

Clefts and their relatives. By MATTHEW REEVE. (Linguistik aktuell/Linguistics today 185.) Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2012. Pp. xiii, 223. ISBN 9789027255686. \$149 (Hb).

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Devising a deft account of clefts has defied linguists for decades. Past analyses have done little to make these constructions fit comfortably into the generative mold. On the contrary, they have typically excelled only at obfuscation and mystification: *it* as an expletive, the copula as a curious bit of matter with no obvious structural position or function in a ‘monoclausal’ structure with two finite verbs, an obligatorily extraposed relative clause of a peculiar type—and these are just the most eye-catching quirks. *Clefts and their relatives* (a revised version of Matthew Reeve’s University College London doctoral dissertation) not only provides much-needed clarity as to how the various ingredients of the cleft find their proper place in the syntactic structure, but it also presents an interesting argument to the effect that clefts are not quite alone in the world of syntax in featuring the kinds of structural relations that they do. The title of the book reflects this dual achievement thanks to the fact that both the technical and common or garden senses of the word ‘relatives’ apply. The book is a splendidly written¹ demonstration of how rigorous application of syntactic diagnostics and adoption of a number of fairly simple analytical tools pave the way for the construction of an original and explicit structural account of the syntax of a recalcitrant construction. It not only offers a better fit with the properties of clefts documented in the previous literature but is also packed with remarkable empirical discoveries within and beyond the realm of the construction under discussion, and with exciting connections between seemingly unrelated data. The main emphasis of the discussion is on the syntax of clefts, but the semantics of these constructions is addressed as well. Throughout, the book contributes to our understanding of so-called specificational sentences. The semantics of the proposal is largely straightforward; the syntax is rather mechanical (the exploitation of the functional category Eq(uative)P in the syntax of specificational sentences is a case in point) and in some respects remarkably old-fashioned (exploiting rightward movement and right-adjunction, for instance, and relying heavily on the ways θ -relations are established, with Higginbotham’s θ -binding playing a central role). But my characterizing the syntactic proposal as mechanical should not be read as a fatal critique: as Bugs Bunny retorts in the classic cartoon *Hair-raising Hare*, just after having been smooched by a wind-up girl bunny, ‘Well, so it’s mechanical!’—and indeed, as long as the mechanics is sound, there is nothing wrong. In what follows, I put some of the mechanics to the test.

The four main ingredients of an English-type *it*-cleft are the subject pronoun *it*, the copula, the focused constituent in postcopular position, and the subordinate clause following the focused constituent. R’s central argument throughout the book is that the subordinate clause is a restrictive relative that, while semantically restricting the reference of the pronoun in subject position, syntactically belongs to the focused constituent but is obligatorily extraposed from that constituent. This statement encapsulates two striking mismatches, one between syntax and semantics (the relative clause syntactically belongs to the focused constituent but semantically restricts the subject pronoun) and the other within the syntax (the relative clause cannot form a surface constituent with what it is construed with in syntax). Resolving these mismatches turns out to be worth the effort: it clarifies the mystery of clefts in a multitude of ways, and leads to the establishment of a close syntactic and semantic relationship with a little-known construction that at first blush seems to bear no close family resemblance to the cleft (the *only*-relative construction illustrated by *I only saw John that I like*) and a partial relationship with a well-known construction that looks much more like the *it*-cleft on the surface (the *it*-extraposition construction instantiated by *It is unfortunate that he said this*). I save the discoveries about the relative clause of the

¹ Commendably, the book was very carefully edited, containing very few typos and incorrect cross-references. The book’s table of contents offers easy navigation; the index, however, is minimal and singularly unhelpful, covering just a single page in length.

cleft and its relatives for the closing paragraphs of this review. First I go over R's account of the other main ingredients of the construction, starting with the pronoun in subject position, *it*.

The pronoun *it* of the *it*-cleft is treated by R as a referential pronoun responsible for the pre-suppositions of clefts: *it* is the underlying subject of the cleft, not an expletive (as in many oft-cited but flawed accounts of the cleft) nor a raised predicate (as in predicate-inversion accounts of clefts inspired by the work of Andrea Moro; see Moro 1997 and den Dikken 2009). R supports his claim that *it* is a referential pronoun in the *it*-cleft on the basis of a variety of empirical arguments, presented in section 2.3 of the book. I pick out the two most striking ones, one based on *pro* and the other on PRO.

Rizzi (1982) points out that in Italian Aux-to-Comp constructions, a *pro* subject is illegitimate as a referential pronoun (thus, **Ritengo essere pro simpatico* 'I believe him to be nice' is impossible), but a sentence such as *Ritengo essere pro probabile che S* 'I believe it to be likely that S' is fine, which, in line with the standard treatment of the subject of *it*-extraposition constructions at the time, leads Rizzi to the conclusion that *pro*-drop in Aux-to-Comp constructions works only with expletives. R accepts this as a litmus test for the referential/expletive distinction, and goes on to observe that the status of sentences like ??*Ritengo essere pro Gianni che ha rotto il vaso* 'I believe it to be Gianni who broke the vase' is severely degraded. This is a novel empirical data point, and if the translation of the distribution of *pro*-drop in Aux-to-Comp constructions into an expletive/referential split is accurate, it confirms that the subject of Italian clefts is a referential pronoun. R's own discussion of *it*-extraposition constructions in Ch. 3, however, roundly endorses Bennis's (1986) argument that the *it* of these constructions is NOT an expletive. If this applies to the Italian counterpart of the *it*-extraposition construction as well (the null hypothesis, plainly), Rizzi's Aux-to-Comp contrast is not about expletives at all. Furthermore, it also seems unlikely, in R's account, that the two *it*'s would differ in referential content: R takes the semantic relation between *it* and the clause in *it*-extraposition constructions to be on a par with that between *it* and the relative of clefts (i.e. *it* is the 'thematic antecedent' of the clause in both constructions, in a θ -binding dependency²). The Italian facts of course remain interesting; but it is doubtful that they support the status of *it* in clefts as a referential pronoun.

For English, R seeks to support *it*'s referentiality primarily on the basis of another novel observation: the fact that the *it* of clefts can control a PRO in an adjunct clause (something that is the prerogative of arguments, not expletives). R advances just a single example to show that this is the case: *It was the furniture that annoyed John on Sunday despite PRO being the décor the day before* (12). But putative control of PRO by *it* in clefts is by no means a straightforward matter: by R's own admission (albeit almost a hundred pages overdue, and in a footnote: n. 39 on p. 103), such control succeeds only in clefts in which no relative clause is included in the control clause (*It was the furniture that annoyed John on Sunday despite PRO being the décor* (**that annoyed him*) *the day before*). As in the Italian Aux-to-Comp case, clefts behave differently from *it*-extraposition here: Chomsky (1986a:92) has *It is true that John is intelligent without PRO being obvious that he is*. And again, the discrepancy between the two *it*'s is unexpected from R's perspective: the *it* of clefts and that of *it*-extraposition share their thematic licensing relationship with the peripheral clause (so R's suggestion, in n. 39, that 'PRO may not thematically license the cleft clause', besides

² The thematic-licensing condition is formulated by R (81) as in (i). Not only is the exploitation of Higginbotham's (1985) θ -binding a rather peculiar relic of an era in which syntactic operations could make reference to θ -roles (in a minimalist framework, θ -binding is an undesirable notion), but the fact that (i) mobilizes both c-command and m-command simultaneously (but for different purposes) makes it an ingredient of a theory of syntactic relations that is overly rich. (Note, incidentally, that the specific reference to DETERMINERS as θ -binders is unfortunate in light of R's desire to have (i) apply also to *only*-relatives, where for R the thematic antecedent of the relative clause is the focus particle *only*—taking (i) literally implies that *only* qua θ -binder is a determiner, which seems unlikely.)

(i) THEMATIC LICENSING CONDITION (NON-SISTERHOOD): The θ -role borne by the relative clause must be θ -bound by a determiner which c-commands the relative and which the relative m-commands. (81)

being ad hoc, would not carry over to *it*-extraposition).³ This lingering mystery casts considerable doubt on the force of the control-based argument for the claim that the *it* of clefts is a referential pronoun. The fact that control works only if the relative clause is not repeated inside the control clause would follow if what is controlling PRO is not *it* but the relative clause itself. Of course it would be absurd to suggest that a garden-variety restrictive relative clause could, by itself, act as a controller. But if the relative clause is actually a (special) FREE relative, the cleft example is assimilated to control of PRO by the free relative of a pseudocleft (as in *What annoyed John on Sunday was the furniture, despite being the décor the day before*), which seems empirically right. If so, this supports the conclusion (reached on entirely different grounds in den Dikken 2009) that the relative clause of *it*-clefts is a null-headed relative (of a special sort), and discounts R's argument for the referential status of *it*.

The copula of clefts, and specificational sentences more generally, has attracted much attention in the linguistic literature. Its syntactic distribution is unlike that of the copula in predicational copular sentences: thus, while *to be* is freely omitted in predicational *I consider John (to be) nice/a nice guy*, it must be included in specificational *I consider my best friend *(to be) John*, and also in *I consider it *(to be) JOHN who won*. There are many different analytical perspectives on this. R's strikes me as not being one of the more insightful accounts. In Ch. 5, he postulates a functional projection 'EqP' in the syntax of specificational and equative sentences, and stipulates that 'Eq, having no intrinsic lexical content of its own, must be overtly filled by some lexical element' (181). Not only does it remain unclear why in this particular context but not in many others (think of C, T, D) the lack of inherent lexical content should mandate lexicalization, but this stipulation is also too blunt a tool. For it is not the case that specificational sentences per se require the presence of a copula: they do so only if the 'value' for what Roger Higgins calls the super-scriptional constituent is not in the structural subject position. Thus, the copula is obligatory in *I consider [what John is]_{sup} *(to be) [important to himself]_{val}* but not in *I consider [important to himself]_{val} (to be) [what John is]_{sup}* (Williams 1983), even though both sentences are semantically specificational (pace R's p. 191). The key difference between them has to do with word order; but word order does not directly translate into the semantics of specification. Since R's EqP is tied one-to-one to the semantics of specification and equation, and since the semantics of specification/equation is not directly implicated in the distribution of the copula, EqP does not seem to be a useful tool in accounting for that distribution. Readers familiar with my work on the copula (see den Dikken 2006 and references there) will not be surprised to learn that I would favor a different, more directly syntactic approach.

³ The syntactic licensing condition that R imposes on the relation between the focus and the relative clause (see (i), which holds of relative clause extraposition in general) cannot proscribe inclusion of this clause in a controlled adjunct either: this condition is met in the text example; the relation between *the décor* and *that annoyed him* is local.

- (i) SYNTACTIC LICENSING CONDITION (NON-SISTERHOOD): In the overt structure, the relative clause and the extended nominal projection licensing it must be immediately dominated by segments of the same category. (81)

I would like to make two quick remarks about (i). Note first that (i) makes explicit reference to 'the overt structure'. This ensures that in a case of relative clause extraposition from a WH-fronted object in SpecCP, the relative clause must be attached to CP: whereas relative clause extraposition from an in-situ object would involve adjunction to VP, R claims that when the object is WH-fronted to SpecCP, only CP is a legitimate attachment site for the extraposed relative. Here he explicitly disagrees with Culicover and Rochemont (1990), as he notes in n. 19 on p. 77, where he also points out that restricting the attachment site of relative clauses extraposed from WH-fronted constituents to CP runs into a conflict with Chomsky's (1986b) ban on adjunction to arguments in the case of extraposition from SpecCP of complement CPs. A second comment that needs to be made regarding (i) is a technical one: definition (i) explicitly exploits the May (1985) segment/category distinction, and R defines 'dominate' as in Chomsky 1986b (' δ dominates α iff every segment of δ contains α '), with individual segments unable to dominate anything; so the reference in (i) to immediate domination by segments is incoherent.

R says about his syntactic head Eq that it ‘bears the same relation to the post-copular XP [of clefts] as focus-sensitive particles such as *only* and *even* bear to the focus of their clause: that is, it “associates” with the focus’ (179). Here we discover the essence of R’s account of the third main ingredient of the cleft: the focus. The Eq-head must, by hypothesis, associate with a focus, and that focus must be in the c-command domain of Eq. This explains the fact that it must specifically be the postcopular XP that serves as the focus, and that focus cannot ‘project’ upward from this XP: in ‘association with focus’ constructions featuring *only* or *even*, we likewise find that the associate of the focus particle must occur below the particle and that focus projection is impossible. (In the closing chapter R floats the interesting idea that the possibility of wide focus in clefts in French is correlated with the availability of pseudo-relatives, a correlation worth checking on a broader typological scale.) These are good results. This proposal also establishes a particularly close connection between *it*-clefts and *only*-relative constructions such as *I only saw JOHN that I like* (a rarely discussed construction that R is the first to provide a detailed discussion of). But we do not need the head Eq to be responsible for ‘association with focus’ in clefts: we could get this effect by exploiting the link between the postcopular focus and the *it* in the structural subject position as well. What matters, and R is right about this, is that we establish a link between clefts (and specificational sentences in general) and ‘association with focus’ constructions. But I see no vital role in this for Eq, a head whose syntactic benefits seem minimal.

Finally, let me address the fourth vital ingredient of the cleft, the subordinate clause following the focused constituent. It is in its treatment thereof that R’s book is the most inventive. The account (presented in Ch. 3) endorses Hedberg’s (2000) argument that the clause is a restrictive relative syntactically associated with the focused constituent, but R at the same time forges a semantic link between this relative clause and the pronoun *it* in subject position. From the conjunction of his SYNTACTIC and THEMATIC licensing conditions on clefts (reproduced in n. 2 and n. 3, above), R procures a simple account of the obligatoriness of relative clause extraposition in clefts: only if the relative clause is adjoined to VP can it simultaneously satisfy the two licensing conditions (the syntactic one by being in the VP projected by *be*, which the focus is also in; and the thematic one by m-commanding *it* and being c-commanded by this pronoun). If the relative clause were attached directly to the focus, the syntactic but not the thematic licensing condition would be met (since the clause would not m-command *it*); and with the relative clause attached to IP, it would satisfy the thematic but not the syntactic licensing condition (since it and the focus are no longer in the same minimal XP). The fact that R’s conditions deliver the obligatory extraposition of the relative clause is an achievement (though of course the victory here is tailor-made: the definitions of syntactic and thematic licensing were designed precisely to ensure this result). The more specific conclusion that the extraposed relative is attached to VP is more tenuous, however. R claims it is supported by the grammaticality of Hedberg’s (1990) *I said that it would be a conservative who’d win, and [a conservative who won] it certainly was*, which he identifies as a case of VP fronting. It certainly does not self-evidently involve a fronted VP, though; an unmistakable case of VP fronting with pied-piping of the relative clause like ... *and [be a conservative who won] it certainly could* seems far worse (cf. *Be bold, you should; be rude, you shouldn’t*, which is fine). Moreover, to the extent that examples like Hedberg’s work, they always involve a focused noun phrase that could, in principle, serve as the host for a restrictive relative: as soon as this noun phrase is replaced with a proper name, the result is degraded (as R’s own judgments on *?I said that it was John that Mary saw, and John that Mary saw it was* (100) and Delahunty’s (1981:204–5) judgments of similar examples indicate; explicit VP fronting here is even worse: *... *and [be John that Mary saw] it certainly could*—though R admits in several places throughout the book that ‘judgements are subtle’, there surely is little subtlety here). This is surely significant; I see no way of explaining it in R’s analysis.

A very interesting payoff of R’s analysis of the relative clause of clefts is the straightforward explanation it provides (in Ch. 4) for the properties of cleft-like constructions in Slavic, and the microvariation within this language family regarding the availability of English-style *it*-clefts. R notes that Russian does not have a direct counterpart to the English cleft: its *Èto Boris vypil vodku* ‘this Boris drank vodka’ may look like an English-style cleft but is not (it does not contain a rela-

tive clause, and its syntax is quite different from an English cleft); **Èto byl Boris, kotoryj vypil vodku* ‘this was Boris which drank vodka’, which does contain a relative clause, is ungrammatical. The cause of the ungrammaticality of the English-style cleft in Russian follows handsomely from R’s theory: the relative clause of such a cleft must be extraposed (because of the way the syntactic and thematic licensing conditions conspire); but ‘Russian lacks relative clause extraposition of this type’ (167). Interestingly, there are some Slavic languages that do have English-style clefts (Bulgarian and Czech are mentioned by R); and it turns out that in these languages, extraposition of restrictive relatives is possible as well. This is an excellent example of the precision with which R pursues his hypotheses throughout his book.

Before closing, I would like to briefly mention one last take-away from R’s discussion of the syntax of the relative clause of clefts. As is well known, the literature on relativization is split on whether the ‘head’ of the relative is inside that clause (the promotion analysis) or originates outside it and matches a null category inside the relative clause (the matching analysis). In Ch. 2 (in which some interesting and previously undisclosed differences between clefts and pseudo-clefts are also presented), R provides arguments from clefts to show that the two analyses are both needed, and cover different data sets (see, however, Boef 2012 for cogent argumentation against a promotion analysis of ordinary relatives). He argues that the promotion derivation is forced for clefts whose foci support no appropriate overt relative operator for the relative clause, and that promotion clefts force a CONTRASTIVE interpretation upon their foci (given that ‘A’-movement of a focus makes a contrastive reading obligatory’; p. 54). We see this clearly in AP-clefts: *It’s BLUE that/*which her eyes are *(, not GREEN)*. R presents a close-up of the class of PP-clefts as particularly striking support for this correlation between promotion and contrastiveness. Clefted PPs that can be associated with an overt WH-operator in the relative clause (*where*) happily support a matching derivation and, concomitantly, do not have to be contrastive and hence serve naturally as answers to information questions (*In which country did you see a rhinoceros? It was in Kenya that/where I saw a rhinoceros*); by contrast, clefted PPs that have no corresponding relative operator force a promotion analysis and, correlatively, are obligatorily contrastive (*It was to John that I gave a book, not to Bob* vs. *To whom did you give a book? #It was to John that/*where I gave a book*). R shows that scope reconstruction, which is available in clefts (*It was a different chicken that every dog ate* supports a distributive reading, unlike its pseudo-cleft counterpart), also requires a promotion derivation, and that, as a consequence, clefts that show scope reconstruction cannot be used as answers to WH-questions. These are very precise results—and they provide a source of support for the Vergnaud/Kayne-style promotion analysis of relative clauses that is much more dependable than the arguments for this approach often offered in the literature.

In matching clefts, the focus and the relative clause are dominated by a DP node that, for R, is directly the complement of the copula, as shown in 1a (which shows obligatory extraposition of the relative CP to VP). In promotion clefts, the focus and the relative clause form a complex CP, once again serving as the copula’s complement, as in 1b.

- (1) a. [_{TP} it_k must [_{EqP} t_k [_{Eq} Eq [_{VP} [_{VP} be [_{DP} FOCUS_i t_j]] [_{CP} Op_i [_C that [_{TP} ... t_i ...]]]]]]]]]
 b. [_{TP} it_k must [_{EqP} t_k [_{Eq} Eq [_{VP} [_{VP} be [_{CP} FOCUS_i t_j]] [_{CP} t_i' [_C that [_{TP} ... t_i ...]]]]]]]]]

R turns the prima facie surprising conclusion that the copula in promotion clefts takes a CP as its complement into an advantage of his approach, noting that it can relate the fact that, in promotion clefts, *be* cannot be replaced with *become* (*It was/*became morose that Bill seemed to be above all*) to the fact that *become* cannot replace *be* in specificational copular sentences with a postcopular CP (*The problem was/*became [_{CP} that he was an idiot*]). Though this is indeed an interesting result, R’s analysis of promotion clefts in 1b raises some nasty questions. Neither CP-node in 1b can be treated as a predicate of *it* (CPs through whose specifier successive-cyclic movement proceeds are not thereby predicative). That seems to leave *it* without a role to play, unless one takes *be* (or *Eq*) to be a predicate head (an idea that pops up frequently in the literature on equative copular sentences, but has no merit; see also R’s pp. 174–78). The representation in 1b also illustrates a (rather clever but still) problematic attempt to render the promotion analysis of relatives compatible with the obligatory extraposition of the relatives that R argues for in Ch. 3. A dissection of R’s (uncharacteristically imprecise) prose and trees on pp. 176–77 of Ch. 5 leads to

the conclusion that, for him, promotion involves movement of the ‘head’ of the relative into SpecCP followed by (not obviously triggerable) adjunction of the ‘head’ to the CP. In this structure, it is the lower CP segment that he takes to be extraposed, thereby flouting a central tenet of the segment/category distinction (viz. that segments cannot be syntactically manipulated), which he exploits elsewhere in the book. It would be worth one’s while to explore the prospects of tweaking the structure of ‘promotion’ clefts in 1b to make it compatible with a more mainstream small-clause analysis of copular sentences.

Preserving the good results of R’s carefully crafted analysis while avoiding its pitfalls should set the agenda for future work. R’s book has given us a great deal to think about in the world of clefts and specificational sentences.

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Language attrition. By MONIKA S. SCHMID. (Key topics in sociolinguistics.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Pp. xviii, 277. ISBN 9780521759939. \$39.99.

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The study of language attrition is currently entering its fourth decade. The development that this field of research has witnessed since the early 1980s is, however, not straightforwardly described as exponential or incremental. While the early years were characterized by groundbreaking investigations, there were also diverging research foci and isolation between studies. This state of affairs diverted attention and resources from the pursuit of a research agenda with common ground. The past decade, however, has seen a remarkable surge in attrition research, and Monika S. Schmid’s book is highly representative of this development. In fact, S herself has