298)

     e.   Et   eranonce   ancora multi aucielle
          and be.3.PL.PAST.PRO-FORM still   many birds
          'There still were many birds'   (*Libro*, II, 43, p. 56)

     f.   Ince   fo   uno singularissimo   omo
          PRO-FORM be.3.SG.PAST one peculiar.SUPERL man
          'There was a very peculiar man'   (*Ricordi*, 33, p. 525)

     g.   Et   sonce   le   infornate
          and be.3.SG.PRO-FORM   the batches
          'And there are the batches'   (*Ricordi*, 6, p. 513)

     h.   Anco ce   fu   lo puopolo de   Bologna
          also   PRO-FORM be.3.SG.PAST the people   from Bologna
          'There also was the people from Bologna'   (*Cronica*, V, p. 16)

     i.   Erance   uno nobilissimo baron de   Francia
          be.3.SG.PAST.PRO-FORM one noble.SUPERL baron from France
          'There was a very noble baron from France' (*Cronica*, XIII, p. 79)

The data available also offer a conspicuous number of existential constructions with a locative phrase in which the pro-form does not occur[4]:

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4   Also in these cases, the order of the constituents, especially of the locative phrase, does not pose any constraint on the construction.

(11) j.   In   questa isola   de Citharea era   uno   tiemplo
          in   this   island of Citharea be.3.SG.PAST one   temple
          'In this island of Citharea (there) was a temple'
                                                        (*Libro*, VII, 19, p. 97)

      k.   In Firenza   era   uno   grande ricco
          in Florence   be.3.SG.PAST one   great   rich
          'In Florence (there) was a greatly rich man'   (*Ricordi*, 6, p. 564)

      l.   Innella   citate de Piacenza, in Lombardia, fu   uno
          in.the   city   of Piacenza in Lombardy be.3.SG.PAST one
          nobile omo
          noble   man
          'In the city of Piacenza, in Lombardy, (there) was a noble man'
                                                        (*Cronica*, IX, p. 35)

Finally, the type of existential [– Pro-form][– Locative phrase] is also attested:

(11) m.   Era   adunqua uno   antique hedificio
          be.3.SG.PAST therefore one   old   building
          'Therefore, (there) was an old building' (*Libro*, XXXV, 13, p. 298)

      n.   Fu   uno   capitano d' arme che…
          be.3.SG.PAST one   captain   of arms who
          '(There) was an army captain who…'   (*Ricordi*, 20, p. 515)

      o.   Era   una   chiesia antiquissima, la quale…
          be.3.SG.PAST one   church   old.SUPERL   which
          '(There) was a very old church, which…'   (*Cronica*, XIII, p. 80)[5]

Campanian and Roman texts display all the variants of the existential construction
which were identified above. The complementary distribution of the pro-form and
the locative phrase seems to operate in most cases, but significant examples of
constructions in which the pro-form can co-occur with a locative phrase are also
found. Therefore, it seems that this early stage is that in which the pro-form is
reanalysed as an existential marker in Campanian and Roman, as testified by the
constructions without a locative phrase, which are increasingly attested. Even
though a quantitative analysis of the examples collected shows the predominance
of the existential construction in which the pro-form cannot co-occur with a
locative phrase, examples (11a-c) allow us to observe the following: (i) the
Tuscan complementary distribution of the pro-form and the locative phrase does
not constitute the only paradigm for the existential construction in Campanian and
Roman. Although to a lesser extent than Sicilian, these two varieties already
exhibit the patterns of the existential construction which are found in Modern

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[5]   The examples given display the order of constituents [Copula][Noun phrase], but the type
      [Noun phrase][Copula] is also found, e.g., "*infinite femmine furono le quali…*", '(there) were
      many women who…' (*Cronica*, IX, p. 34).

Italian; (ii) Sicilian turns out to be the most progressive variety among the vernaculars under consideration.

4.2 Venetan, Venetian and Lombard

Five texts from the North of Italy provide examples of existential constructions in which the pro-form does not co-occur with a locative phrase. Two texts are from Veneto: the fourteenth-century *Monumenti del dialetto di Lio Mazor*, which is written in Venetan, and the fifteenth-century Venetian *volgarizzamento* of the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis*; three texts are from Lombardy: the fourteenth-century *Elucidario*, probably composed in Milan and the fourteenth-century Mantuan texts *Sette secoli di volgare e di dialetto mantovano*, edited by Schizzerotto (1985), and *Nuovi studi sul volgare monatovano di Vivaldo Belcalzer*, edited by Ghinassi (1965). Unfortunately, these texts do not offer as many and various examples of existential constructions as those found in the Tuscan and southern varieties, but the analysis of the data available reveals some distinctive features of the northern vernaculars.

The data available suggest that the northern varieties display the complementary distribution, as the pro-form does not occur in those few examples of existential constructions with a locative phrase:

(12) a. In lo solo è   tre   cosse
          in   the sun   be.3.SG three things
          '(There) are three things in the sun'   (*Elucidario*, I, 3, p. 88)

     b. In India è   bove
         in India   be.3.SG ox
         'In India (there) is (an) ox'   (Vivaldo Belcazer, 38-39, p. 172)

     c. In ziascuna uva   iera   xii   graneli
         in   each   grapes   be.3.sg.past twelve   acini
         '(There) were twelve acini in each grapes'
                                              (*Venetian Navigatio*, 20, p. 136)

The type of existential [– pro-form][– locative phrase] is also attested:

(12) d. E era   grando abondantia de tutte le   cosse
         and be.3.SG.PAST   great abundance of all   the things
         'And (there) was great abundance of all sorts'
                                              (*Elucidario*, I, 93bis, p. 110)

     e. Et è   molte maynere de queste bestie
         and be.3.SG many   types   of these beasts
         'And (there) are many types of these beasts'
                                              (Vivaldo Belcalzer, 30-31, p. 172)

    f.   E   iera   xii   uve
        and be.3.SG.past twelve grapes
        'And (there) were twelve grapes' (*Venetian Navigatio*, 20, p. 136)

With the exception of the Venetian *Navigatio*, the data available also show existential constructions without a locative phrase which can optionally (see (12g-i)) exhibit the pro-form. Distinctively, the pro-form displayed by all the northern texts is *ghe*, and its variants *g'/ge/gh'*:

(12) g.   Un altro arboro g'   era
          an other tree   PRO-FORM be.3.SG.PAST
          'There was another tree'   (*Elucidario*, I, 69, p. 105)

      h.   Roxella no   ghè   alcuna
          Roxella NEG PRO-FORM.be.3.SG any
          'There is no roxella'   (*Sette secoli*, III, 30, p. 17)

      i.   Et autro no   ge   fo
          and other NEG PRO-FORM be.3.SG.PAST
          'There was not another'   (Lio Mazor, 12, p. 26)

In the examples (12g-i), *g'*, *gh* and *ge* behave as existential pro-forms, as is the case of *ci* and *vi* in the southern varieties, i.e. they join with the copula to spell out an existential predicate (Bentley, 2006).

    As pointed out by Benincà (2007), in Modern Venetan the clitic *ghe* is not exclusively locative, and it can be found in constructions with the verb *avere*, where its locative role, if there ever was one, has been lost and subsequently reanalysed to cover other functions, be they phonological (12j) or argumental, i.e. dative (12l):

(12) j.   Gh'   à   cantà
          CLITIC have.3.SG sing.PAST.PARTICIPLE
          'He/she has sung (or, he/she sang)'[6]

In (12j) the clitic *gh* "joins with the verb *avere* (auxiliary or possessive) without any referential meaning, but apparently with a phonological function"[7], which optimises the syllable *a-*. A non-locative, but rather phonological, function of *g* is also attested in early Mantuan:

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[6]   For examples (12j) and (12l) see Benincà, 2007, pp. 28-29
[7]   Benincà, 2007, p. 28. My translation.

(12) k. E   non   gaveva   raxon
         and   NEG   CLITIC.have.3.SG.PAST   reason
         'And (he) had no reason'   (*Sette secoli*, III, 24, p. 16)[8]

In Modern Venetan, the non-locative clitic *ghe* can also have the argumental function of a dative:

(12) l. Ghe   lo   gh'   ò   dà
         DAT   it.OBJ CLITIC have.1.SG give.PAST.PARTICIPLE
         'I have given it to him (or, I gave it to him)[9]

Crucially, in the early northern varieties, the clitic *g'* is also attested in constructions with the verb *essere*, where, contrary to (12g-i), but rather as in (12k), it exhibits neither a locative nor an existential function:

(12) m. El   g'   è   bon nar   a Uenecia
         EXPLETIVE CLITIC   be.3.SG good go.INF to Venice
         'It is good to go to Venice'   (Lio Mazor, 53, p. 34)

     n. Domandà   chi   g'   era
         ask.3.SG.PAST who   clitic be.3.SG.PAST
         'He asked who he was'   (Lio Mazor, 12-13, p. 19)[10]

Albeit the pro-forms *ghe*/*gh*/*g'* might have originated, etymologically, as deictics – in fact, as allotropes of the Latin HIC/HILLIC/IBI/ILLI[11], the examples given provide satisfactory evidence that they have lost their locative function both in the early northern varieties under consideration and in Modern Venetan. In the early northern varieties, the complementary distribution noted in (12a-c) is not as effective as in early Tuscan, where *ci*/*vi* remain exclusively locative, as the clitics *g*/*g'* are also synchronically attested without any locative function (12k and 12m-n).

The fact that "existentiality" can be instantiated without the support of any sort of pro-form is clearly testified by the types of existential construction [– pro-form][– locative phrase] found in *all* the early vernaculars under consideration. In contrast with Modern Italian, this is a distinctive feature of the early varieties and it relates to the temporal proximity of the early vernaculars to Latin, where the

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8   Although ambiguous out of context, the example is not an existential construction with the copula avere, as it has a clear nominative/subject in the previous line of the text: el meso che ve' doveva dar lo capello […] l'à baratà e non gaveva raxon, che s'aviva ben pagà… 'The courier, who had to deliver the hat to you, had it bargained and he had no reason (to do that), as he had been paid well'.

9   There are certain constraints in the use of the *gh* as a non-locative clitic, i.e. whether it occurs with other clitics or partitives, or whether it is used with temporally marked forms of the verb. For the purposes of this article, however, such constraints do not interfere with the existential constructions and a very exhaustive explanation of their occurrence can be found in Benincà (2007).

10 Again, the context excludes the possibility of interpreting the examples as an existential/locative construction, i.e. 'he asked who was there'.

11 Benincà, 2007, p. 34.

type of existential [– pro-form][– locative phrase] was the only norm, e.g. *est magister, (qui…)*.

Interestingly, the Venetian *Navigatio* poses an ambiguous case of existential. Observe the example:

(12) o.   E   non iera   erba   senza   flori
           and   NEG be.3.SG.PAST grass   without flowers
           'And (there) was no grass without flowers
                                                       (*Venetian Navigatio*, 1, p. 36)

It can be argued that the imperfect *iera* is the outcome of the incorporation of the locative clitic pro-form /j/ within the verb *essere*; if this holds true, example (12o) can therefore be classified as a type of existential [+ pro-form][– locative phrase]. Benincà (2007), however, suggests that /j/ is an internal morphological feature of the verb *essere*, since it is the result of Latin Ĕ > tonic /ɛ/ in Romance; in this case, (12o) would figure as a type of existential [– pro-form][+ locative phrase]. Whether /j/ is an original locative, which has been reanalysed, and even incorporated within the verb *essere*, or it merely is a morphological feature of the copula, it remains to be ascertained. If, however, /j/ was originally a locative clitic, then, as is the case with *ci/vi/ghe*, it must have been reanalysed as an "existential" clitic. This is confirmed by a great deal of existential constructions in which /j/ can co-occur with a locative phrase:

(12) p.   Una isola in la qual /j/era   un bosco
           an   island in which CLITIC.be.3.SG.PAST a   forest
           'An island in which there was a forest'
                                                       (*Venetian Navigatio*, 24, p. 148)

      q.   E   dentro una compagnia e   l'   altra j/era   spazio
           and within a   group   and the other CLITIC.be.3.SG.PAST space
           'And there was space within a group and the other'
                                                       (*Venetian Navigatio*, 19, p. 128)

      r.   In ziascuna uva   iera   xii   graneli
           in each   grape   be.3.SG.PAST twelve   acini
           '(There) were twelve acini in each grape'
                                                       (*Venetian Navigatio*, 20, p. 136)

The examples would also provide evidence that the complementary distribution of the pro-form and the locative phrase firstly noted in the northern varieties is no longer effective, at least in fourteenth-century Venetian.

With the exception of Tuscan, we have seen that in all the varieties under consideration the existential constructions can display, but do not have to, pro-forms which are not exclusively locative; in fact, as is the case with the existential constructions of Modern Italian, the pro-form is an existential marker which joins with the copula to spell out an existential predicate. The originally deictic role of the pro-forms has been maintained in other constructions, which, however, are not

existential, as seen in (5b-d) and (12k, 12m-n). This is also the case of Modern Italian. Observe the examples:

(13) a.   *(Ci)   sono   due gatti nel   giardino
          PRO-FORM be.3.PL two cats   in.the   garden
          'There are two cats in the garden'
          [*Sono due gatti nel giardino]

     b.   (*Ci)   vado   a   scuola
          PRO-FORM go.1.SG to   school
          'I am going (*there) to school'
          [*ci vado a scuola, unless it is: ci vado // a scuola]

Note that the Modern Italian existential construction in (13a) contrasts with the locative one in (13b): whereas in (13a) *ci* occurs as a marker of existentiality, in (13b) it is clearly a locative pro-form, which cannot co-occur with a locative phrase within the clause.

An overall view of the existential constructions of all the varieties under investigation leads to the conclusion that in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Tuscan the pro-forms *ci/vi* had not yet differentiated as a distinctive marker of existentiality but, rather, they preserved their locative function, which was still coinciding with their etymological value, i.e. Latin HECCE HIC and IBI. However, the early-Tuscan complementary distribution of the pro-form and the locative phrase is not attested in Modern Italian; this indicates that, in the history of the existential constructions, and, most importantly, 'somewhere else' outside thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Tuscany, there must have been a reanalysis of the locative pro-forms *ci/vi*. This crucial moment towards the 'existentialization' of the pro-forms is witnessed by fourteenth-century Sicilian, where *ci/vi* seem to have lost their deictic function to become uniquely an existential marker of the construction. Although to a lesser extent than Sicilian, the pro-forms of the Campanian and Roman varieties also seem to have undergone, synchronically, the same process of existentialization. Locative *ci/vi* have remained in other syntactic constructions of both early vernaculars and Modern Italian, as it is shown, respectively, in (5c-d, 12k, 12m-n) and in (13b). In the northern varieties, the pro-forms *ghe/gh'/ge/g'* cannot co-occur with a locative phrase, but the complementary distribution, which would make these pro-forms locative, appears to be less effective than in Tuscan, as *ghe/gh'/ge/g'* are also attested without any locative function in both the early and the modern varieties (12k, m, n and 12j, l).

However, as far as the existential constructions are concerned, the contrast between, on the one hand, the early-Tuscan, Lombard and Venetan data and, on the other hand, the early-Sicilian, Campanian, Roman and Modern Italian data suggests that not all existential pro-forms are necessarily locative, and thus the locative analysis of existential constructions must be reconsidered. In the early stages of the history of Italo-Romance, the existential pro-form exhibits diatopic discrepancies: whereas in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Tuscan and northern varieties it still appears to encode a locative argument, in fourteenth-century

Sicilian, Campanian and Roman it can be said to be already a marker of existentiality, which joins with the copula to spell out an existential predicate.

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