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Against the matrix left peripheral analysis of English *it*-clefts*

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In the wake of the proposals for the articulated left periphery (Rizzi 1997), Meinunger (1997, 1998), Frascarelli & Ramaglia (2009, 2013) and Sleeman (2011) assign to *it*-clefts a representation modeled on that of *wh*-interrogatives and of focus fronting. This paper first outlines one precise cartographic implementation of this analysis and then it is shown that such an analysis presents a number of problems of implementation, which concern the external and internal syntax of *it*-clefts. Distributionally, *it*-clefts are shown to pattern differently from sentences with focus fronting. Moreover the monoclausal analysis raises problems of implementation, in particular given that the cleft focus can itself undergo focus fronting and *wh*-movement.

1. Background

The syntax of cleft sentences such as English (1a) has been the focus of a lot of attention, both in the descriptive and the theoretical literature. “Traditional” analyses of clefts (cf. Reeve (2011) for extensive survey and discussion), including cartographic implementations such as those in Belletti (2009), privilege the fact that a cleft sentence contains a segment that has a strong similarity with relative clauses: *the dog that Mary saw* in (1a) is identical to the relative clause in (1b). The cleft focus *the dog*, the “antecedent” of the cleft relative *that Mary saw*, is taken to occupy a clause-internal position, with various implementations as to the precise nature of that position.

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- (1) a. It was *the dog* that Mary saw.
b. I know the dog that Mary saw.

In the wake of the proposals for the articulated left periphery (Rizzi 1997), some recent papers privilege the interpretive similarities of English *it*-clefts with sentences with a focused constituent such as (1c) and also with interrogative sentences such as (1d). Both of these are monoclausal and display a fronted focal constituent, with the remainder of the clause being presupposed: (1c) and (1d) presuppose “Mary saw something”; the cleft sentence (1a) carries the same presupposition (Declerck 1988; Skopetos & Fanselow 2010: 176; Reeve 2011). Meinunger (1997, 1998); Frascarelli & Ramaglia (2009, 2013) and Sleeman (2011) assign to *it*-clefts a representation modeled on that of *wh*-interrogatives (1d) and of focus fronting (1c). We will refer to the latter analyses as the “matrix” analyses because they propose that just as *the dog* targets a matrix focus position in (1c), so *the dog* targets the focus position in relation to the matrix copula *be* in the cleft (1a):

- (1) c. *The dog* Mary saw.
d. What did Mary see?

In what follows we first outline one precise implementation of the matrix analysis, which will be the basis of our discussion, and then we show that it presents a number of problems of implementation which proponents of the matrix analysis would have to address.

2. The matrix analysis of *it*-clefts

2.1 The articulated left periphery (Rizzi 1997)

To the best of our knowledge, the matrix analyses of *it*-clefts in English have all been inspired by Rizzi’s (1997) proposals concerning the decomposition of the left periphery. Versions of the matrix analysis were elaborated in Meinunger (1997, 1998), Frascarelli & Ramaglia (2009, 2013) and Sleeman (2011). In this section we briefly outline some crucial assumptions underlying work in this area and bearing directly on the argumentation.

The cartographic view of clause structure, as initiated by Rizzi (1997), Cinque (1999) and also Cinque and Rizzi (2010), aims at providing a detailed map of the composition of the clause and explores the view that many interpretive properties of the clause are syntactically encoded. Accordingly, instead of the minimal structural layering represented by (2a), in which the clause is composed of three layers, VP, TP and CP, each of these clausal layers is decomposed as an articulated

domain. Relevant for our purposes is that CP is decomposed into an array of functional projections summarized in (2b). The relevant projections are taken to encode discourse-related properties of information structure such as focusing and topicalisation, among others. Crucially for our purpose, it is assumed that the left periphery contains a specialized projection for focused constituents, FocP (2c). This projection is also taken to host the *wh*-focus of root interrogatives (2d) (Rizzi 1997).

- (2) a. CP > TP > VP
 b. ForceP > TopP* > IntP > TopP* > FocP > TopP* > FinP
 (Rizzi 1997, 2004, 2012: only 1 FocP activated in the LP)
 c. [_{ForceP} [_{FocP} *Fido* [_{FinP} they named their dog]]]
 (cf. Molnár & Winkler 2010)
 d. [_{ForceP} [_{FocP} What [_{Foc} did] [_{FinP} [_{IP} they name their dog]]]]?

2.2 The matrix analysis of clefts

According to the matrix analysis of clefts, the cleft focus (*the dog* in (1a)) is not clause-internal, say within the complement domain of *be*, but, encoding a discourse function, it ends up in the left periphery of the main clause. More precisely, the cleft focus targets the matrix FocP, thus assimilating the syntax of (1a) to a larger extent to (1c) than in the traditional analyses according to which the cleft focus remains in a TP-internal position. In our evaluation of the matrix analyses of clefts, we concentrate on Frascarelli and Ramaglia's implementation of the matrix analysis because this has the merit that it is worked out in most detail.

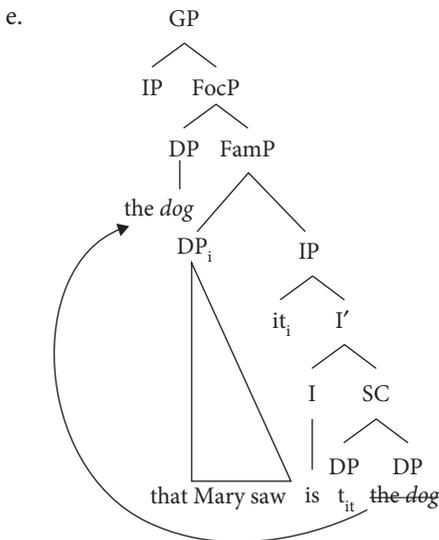
Below we first outline Frascarelli and Ramaglia's (2013, henceforth F&R) derivation of clefts. The representations (3a–d) provide bracketed representations of the steps of the derivation, (3e) is a tree diagram. According to F&R (2013) an *it*-cleft is derived as follows:

1. The clefted XP (i.e. the cleft focus *the dog*) starts out as the predicate of a small clause configuration whose subject is *it* (3a);
2. The small clause is the complement of the copula, which is inserted in I as a linker in the sense of den Dikken 2006 (see F&R 2013, 100, note 4 and section 2) (3a).
3. The subject of the SC, *it*, moves to the canonical subject position, SpecIP (3a).
4. The presupposed relative clause (= *that Mary saw*) is directly merged in the clausal LP as the specifier of a low Topic projection which hosts familiar topics, FamP (Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl (2007), Bianchi & Frascarelli (2010)) (3b).

5. The SC predicate *the dog*, the cleft focus, is extracted and moved to the matrix FocP (3c).¹
6. The remnant IP, from which the cleft focus has been extracted, moves itself to the specifier of a designated topical projection hosting backgrounded material expressing presupposed information (cf. F&R 116–7, note 31), identified as “Ground” (cf. Poletto & Pollock (2004)), which dominates FocP (3d).

F&R’s appeal to GP is intended to capture the interpretive similarity of *it*-clefts, such as (1a), with *wh*-questions, such as (1d), in which the fronted *wh*-constituent is focused and in which the content of IP “Mary saw something” is presupposed.

- (3) a. $[_{IP} \text{it is } [_{SC} t_{it} [_{NP} \text{the dog}]]]$
- b. $[_{FamP} [\text{that Mary saw }] [_{IP} \text{it is } [_{SC} t_{it} [_{NP} \text{the dog}]]]]]$
- c. $[_{FocP} [_{NP} \text{the dog}]] [_{FamP} [\text{that Mary saw }] [_{IP} \text{it is } [_{SC} t_{it} t_{NP}]]]]]$
- d. $[_{GP} [_{IP} \text{it is } [_{SC} t_{it} t_{NP}]]] [_{FocP} [_{NP} \text{the dog}]] [_{FamP} [_{DP} [_{SC} [_{NP} \text{pro}]]] [_{CP} \text{that Mary saw }]]] t_{IP}]]]$



The derivation has as its main appeal that it directly captures the similarities between clefting (1a) and focusing (1c) because the two patterns are taken to exploit the same left peripheral projection. In what follows we take issue with this derivation. Our concerns relate both to the external distribution of the cleft

1. “The focused constituent moves either to SpecFocP or SpecContrP depending on whether it acts as an information or a contrastive Focus, respectively” (F&R 2013, note 32). Observe that potentially their text might be taken to imply that there may be two left peripheral foci in one clause, which is not, we think, what they intend to say. We interpret the text to mean that the unique FocP is either informational OR contrastive.

pattern (Section 3) and to the actual derivation (Section 4): (i) Our first object is that *ceteris paribus*, a derivation of *it*-clefts such as (3e) leads to the incorrect prediction that in English the *it*-cleft pattern (1a) and focus movement (1c) have the same distribution. (ii) F&R's derivation exploits the parallelism between *it*-clefts and sentences with focus fronting, postulating that in both the focused constituent occupies the matrix SpecFocP. However, in terms of their derivation in (3), it turns out that the various word order patterns in English clefts can only be captured by a reduplication of Rizzi's original LP structure and require postulating a dedicated FocP for clefts.

2.3 Alternative analyses

Other authors have adopted a different approach according to which the subject of the *it*-cleft, the pronoun *it*, occupies the canonical subject position in the matrix SpecTP and the copula occupies its regular position in the TP domain. Again there are various implementations: we cite Belletti (2009), Clech-Darbon, Rebuschi and Railland (1999), É. Kiss (1998), Hedberg (2000), Reeve (2010, 2011), Sleeman (2011), etc. The execution of the analysis differs across authors, but what unites them is that the derivation of cleft sentences does not involve the left periphery of the clause headed by *be*. For instance Hedberg (2000) and Reeve (2010: 79, his (1), also 2011) propose a derivation like in (4), in which the focus of the cleft, here a DP, is adjoined to the cleft relative. Crucially, in this account the focus of the *it*-cleft occupies an IP-internal position and the problems pointed out in this paper, which are specifically related to the matrix analysis, do not arise.

- (4) $[_{IP} it_i [_{I'} was [_{VP} t_i [_{DP} DP [_{CP} that Mary saw]]]]]$

3. External syntax: The distribution of *it*-clefts

If *it*-clefts are derived by "regular" focus and topic movements to the LP, then all things being equal, domains where such movements are known to be independently unavailable or degraded are predicted to be incompatible with *it*-clefts. This prediction is not borne out.

3.1 Infinitival contexts

As can be seen in (5a) infinitival clauses are not compatible with focus fronting, whether this be *for to* infinitivals (5a), ECM patterns (5b), or bare infinitival clauses (5c):

- (5) a. *For *this project* John to be in charge of would be unexpected.
 b. *I believe *this project* John to have been in charge of at the time.
 c. *Don't let *this project* John be in charge of.

The standard assumption is that infinitival clauses are not endowed with the same rich left periphery that is available for root clauses. If clefting were derived by fronting to FocP it should also be unavailable in these three environments, contrary to fact.

- (6) a. For it to be *John* who is in charge would be rather unexpected.
 b. I believe it to have been *John* who was in charge at the time.
 c. Don't let [it be *you* that gets arrested].

Let us illustrate this in relation to ECM complements such as (5b). The assumption is that the verb *believe* selects a TP complement without any C projection (6d). The verb *believe* is responsible for the case marking of the subject of its non-finite complement. Various implementations of this converge on the assumption that the clausal complement of ECM verbs is reduced (see Rizzi 1997: 300–304 for one account).

- (6) d. believe [_{TP} John to have been in charge]

In the absence of the CP layer, the ungrammaticality of (5b) follows. If *believe* in (6b) also selects a TP complement, this should lack the “space” to host the cleft focus. One way to salvage the left-peripheral derivation of the cleft would be to assume that the examples in (6) involve a more complex derivation as illustrated in (7). (i) The cleft relative *who was in charge* is merged directly in the FamP of the matrix domain (7a), (ii) the cleft focus *John* is extracted from within the infinitival domain and moved to FocP of the matrix domain (7b), and (iii) the remnant matrix IP as a whole is fronted to the matrix GP (7c).

- (7) a. [_{FamP} who was in charge
 [_{IP} I believe it_i to have been [_{SC} [it_i] [John]]]]]
 b. [_{FocP} *John*_j [_{FamP} who was in charge
 [_{IP} I believe it_i to have been [_{SC} [it_i] [John]]]]]]]
 c. [_{GP} [_{IP} I believe it_i to have been t_i t_j]
 [_{FocP} *John*_j [_{FamP} who was in charge
 [_{IP} I believe it_i to have been [_{SC} [it_i] [John]]]]]]]]]

Such a complex derivation remains in line with the spirit of F&R's work. However, it would entail that to derive the cleft in (8a) in the same way, the cleft focus *John* has to be moved either to the FocP of the embedded relative, which in itself is not easily compatible with focus fronting (8b), or alternatively the cleft focus *John* will have to be extracted from the DP and moved to the matrix FocP associated with the imperative implying an extraction from the complex DP in violation of the Complex NP constraint (Ross 1967).

- (8) a. Don't pay attention to [_{DP} those who believe it to have been *John* who was in charge].

- b. *Don't pay attention to [_{DP} those who *John* believe was in charge].

An alternative would be to give up on the assumption that the left periphery of non-finite complements is necessarily reduced, and to assume that even infinitival clauses have the full-fledged left periphery. However, this would have further implications for the theory and would require a reconsideration of the derivation of ECM patterns, for instance.

3.2 Finite domains incompatible with focus fronting

Since Emonds (1970, 1976) and Hooper and Thompson (1973) it has been known that a range of embedded finite domains in English resist so called main clause phenomena (MCP), typically fronting operations that have discourse effects and target the left periphery. Domains incompatible with MCP are listed below, and illustrated in (9): central adverbial clauses, such as temporal clauses (9a); complements of factive predicates (9b); sentential subjects (9c); complement clauses to nouns (9d); subjunctive clauses (9e).

- (9) a. *[When this song I heard], I remembered my first love.
 b. *Mary realizes [that this book, John read].
 (Hegarty 1992: 52, n. 19, his (iii))
 c. *[That this book, Mary read thoroughly] is true.
 (Authier 1992: 332, his (17b))
 d. *John raised the possibility [that Mary, your antics would upset].
 (Alrenga 2005: 179, his (15c))
 e. *It's important [that the book he study carefully].
 (Hooper & Thompson 1973: 485, (166))

In his seminal work Emonds (1976) assumes that clefting is structure preserving, i.e. it is located within his "S", the current IP or TP (Emonds 1976: 138–40). The same point is made by Hooper and Thompson (1973: 472). Thus, clefting is not an MCP. While there may well be restrictions on the distribution of clefting (cf. Lahousse, Laenzlinger & Soare 2014; Lahousse & Borremans 2013), finite domains incompatible with MCP remain compatible with clefting. Adverbial clauses are a case in point: they are incompatible with focus fronting, but remain compatible with *in situ* focus and with *it*-clefts:

- (10) a. Whenever we needed *information*, Bill could not be reached.
 b. *Whenever *information* we needed, Bill could not be reached.
 c. Whenever it was *information* we needed, Bill could not be reached.
- (11) a. If he had wanted a *left* wing government, he would not have voted for the lib dems.

- b. *If a *left* wing government he had wanted he would not have voted for the lib dems.
- c. If it was a *left* wing government that he wanted, he would not have voted for the lib dems.

All embedded *that*-clauses which resist MCP remain compatible with *it*-clefts:

- (12) a. Susan resents that it was *Mary* who was put in charge of the conference. (ii, 9b)
- b. That in the end it was *Bill* who invited Susan surprised everyone. (iii, 9c)
- c. The news that it was *Susan* that they had invited surprised everyone. (iv, 9d)
- d. But if this is the force of the quantifier in (7), then that force requires that it be *Orcutt* who is the value of the variable *x*. (<http://faculty.washington.edu/smcohen/453/QuineDisplay.pdf>) (v, 9e)

Observe also that for many speakers, argument fronting in an embedded domain requires the overt realization of complementizer *that* (13a). There is no requirement that the complementizer be overt when it introduces a cleft pattern (13b, c):

- (13) a. John believes *(that) Bill, Mary doesn't like. (Nakajima 1995: 147, (8))
- b. but he says it's not just the equipment that's important, but how to use it (http://napavalleyregister.com/business/article_)
- c. And he says it's not just him they're annoying – they're pushing past or obstructing the whole private sector. (*Observer* 13.3.11 page 5 col 2)

3.3 *Yes-no* questions

The availability of the cleft pattern in *yes/no* questions raises two points. First, for many speakers fronting of an argument in an embedded *yes-no* question is degraded (cf. Rochemont 1998; Nakajima 1995: 149). Clefting, however, is generally felt to be compatible with *if/whether* clauses.

- (14) a. %*I wonder if/whether to Mary, Tom gave this book.
- b. I wonder if/whether it is to *Mary* that Tom gave this book.

In addition, the availability of clefting in *yes-no* questions raises a specific problem of execution for F&R's analysis. Recall that one element of their analysis is the hypothesis that the remnant IP, from which the cleft focus has been extracted, is itself moved up to a left peripheral topical projection, equated with Poletto and Pollock's (2004) GroundP (GP). GroundP hosts backgrounded material expressing presupposed information. As mentioned, F&R's appeal to GP is intended to capture the interpretive commonality of *it*-clefts, sentences

with focus fronting (1c) and *wh*-questions such as (1d), in all of which the content of the IP “Mary saw something” is presupposed. Their derivation of the cleft pattern in (14b) must include a step in which the remnant IP moves to GP:

- (14) c. whether [_{GP} [_{IP} it is [_{SC} t_{it} t_{NP}]] [_{FocP} [_{NP} the dog] [_{FamP} [_{DP} [sc
[_{NP} pro] [_{CP} that Mary saw]]] t_{IP}]]]

However, this step is problematic. For Poletto and Pollock (2004:284) IP cannot be attracted to the GroundP layer in *yes-no* questions, because in these questions the content of IP is not presupposed. To maintain their matrix analysis of clefts, F&R are forced to assume that the remnant IP can also be moved to GP in *yes-no* questions. Of course, F&R might be able to reformulate their own definition of the interpretive role of GP to eliminate this problem, but as it stands, this issue is not addressed and the parallelism with Poletto and Pollock’s account would in any event be weakened.

4. Reduplicating the left periphery

The core argument for the matrix analysis of clefts seems to be economy: if clefts share some of their interpretation with left peripheral fronting, and assuming a strong match between interpretive properties and syntax (as is common to most cartographic work), an analysis according to which the same left peripheral position is used to encode the focusing effect is more economical. This argument clearly has its appeal but closer scrutiny of the data reveals that the hypothesis that there is a uniquely identifiable left peripheral position to host the focus of an *it*-cleft and the regular fronted focus is not tenable. On the contrary, many patterns converge to show that the position occupied by the cleft focus must be distinct from the left peripheral focus position associated with focus fronting, with *wh*-movement and with negative inversion in English, as will be discussed in the next section. The upshot of these data is that the only way to salvage the matrix analysis in (3) would be to postulate a specialized left peripheral position for the cleft focus. Again, though this is as such not incompatible with the cartographic approach, it flies in the face of the original argument of economy that made the matrix analysis so compelling.

4.1 Negative inversion

Based on the distributional parallelisms between *wh*-fronting, focusing and negative inversion it is assumed that the fronted constituent in negative inversion patterns such as (15) targets SpecFocP (Haegeman (2000a, b) and Radford (2009a, b), Collins and Postal (2014)).

- (15) [_{ForceP} [_{FocP} At no point had [_{FinP} he been conscious of the problem]]]].

As shown by (16a), English *it*-clefts are compatible with negative inversion. If, following F&R, the cleft focus *the students* occupies SpecFocP in (16a), then the fronted LP negative PP triggering subject-auxiliary inversion *on no account*, cannot itself be located in SpecFocP. Thus, an additional LP projection is required whose specifier will host the negative constituent and whose head will host the inverted auxiliary. This specialized projection might either be a specialized projection dedicated to sentential polarity (cf. Laka 1990; Progovac 1994), as in (16b), or it could be Rizzi's IntP (as in (16c)).² In the literature, (Haegeman (2000a, b) and Radford (2009a, b), Collins and Postal (2014)), though; it is assumed that the constituent that triggers negative inversion patterns with *wh*-phrases and targets FocP. On either assumption, however, it follows that the landing site of negative inversion now has to be differentiated from that of focus fronting and of *wh*-fronting in root questions. For an additional alternative see also the discussion below.

- (16) a. %On no account should it be the *students* who are correcting these papers!
- b. [_{PolP} On no account should [_{GroundP} it ~~should~~ be [_{FocP} the students [who are correcting these papers]]]]
- c. [_{IntP} On no account should [_{GroundP} it ~~should~~ be [_{FocP} the students [who are correcting these papers]]]]

4.2 *Wh*-movement of the clefted XP

A second problem arises when one takes into consideration examples such as (17), in which the focus of the cleft has undergone *wh*-movement. Various types of *wh*-fronting are compatible with clefting. (17a–e) are examples in which fronting affects a *wh*-constituent which is itself the focus of the cleft. (17f) illustrates exclamative fronting of the cleft focus, (17g) illustrates a relative clause and (17h) illustrates a free relative. (17i) is the corresponding example from Italian, provided by F&R themselves.

- (17) a. What was it ___ that you saw?
- b. Who was it ___ that you were going to invite?
- c. Where was it ___ that you met him for the first time?
- d. How many books was it ___ that you had to read?

2. Observe that the latter option would deviate from Rizzi's own motivation for IntP, which was explicitly reserved for the yes/no operator and for why (Rizzi 2004; cf. Kiss 1994) as these showed a specific distribution different from fronted *wh*-phrases.

- e. It could help you focus on what it is ___ you want.
(*Guardian* 4.6.11, p. 7 col 3)
- f. What a glorious bonfire it was ___ you made!
(Quirk et al. 1985: 1386)
- g. I'd advise anyone thinking of relocating to try not to resent the person whose job it is that is making you move. (<http://www.insidedivorce.com/>)
- h. Whoever it was that invented this...
- i. *Chi è (stato) ___ che ha rotto il vaso?*
who be.3SG be.PCPT ___ that have.3SG break.PTCP the vase
'Who is it that broke the vase?' (F&R 2009: 5: (84a))

In his work on the left periphery Rizzi (1997, 2001) assumes that root *wh*-movement targets SpecFocP. An empirical argument of this assumption is the complementary distribution between *wh*-movement and focus movement in Italian illustrated in (18):

- (18) a. *A *chi questo* hanno detto (non qualcos'altro)?
to whom *this* they said (not something else)
- b. **Questo a chi* hanno detto (non qualcos'altro)?
This to whom they said (not something else)

If the cleft focus itself targets the left peripheral FocP, then the fact that examples such as (17a–d) are licit obviously raises the question as to the landing site of fronted interrogative *wh*-constituent in these examples. One option, suggested in (19b) is that the fronted *wh*-constituent targets the specifier of IntP, a specialized projection dedicated to interrogatives. However, such an analysis would raise at least two problems. It means that we no longer have any account for the complementary distribution of focusing and *wh*-movement in root clauses in Italian (18) and moreover, in Rizzi's work the projection IntP was specifically postulated to set apart *yes-no* questions and *wh*-questions introduced by *why* and its equivalents from other *wh*-questions (Rizzi 2004; Kiss 1994). Generalizing all *wh*-movement to IntP abolishes the original distinction. Alternatively, the fronted *wh*-constituent here targets ForceP (19c). But in that case too, the complementarity with focusing in Italian remains unaccounted for. Moreover, whichever representation is now chosen, if Rizzi's original proposal that in the unmarked case *wh*-fronting targets FocP is maintained, then the outcome of the multiplication of landing sites for the fronted *wh*-phrase will be that two distinct landing sites are also postulated for the fronted auxiliary.

- (19) a. [_{ForceP} [_{?P} what [_{? was}] [_{GP} [it was sc] [_{FocP} what [that you saw]]]]]...
- b. [_{ForceP} [_{IntP} what [_{Int was}] [_{GP} [it was sc] [_{FocP} what [that you saw]]]]]...
- c. [_{ForceP} what [_{Force was}] [_{GP} [it was sc] [_{FocP} what [that you saw]]]]

The derivations in (19b) and (19c) raise an additional problem of execution. In both it is assumed that *what* first targets the specifier of the left peripheral FocP and then moves to the higher projection which hosts the *wh*-phrases. This clearly violates the cartographic approach to (the principle of) Criterial freezing, according to which a constituent moved to a position for interpretive reasons cannot be extracted from that position (see Rizzi 2001 a.o.).³

Based on these considerations, we have to conclude that the matrix analysis of *it*-clefts requires postulating an additional (higher) landing site for all fronted *wh*-phrases in root questions as well as a specialized higher LP position for negative inversion, leading to a complication of the cartography of the LP and a loss of parallelism: *wh*-fronting and negative inversion would no longer be aligned with focus fronting. The gain achieved by assimilating the cleft focus (1a) to the fronted focus in (1c) is off set by the need to postulate additional positions. Meinunger (1997, 1998) or F&R (2009, in press) do not discuss such data.

4.3 Focussing the cleft focus⁴

In the preceding section we illustrated examples in which the cleft focus undergoes *wh*-movement. In a left peripheral analysis of clefting one would need to adopt a more articulated structure in which negative inversion and *wh*-fronting can or must target projections distinct from FocP. At this point clefting and focus fronting could arguably be said to be associated with the designated FocP in the left periphery.

The following examples lead to a further complication since a cleft focus itself appears to be focus fronted. Though not all speakers accept such examples, (20a–b) are provided in the literature and (20c–d) are attested.

- (20) a. Was it *Sue* who polished off the cookies?
No, *Pat* it was who ate them.
(Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 1420, (21))⁵
- b. *John* it was that *Mary* saw. (Reeve 2011: (94a))

3. As pointed out by a reviewer this is a rigid interpretation of criterial freezing which is certainly not endorsed generally. However, it is the version of criterial freezing adopted by those taking a cartographic stance, i.e. the position endorsed by Frascarelli and Ramaglia. With respect to clefting, Belletti (2009) and Rizzi (2010, 2012), both working within the cartographic perspective, specifically endorse the position taken here.

4. Not all informants accept this pattern.

5. For Huddleston and Pullum (2002:1420), this movement is motivated by focusing requirements (also Dryer (1996: 494–495) and Halliday (1967: 237)).

- c. [Arsenal] needed someone to pick them up. *Van Persie it was* who stepped forward to get them back on their feet.
(*Observer* 25.11 page 27 col 1)
- d. Here the Restoration was decided upon, and *Talleyrand himself it was* who decided it.
(www.freefictionbooks.org/.../22163-diary-and-notes-of-horace-templeton-esq-by-lever?)

These data are obviously even more problematic than those discussed in the preceding section in that it is now necessary to postulate that in addition to the landing site for the cleft focus, there is a FocP to host the extracted cleft focus when it has been moved higher. Schematically we need a representation such as that in (21), where two focus projections are now set apart, and separated by the GP.

- (21) [_{FocP1} The *dog* [_{GroundP} it was [_{FocP2} ~~the dog~~ [that died]...]]]

The representation is problematic in that it suggests that one left peripheral domain contains two focus projections, while focus is usually considered to be unique (cf. Rizzi's original proposal for the left periphery and much later work). The representation also undermines the argument of economy that was the basis for the matrix analysis of clefts. If two distinct FocPs were indeed assumed, one might reintegrate the problematic data from negative inversion and from *wh*-movement discussed in the preceding sections by assuming that the higher projection, FocP1, in fact is Rizzi's original left peripheral FocP (1997), which could also host negative inversion, *wh*-fronting etc. in line with Haegeman (2000a, b), Radford (2009a, b), Collins and Postal (2014):

- (22) a. [_{FocP1} On no account should [_{GroundP} it ~~should be~~ [_{FocP2} the *students* [who are correcting these papers]]]]]
b. [_{FocP1} what [_{Foc} was] [_{GroundP} [it ~~was se~~] [_{FocP2} ~~what~~ [that you saw]]]]]

To the extent that *it*-clefts may have a negative focus (23a), this can also (marginally) be involved in negative inversion (23b). This would be in line with the hypothesis that FocP1 is the projection that hosts *wh*-moved constituents and the trigger of negative inversion.

- (23) a. %It was none of *these* books that I was using (but those ones).
b. ??%None of *these* books was it ____ that I was using, it was *those*.

Under the current hypothesis whereby two Focus projections are distinguished, FocP2 is conceived of as a specialized landing site for clefts, but this in turn entails that if FocP2 is part of the left periphery, this is a *sui generis* position for the cleft focus and not Rizzi's FocP. Unless further support can be advanced for such a low left peripheral focus projection, the original argument that the matrix analysis of clefting is economical is lost.

According to representation (21), the fronted cleft focus targets the regular “Rizzian” left peripheral FocP(1). An immediate prediction of this account will be that this fronting will be subject to well-known restrictions on focus fronting in English and will pattern with MCP. This prediction is correct. Speakers who allow focus fronting of the focus of the *it*-cleft, disallow the pattern in adverbial clauses (24).

(24) %*I was very worried when *John* it was that they invited.

The type of focus fronting of the cleft discussed here has the same interpretive effect as regular focus fronting, which follows if it targets the “regular” FocP.^{6,7}

5. Conclusion

The matrix derivation of *it*-clefts as proposed in some recent papers offers the bonus that it captures the similarities between clefting and focusing directly because the two patterns are taken to exploit the same left peripheral projection, SpecFocP. However, closer examination of the matrix derivation of *it*-clefts raises a number of issues, both relating to the distribution of the cleft pattern and to the word order variations encountered with clefting in English.

1. The matrix derivation leads to the incorrect prediction that, like focus fronting, the *it*-cleft (1a) is a main clause phenomena and thus should have a restricted distribution. This prediction is in conflict with the existing literature (Emonds 1976; Hooper & Thomson 1973) and is shown to be empirically incorrect.
2. The matrix derivation of clefts exploits the parallelism between *it*-clefts and sentences with focus fronting, postulating that in both the focused constituent occupies the matrix SpecFocP. The initial argument in favour of this derivation is one of economy: one position (SpecFocP) can be used to capture two distinct patterns. However, given the matrix derivation of *it*-clefts, a number of observed word order variations with English clefts can in fact only be captured by a reduplication of Rizzi’s original LP structure and require postulating a dedicated FocP for clefts. This undermines the economy argument.

As it stands, we conclude that however compelling the matrix analysis of *it*-clefts might appear, there remain too many problems of execution to warrant its adoption.

6. We thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this effect.

7. As before, examples in which the cleft focus appears to move remain problematic for criterial freezing, see Rizzi (2010, 2012).

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