Predicate Which Appositives

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There are several anaphoric constructions in English that take as antecedents various elements occurring in the extended verbal projection, from CP down to VP. Some of these constructions are anaphoric on proposition-denoting constituents; for example, the propositional appositive relative in (1) targets a CP (Potts 2002b). Others target smaller syntactic elements, such as predicate as-parentheticals (2) (Potts 2002a). The construction in (3) is what I call a PREDICATE which APPOSITIVE (PWA). This construction is unanalyzed in Potts 2002a,b. PWAs characteristically adjoin to some element of the verbal projection and have the shape of relative clauses beginning with the word which. The difference between PWAs and other relative clauses, including those like (1), is that the gaps inside of them do not show up in canonical argument positions but rather in places where one might expect to find a predicate-denoting element.

1. John knows Mary, which I was aware of.
2. The plums were delicious, as were the durians.
3. Harris sold a goat, which I don’t think he should have.
4. Harris sold a goat, and I don’t think he should have [sold a goat].

PWAs look at first like they contain verb phrase ellipsis, or VPE (compare (3 with (4). I show, however, that PWAs categorically fail diagnostics for VPE: they are island-sensitive (5); ellipsis is always optional, but PWAs always contain gaps (6); and PWAs host an unusual, though often optional, version of do that cannot appear in VPE (7).

5. Harris sold a goat, and/*which Tom asked whether Sally should [sell a goat].
6. Mary met Sally, and/*which Harvey might also meet Sally.
7. Harvey kissed a pig, which/*but you shouldn’t do [kiss a pig].

As has been argued for as-parentheticals and the appositive relatives, the island sensitivity shows that PWAs appear to host A’-movement. Despite this difference from VPE, PWAs pattern with SURFACE ANAPHORA (Hankamer & Sag 1976), permitting, amongst other phenomena, A-movement out of the anaphor as in passives (8) (Schuyler 2001) and the introduction of missing pronominal antecedents as in (9) (Hankamer & Sag 1976).

8. Mary was seen by the cops, which Sally was t also.
9. Sally didn’t meet a boy last night, which Mary did t, and he was very handsome.

The analysis of these data pulls from two related phenomena. On an account of surface anaphora as non-pronunciation of syntactic material (Merchant 2001, Goldberg 2005, a.o.), the anaphoric component of PWAs has internal syntactic structure. McCloskey (To Appear) shows that the same fact holds of Irish predicate as-parentheticals, which also show clear evidence of A’-movement. Here, verbs can be seen to raise out of the elided material, demonstrating that a non-surface-overt VP must be available in the structure, as Goldberg 2005 clearly shows. McCloskey concludes that movement of the verbal phrase to the specifier of CP is responsible for the presence of A’-movement, and I follow him here.
The apparent difference is that what moves in the data above is not a (silent) VP, but the pronoun which. Following work on Danish surface anaphors by Houser et al. (2007), I claim that which is in fact a pronominalized VP, derived post-syntactically. Similarly to which in PWAs, Houser et al. show that the Danish anaphoric pronoun det behaves like a surface anaphor, appearing in the location where a VP is found (10). Since the wh-movement gap in PWAs is in the same place that det is found in Danish clauses, and since there is no other available place where which could originate, I argue that the analysis of these pronouns should be the same.

(10) Han siger han kan hækle, men selvfølgelig kan han ikke det.
‘He says he can crochet, but of course he can’t (crochet).’

Under this analysis, which in PWAs is a pronominalized VP, which moves to Spec, CP as under McCloskey’s analysis. The A’-movement of this element explains both the island sensitivity in (5) and the obligatory gap in (6). This analysis adds to the understanding of the syntax of appositives, showing that the presence of which in the deep structure or numeration—an apparent assumption of Potts (2002b), and, perhaps the most naïve approach—is not consistent with the analysis of PWAs. This also adds more generally to the theory of anaphora, demonstrating a new instance of surface anaphora with a surface pronunciation, unlike as-parentheticals and VPE.

References:


