'Pronominal Epithets' and Similar Items
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'PRONOMINAL EPITHETS' AND SIMILAR ITEMS

Jackendoff (1969) argues in favor of a so-called interpretive approach to the coreferential anaphoric properties of English sentences. In particular, he argues as follows (1969; 57-8):

The second case I will discuss in this section is one that is conceptually impossible within a transformational framework, (of pronominalization: PMP) but very natural in an interpretive system. Consider sentences like the following:

(83)   I wanted Charlie to help me, but the bastard wouldn't do it.
(84)   Irving was besieged by a horde of bills that the poor guy couldn't pay.
(85)   Although the bum tried to hit me, I can't really get too mad at George.

There are many noun phrases such as *the bum, the bastard,* and *the poor guy,* which can be used coreferentially with another noun phrase if they are reduced in stress. These 'pronominal epithets' can occur in all the configurations that a normal pronoun can: (83), (84), and (85) illustrate pronominal epithets in subordinate clauses on both the left and the right. (86) shows one in a main clause, with the coreferential NP in a subordinate clause on the left. (87) shows that the other NP cannot be on the right and in a subordinate clause.

(86)   The fact that Charlie is unpopular irritates the bastard.
(87)   It irritates the bum that Charlie is unpopular.

Since the pronominal epithets obey similar structural conditions as pronouns (probably a subset of those conditions), we would obviously be missing a generalization if we did not handle them by the same rule.

In a transformational framework, however, the generalization cannot be captured. The pronominalization rule changes NPs into pronouns. We will have to add the condition that it can optionally change an NP into a pronominal epithet instead. But then which pronominal epithet should the NP be changed into? The meaning is obviously changed if we substitute an epithet for a pronoun or one epithet for another.

In an interpretive framework, we can mark epithets as special lexical items which may function as pronouns, adding their lexical meaning to the intended attributes of the person they refer to. Then the pronominalization rule requires no changes at all, since the optional feature *pro* on the epithets automatically brings them under the domain of the rule.

While I have no interest in defending a 'transformational' derivation of anaphoric items like pronouns by deletion form 'full' NP, the argument that anaphoric epithets lend some support to interpretive rules for coreferential phenomena just does not go through.

The argument depends completely on the parallelism between constraints on anaphoric connections between coreferential antecedent and pronoun and between coreferential antecedent and epithet. As Jackendoff correctly observed, the restrictions on antecedent-epithet pairs are a sub-set of those

on antecedent-pronoun pairs, basically consisting of the same constraints on antecedent-pronoun pairs in which there is no command relation. The latter follows since in general coreferential antecedent-epithet pairs cannot be joined by a command relation:

(1) (a) *Melvin$_i$ claimed that the bastard$_i$ was honest
    (b) *that the bastard$_i$ lost irritated Melvin$_i$.

Jackendoff proposes to account for the epithet pronoun restriction parallelism by simply adding some ad hoc mark to the lexical entries for those nouns which can function as epithets. The interpretive rules for establishing coreferential linkages will then be sensitive to this marking, assigned also to normal pronouns, and will treat them identically without any special statement.

However, there is an alternative treatment which extracts the full generalization possible about epithet-pronoun coreference parallelism and which requires no appeal at all to interpretive rules. Namely, derive anaphoric epithets from underlying pronouns+appositive relative clauses. Thus, in these terms, (2)b would derive from a more remote structure like (2)a:

(2) (a) [I wanted Harry$_i$ to help me but he$_i$, who$_i$ is a bastard, wouldn't do it].
    (b) I wanted Harry$_i$ to help me but the bastard$_i$ wouldn't do it.

In these terms, the anaphoric parallelism between epithet and pronoun is explained directly in terms of the fact that epithets derive from underlying pronouns, whose anaphoric connections have been previously established (according to the existing constraints, by whatever principles are relevant). Of course, it is necessary to indicate somehow which predicate nouns can undergo the rule relating (2a, b), but this list is equivalent to the list Jackendoff's system requires to indicate those words which have his special marking *pro*.

Derivations like (2) require one further remark. For many people at least, appositive relatives cannot occur on non-subject pronouns:

(3)   *I hate him, who is a bastard.

It is, however, such ill-formed structures which would have to underlie certain epithet derivations:

(4) (a) [I have never met Melvin$_i$ but Joan says she has met him$_i$, who$_i$ is a bastard].
    (b) I have never met Melvin$_i$ but Joan says she has met the bastard$_i$.

However, all this seems to show is that the constraint illustrated in (3) is

defined on, or is at least partially sensitive to, the actual output configuration.

Finally, note that the mode of derivation proposed here extends in fact far beyond epithets to include the whole range of appositively used anaphoric NP. Thus the same rule can also be made responsible for such derivations as (5b) from structures like (5a):

(5) (a) [As Mary's son$_i$ grew up, Bob spent more and more time with him$_i$, who$_i$ was a youth.

(b) As Mary's son$_i$ grew up, Bob spent more and more time with the youth$_i$.

(6b) from structures like (6a):

(6) (a) [when I first met the Bagworth, he$_i$, who was the Junior Senator from Cambodia, ...

(b) when I first met Bagworth$_i$, the Junior Senator from Cambodia$_i$, ...
etc.[1]

In conclusion, the distributional parallelism between antecedent-pronoun and antecedent appositive NP coreferential pairs lends no support whatever to interpretive ideas about anaphora, a finding which is consistent with the conclusions reached elsewhere (Postal (to appear)) that no known facts lend support to any interpretive theories of anaphora.

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[1] There are certain conditions, which I do not understand, that determine the choice of article on the appositive anaphoric NP. Thus in examples like:

(i)   when I first met the senator$_i$, that bastard$_i$ was living in Paris,
that is much superior to *the*. Similarly in:

(ii)   a sailor kissed a nurse$_i$ and that nurse$_i$ caught meningitis.

But:

(iii)   a sailor$_h$ kissed a nurse$_i$ and $\left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{the} \\ \text{*that} \end{array} \right\}$ nurse$_i$ that
            he$_h$ kissed caught meningitis.