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Author(s): James D. McCawley

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WHAT'S WITH *WITH*?

JAMES D. McCAWLEY

University of Chicago

The absolute construction exemplified by *with the bus drivers on strike* consists of *with* plus a constituent that possesses all the characteristics typical of embedded S's, except for having to contain a verb: it serves as a domain for cyclic application of transformations, it serves as a scope for quantifiers and negatives, and its elements do not command elements of the main clause. An analysis of these constituents as underlying S's, subject to optional deletion of *be* (or of possessional *have* and its subject) explains why this construction allows adverbs as adjuncts to constituents that normally do not support adverbs. Peculiarities of the distribution of adverbs in the construction support the contention that the NP in *with NP PP* is an underlying subject of *be* in some cases, an underlying object of *have* in others.

The '*with* absolute' construction has until recently been largely neglected by both traditional grammarians and transformational linguists:

- (1) a. With the bus drivers on strike, we'll have to ride our bicycles.
- b. With the postal rates going up next week, you should answer these letters right away.

Its syntax was treated in some detail by Jespersen (1940:38–42); after that, it attracted little interest until the late 1970's, when Riemsdijk dealt at some length with it and its Dutch analog in a section of his dissertation on prepositional phrases (ultimately published as Riemsdijk 1978). Various aspects of the English construction are dealt with in Stump 1981, Nathan 1981, Ishihara 1981, and Sakakibara 1982; and its French counterpart is given an extensive treatment by Ruwet 1978.

Among the details of this construction that remain controversial are (a) its surface constituent structure and (b) the status of the material following the *with* as a deep and/or surface S. The analyses by Riemsdijk and Ruwet both assign to this construction a ternary-branching surface structure, as in Figure 1 (overleaf); while Jespersen, who discusses it in a chapter on 'Simple nexus as regimen of a preposition', implicitly assigns to it a surface structure as in Figure 2.

The claim that the NP and the following item form a syntactic constituent, as in Fig. 2, is supported by the fact that the combination of those two items serves as antecedent of a pronoun (2a), can undergo Right Node Raising (2b),¹ and can be the locus of conjoining (2c):

¹ The status of 2b as evidence for the structure in Fig. 2 is weakened by the fact that such examples all seem to have a jocular air, and could conceivably involve some deviation from normal syntax. This paper contains few examples in which the absolute expression comes after, rather than before, the main clause: I have arbitrarily restricted my attention to examples in which the absolute construction precedes the main clause. My impression is that absolute expressions in final position do not differ from those in initial position with regard to the issues discussed in this paper (which relate to the internal structure of the expression), though they do not play exactly the same roles in the sentences in which they occur.

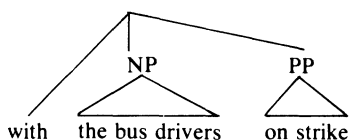


FIGURE 1.

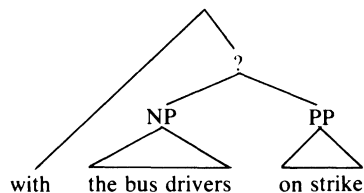


FIGURE 2.

- (2) a. With everyone planning on attending, WHICH I hadn't expected, we'll be short of space.
 b. I wouldn't want to live in Sicily with, or for that matter, even without, Mt. Etna erupting.
 c. With mother in the hospital and father on a drunken binge, the family is in bad shape. [essentially Riemsdijk's ex. 99]

Riemsdijk claims that examples like 2c involve not underlying conjoining within a single absolute construction, but rather Conjunction Reduction or deletion of *with* in an underlying structure with two separate absolute constructions, as in 3a. Riemsdijk's suggested sources allow only *and*; but in fact the full range of coordinating conjunctions is possible in examples comparable to 2c:

- (3) a. With mother in the hospital and with father on a drunken binge, the family is in bad shape.
 b. With either John away or his doorbell not working, no one could get into his apartment.
 b'. ?Either with John away or with his doorbell not working, no one could get into his apartment.
 b''. *Either with John away no one could get into his apartment, or with his doorbell not working no one could get into his apartment.
 c. With Sam already here but Lucy not having arrived yet, we can't keep Sam from drinking all the whisky.
 c'. ?With Sam already here but with Lucy not having arrived yet, we can't keep Sam from drinking all the whisky.
 c''. *With Sam already here we can't keep him from drinking all the whisky, but with Lucy not having arrived yet we can't keep Sam from drinking all the whisky.

If anything, the slightly odd 3b',c', as well as 3a, reflect not conjoining of sentences containing absolute constructions, but copying of elements that introduce conjoined constituents:

- (4) I don't know whether he's leaving or WHETHER he's staying.

The facts in 2 establish rather conclusively that the NP and the following item make up a constituent, which I will henceforth refer to as the NEXUS CONSTITUENT. I turn now to the question of whether the nexus constituent is a S in surface and/or underlying structure. I will argue that it behaves like a S in all respects save one, namely that it need not have a verb in surface structure; and I will ultimately argue that the requirement that a S have a surface V is

in fact not imposed on S's in general, but is merely a correlate of morphological requirements to which some S's, but not all, are subject.

The nexus constituent serves as a cyclic domain, as illustrated by examples in which it serves as the domain of application of Passive (5a), Raising (5b), *There* Insertion (5c), Extraposition (5d), Gapping (5e), and Quantifier Float (5f):

- (5) a. With politicians being shot at by snipers every day, I don't see why anyone would go into politics.
- b. With Gonzalez appearing to know everything about economics, we could hardly put up a better candidate.
- c. With there being no possibility of advancement in her present job, Linda is determined to find a new job.
- d. With it obvious that the money is lost, we don't know what to do.
- e. With Pollini playing the Brahms Second and Arrau the Beethoven Fourth, we're going to have a great week of concerts.
- f. With the students probably all wanting to find out their grades, we had better finish grading the papers tonight.

The nexus constituent can involve an idiomatic subject:

- (6) a. With the cat out of the bag about our plans, we can't expect Oscar to help us.
- b. With the shit just about to hit the fan, now might be a great time for you to visit your uncle in Florida.
- c. With my leg continually being pulled, I'm sick and tired of these jokers that you hang around with.

The nexus constituent can serve as the scope of quantifiers:

- (7) a. With everybody on strike, we're forced to close down.
- b. With $[(\forall x: x \text{ a person})(x \text{ is on strike})]$, we're forced to close down.
- c. $*(\forall x: x \text{ a person})[\text{with } x \text{ on strike, we're forced to close down}]$

Note that 7a can be interpreted with 'x is on strike' as the scope of *everybody* (7b); but an interpretation with the whole sentence as scope (7c) is bizarre. Moreover, the interpretation of the scopes of multiple quantifiers within the nexus constituent is exactly parallel to that in similar independent sentences—even in cases which deviate from the putative principle that a preceding quantifier has higher scope than a following one:²

- (8) a. With strikes taking place in every major city, the country is falling apart.
- a'. Strikes are taking place in every major city.
- b. With welcoming kisses being given to many boys by every girl, a festive mood prevailed.

² That 'principle' is at best a first approximation to the truth. Kuno 1971 and Ioup 1974 discuss factors other than word order that affect quantifier scope. Thus Kuno (351–64) argues that only LEFTWARD movement of NP's affects their scope relations, as in 8b' (taken from Kuno), where the order of *every girl* and *many boys* has been reversed by rightward movement of the former rather than leftward movement of the latter—and *every girl* retains higher scope than *many boys*, even though not preceding it in surface structure.

- b'. Welcoming kisses were given to many boys by every girl.
- c. With a girl in every port, Harry feels pretty contented.
- c'. Harry has a girl in every port.

The nexus constituent can also serve as the scope of negation:

- (9) a. With no one feeling safe, everyone stays home at night.
- b. With none of his projects ever having succeeded, Oscar is having great difficulty raising money.

Note that, in 9, negation in the initial constituent does not trigger inversion (10a–b), nor does negation in a subordinate clause (10c–c'):

- (10) a. *With no one feeling safe does everyone stay home at night.
- b. *With none of his projects ever having succeeded is Oscar having great difficulty raising money.
- c. If no one objects, you can leave right away.
- c'. *If no one objects can you leave right away.

The condition under which negation in an initial constituent triggers inversion is apparently that the negation must command the tense of the main clause; hence the facts in 10 provide evidence that material in the nexus constituent does not command material in the main clause. This point is confirmed by facts about another phenomenon that involves negation and is sensitive to command. Specifically, negation within the nexus constituent does not support negative polarity items in the main clause, nor does negation in a subordinate clause:

- (11) a. *With no one feeling safe, anyone ever goes out.
- a'. *[That no one feels threatened] ever leads anyone to go out.
- b. *With none of his projects ever having succeeded, I'd give Oscar a red cent.
- b'. *A person [who can't trust Oscar] would give him a red cent.

The negations in the examples given so far are incorporated into NP's such as *nothing*, *no one*, or *none*. It is also possible to have simply *not* at the beginning of the predicate constituent—in which case, once again, the nexus constituent is the scope of the negation:

- (12) a. With Arthur not feeling well, we can't count on him to join us.
- b. With that portrait of your Uncle Edgar not over the fireplace any more, the room looks bare.
- c. With your brother not a veterinarian, I don't see how he's qualified to tell me what to feed my cat.
- d. With the windows not open, it must be very uncomfortable in that office.

These examples have the interesting characteristic of allowing *not* even when the following constituent is something that normally does not combine with *not* into a larger constituent; e.g., *not a veterinarian* otherwise occurs as a constituent only when it reflects sentence negation (13a), being excluded in ordinary NP positions (13b):

- (13) a. We consulted not a veterinarian but a pediatrician.
- b. *This dog was treated by not a veterinarian.

In the analysis to be presented below, in which *be* as topmost verb of an absolute clause is optionally deletable, the combinations of *not* with things other than V's in 12b–d present no anomaly: they are simply what results from an embedded S of the form *NP not be X* through deletion of *be*. By contrast, no schema of the form *NP Xⁱ* correctly expresses what the nexus constituent can contain, since such a formula would allow for *not* only if X were V, in which case it would not allow for V-less instances of the construction.

Similar points can be made about adverbs. The 'predicate' constituent of absolute constructions may be any of the types of constituent listed in 14—either in its pristine form, or accompanied by temporal and/or epistemic adverbs and/or *not*.³

- (14) a. Verb phrase in -EN or -ing or *to* infinitive form:
 With lawyers (currently) subjected to frequent attacks in the press,
 you should consider changing to a different profession.
 With everybody yelling about taxes (these days), it's no wonder
 that the mayor is trying to cut the budget.
 With there (probably) to be a meeting at 1:00, we'd better have a
 quick lunch.
- b. Adjective phrase:
 With most students (evidently) (perpetually) eager to learn about
 new things, we shouldn't teach the same courses year after year.
 With Emil (obviously) afraid of snakes, you shouldn't take him
 along on your camping trip.
- c. Prepositional phrase:
 With his wife (still) in Florida, Mike feels lonely.
 With the FBI (probably) (currently) on his track, Tom is lying low.
- d. Noun phrase:
 With Mexico City (currently) (probably) the largest city in the
 world, I'm surprised you don't have a branch office there.
 With your son a student (again), you probably don't see so much
 of him.

The adverbs in question normally cannot occur as constituents of adjective phrases, prepositional phrases, or noun phrases:⁴

³ The occurrence of adverbs in such constructions was first pointed out by Ruwet (186–7). Many of my examples of adverbs in absolute constructions are modeled on his.

⁴ Ernst 1981 explores a class of cases in which adverbs can in fact occur as constituents of NP's; e.g.,

We based our argument on precisely the reasons you suggested.

Are primarily horn players required for the job, or will bassoonists do?

However, the adverbs that may occur in such constructions are limited to the types that Ernst calls 'degree of precision' (*precisely, roughly*), 'modal' (*absolutely, perhaps*), and 'set-divider' (*primarily, mostly*). But the adverbs in absolute constructions are subject to no such restriction, as shown by the occurrence in 14 of adverbs like *currently* and *perpetually*, which are excluded from the constructions discussed by Ernst. In addition, the adverbs in his constructions can occur only at the beginning of the NP, while those in 14d can follow the NP.

Adverb and A' do not make up a constituent even in the following perfectly normal variant (a) of 15a, in view of the impossibility of Gapping in (b):

- (15) a. ?John may be [still afraid of snakes].
 b. *John fishes for marlin [still in Florida].
 c. *I've just visited [currently the largest city in the world].

These adverbs do, however, occur as modifiers of V''s consisting of *be* plus adjective phrase, prepositional phrase, or noun phrase (e.g., *Mexico City currently is the world's largest city.*) The possibility of adverbs in 14, then, is a consequence of the analysis developed below, which sets up an embedded S in absolute constructions and allows deletion of *be*: the combinations of adverb and non-V' are precisely what would result from deletion of a *be* that was the topmost verb of a S.

I turn now to the question of whether ALL instances of 'with absolute' constructions can be analysed as derived from *with* + S—and if so, what the S is. Most of the examples discussed so far have been sentences possessing characteristics that are explained if we posit an embedded S with a *be* subject to deletion. In one case, namely 8c, it was hinted that we needed an embedded S with *have*, plus deletion of the *have* and its subject; several examples will be given shortly that call for such a derivation. But it should be emphasized that, in a great many examples, no verb whatever is deleted from the absolute construction. Thus, nothing more than a tense need be missing from the nexus constituent:

- (16) a. With your brother having lost everything in the stock market crash,
 I'm surprised that he became prosperous again so quickly.
 b. With George owning half the land in the city, I'm sure he could
 have loaned you the money.
 c. With Alice understanding economics better than anyone else we
 know, it was silly of you to ask Otto.

The *-ing* in these examples is not a residue of a *be* + *-ing* progressive, but is simply a marker of subordination, as in non-finite reduced relative clauses:

- (17) a. *Your brother is having lost everything in the stock market crash.
 a'. a person having lost everything in the stock market crash
 b. *George is owning half the land in the city.
 b'. someone owning half the land in the city
 c. *Alice is understanding economics better than anyone else we
 know.
 c'. anyone understanding economics

The special role of *be* in the absolute construction is only that it MAY be deleted if it is the topmost verb. All uses of *be* have corresponding absolute

-
- (a) John is still afraid of snakes.
 (b) *Bill is now worried about mice and John still afraid of snakes.

Gapping deletes all of a clause except for one constituent before the verb, and one after it; hence, unacceptable Gapping can be used as evidence that two items after the verb do not make up a constituent. *Still* in (a) is adjacent to the A' as a result of attraction of *be* to the tense morpheme.

constructions which lack surface *be*; and the deletion of the *be* is optional, except where special factors prevent its retention.⁵

- (18) a. With Mexico City (being) the largest city in the world, ...
- a'. With Emil (being) afraid of snakes, ...
- b. With Nancy (*being) taking four philosophy courses this term, ...
- c. With the meeting (*being) to start at 1:00, ...
- d. With Ovaltine (being) believed to be a carcinogen, ...

The obligatoriness of the deletion in 18b–c results from two independently established constraints: the ‘Double *-ing*’ Constraint of Ross 1972,⁶ and the restriction of *is to* to finite forms (Pullum & Wilson 1977:757, 770).

Some possible instances of deletion of *have* with its subject are:

- (19) a. With a girl in every port, Harry feels pretty contented. [= 8c]
- b. With nothing to lose but their shackles, the workers were ready to revolt.
- c. With more money on me than I can afford to lose, I feel nervous.
- d. With a firm commitment from Macmillan to publish his book, Bert isn't worried about his tenure case.
- e. With job offers from three major universities, Ann is feeling great.
- f. With three brothers and two sisters, Harry had little time to himself.
- g. With no time to himself, Harry felt miserable.

Two different shapes of the absolute construction appear here: exx. 19a–c are of the form *with NP X* (with extraposition from the NP involved in 19b), while 19d–g are of the form *with NP*. I will treat both forms as instantiating the same construction as ex. 1, in view of the parallelism of their semantic interpretations to those of the earlier examples—provided a subject and a *have* are supplied. Thus 19a presents the proposition that Harry has a girl in every port, and 19f the proposition that Harry had three brothers and two sisters, as ‘given’ information serving as background to the main clauses. The claim that an embedded S exists, even in cases where the construction has the surface form *with NP*, is supported by phenomena sensitive to command (as shown in 10–11). For example, in 20a the negation in *with no job* does not trigger inversion, nor

⁵ In fact, one case exists in which a *be* which is the topmost verb in an absolute construction may not be deleted—namely that in which it has triggered *There* Insertion. Thus 5c does not allow a variant **With there no possibility of advancement in her present job, ...* This illustrates Richard Wojcik's observation (p.c.) that putative deletions of *be* never apply to a *be* that has triggered *There* Insertion; e.g.,

The judge ruled the indictment (to be) defective.

The judge ruled there to be (→ **∅*) a defect in the indictment.

⁶ Though the details of this constraint are controversial, the asterisked version of 18b is excluded by all formulations of which I am aware: Ross' original global syntactic constraint, the non-global revisions proposed by Milsark 1972 and Pullum 1974, and the primarily phonological constraint offered by Bolinger 1979.

in 20b does it support a negative polarity item:⁷

- (20) a. With no job, Sam is happy.
- b. *With no job, Sam has a red cent.

In addition, such expressions support adverbs:

- (21) a. With no job currently, Sam is happy.
- b. With job offers from three major universities so far, Ann is feeling great.

In some of the examples of 19, we have no strong reason for taking the embedded sentence to involve possessional *have*, rather than (*there* plus) existential *be*; e.g. there are no strong grounds for taking the embedded S in 19b to be *They had nothing to lose but their shackles*, rather than *There was nothing to lose but their shackles*. But only the former possibility is viable in the case of 19c,g, where *with* is followed by a combination of elements that otherwise can only follow *have* (cf. **More money on me than I can afford to lose is in my hip pocket*.) Some cases admitting only the latter possibility for the embedded S will be discussed below (cf. 32). Although the possibility of alternative analyses with an embedded existential *be* will make it difficult to identify sentences as exemplifying the deletion of *have* which is posited here, it is at least possible to identify a major class of cases in which that deletion is inapplicable. Specifically, only the 'possessional' sense of *have*, where this includes inalienable possession, can undergo the deletion (cf. 19f):

- (22) a. *With drunk all the beer, Fred feels sleepy. [perfect *have*]⁸
- b. *With his tailor make him a new suit every year, George is well-dressed. [causative *have*]
- c. *With to go home at 6:00, we shouldn't waste any time. [*have to*]
- d. *With got a lot of money, Alex can vacation on the Riviera. [*have got*]

⁷ Ex. 20a is taken from Liberman 1975, who contrasts it with (a) below—in which the negation has the whole S as scope, and inversion applies:

(a) With no job would Sam be happy.

Since Liberman does not entertain the possibility of an analysis in which the *not* of 20a fails to command the material of the main clause, he is forced to accept an analysis in which inversion is optional, and negative scope is assigned by a rule that is sensitive to surface word-order. Under my analysis, 20a differs from (a) above with regard to whether *not* commands the tense marker of the main clause; and inversion is triggered by negative elements that precede and command the main-clause tense-marker. It is clearly COMMAND and not C-COMMAND that is relevant to inversion and negative polarity items—in view of examples like (b), in which *no* commands, but does not c-command, the tense-marker and the negative polarity item:

(b) Under no circumstances would I give him a red cent.

⁸ One possible instance of deletion of perfect *have* is provided by sentences like *With Fred arrested, we're in big trouble*; this may require an underlying structure with a present perfect, considering the oddity of a simple present in *?Fred is arrested* (cf. *Fred has been arrested*). If in fact a deleted perfect *have* exists here, this sentence poses a triple anomaly: perfect *have* is deleted (otherwise, only possessional *have* is deleted); *have* + *be* is deleted (otherwise, only the topmost verb is ever deleted); and the subject is retained (otherwise, deletion of *have* is accompanied by deletion of its subject).

- e. *With a good time whenever she visits us, Harriet would be a good person to invite. [experiential *have*]

In most of these cases, *have* is not followed by a NP; thus, if a surface shape *with NP (X)* is required by an output constraint (which could well be the case), those examples would violate that constraint. However, a constraint on the surface shape would not suffice to rule out 22b or 22e; so, in any event, we need some restriction on the kind of *have* that can be deleted in absolute constructions.

The discussion of adverbs above did not touch on cases where an understood *have* was posited in the absolute construction. Adverbs do occur in such constructions, and in fact may precede the NP:

- (23) a. With currently a girl in every port, Harry feels contented.
 b. With rarely anything to say, Oscar isn't highly regarded.
 c. With usually more money than she knows how to spend, Sarah is living a dissolute life.

In the examples of 14, by contrast, the adverbs come after the NP. Those examples, indeed, do not allow variants in which the adverb precedes the subject NP:

- (24) a. *With currently lawyers subjected to frequent attacks in the press, ...
 b. *With obviously Emil afraid of snakes, ...
 c. *With still his wife in Florida, ...
 d. *With currently Mexico City the largest city in the world, ...

These examples illustrate a general constraint in English against S-initial adverbs in non-finite clauses—as illustrated by 25, taken from Emonds (1976:196):

- (25) a. *Mary arranged for in St. Louis John to rent a house cheap.
 b. *They build machines for during lunch hours businessmen to exercise on.

Emonds used such examples to argue for a quite different conclusion, namely that *for* is an adjunct to the subject NP in the surface structure of *for-to* complements. However, that conclusion is untenable, since the *NP to V'* part of a *for-to* complement behaves as a unit with regard to conjoining:

- (26) For [either John to find us or your car to break down] would be horrible.

Rather, S-initial adverbs are simply excluded in non-finite S's.⁹ The placement of the adverbs in 23 then provides confirmation for an analysis in which the absolute constructions have an understood *have* and an understood subject: the adverbs here can be taken to be \bar{V} -initial (cf. *Harry currently has a girl in every port*), and thus do not violate the constraint against S-initial adverbs in non-finite S's. The examples in 24, however, admit only analyses in which they do violate it. Note that this account of the difference between 23 and 24 depends on whether the NP of a *with NP X* combination is a subject, which determines

⁹ There is no such constraint on finite embedded S's: *The project that [currently John is working on] takes up all his time.*

whether an adverb that precedes the NP can be analysed as V'-initial, or only as S-initial.

In an important class of cases, namely absolute constructions of the form *with NP as X*, it is not apparent that any of the derivations proposed so far in this article is viable:

- (27) a. With Schwartz as goalie, our team is sure to lose.
- b. With your husband as the holder of a Mutual of Idaho policy, you'll never have to fear old age.

To show that *NP as X* is a constituent, and indeed a S, the same sorts of arguments can be used as were given above for other instances of the absolute construction. *NP as X* can be the antecedent of a relative pronoun (28a), can be the locus of conjoining (28b), can serve as the scope of quantifiers (28c) or negation (28d), and can support adverbs (28e); and in one fairly clear case, it serves as domain of application of a cyclic transformation, namely Quantifier Float (28f):¹⁰

- (28) a. With Reagan as President, which anyone could have foreseen, our taxes are being diverted to the Pentagon.
- b. With Reagan as President but Carey as governor, politics in New York state is quite amusing.
- c. With five Republicans as members of each committee, Reagan's bills should all get quick committee approval.
- d. The country got along fine in the late 1940's with no one as vice president.
- e. With Reagan currently as President, there is no hope for disarmament.
- f. With your children all as students, you won't be able to continue living in this style.

¹⁰ Ruwet (183–4), citing examples like the following, maintains that *with NP as X* does not allow Quantifier Floating from the NP:

- (a) With all those imbeciles as guides, we were always getting lost.
- (b) ??With those imbeciles all as guides, we were always getting lost.

I would argue, however, that the strangeness of (b) resides entirely in the incongruity of its meaning, and is connected with the fact that Quantifier Floating makes a difference with regard to the predication structure of the sentence. In (a), the cause of our misfortune is the identity of the guides (namely, all those imbeciles); i.e., we probably wouldn't have kept getting lost if other people had been our guides. In (b), the cause is the proportion of the given imbeciles who served as guides; i.e., (b) makes the unlikely suggestion that we wouldn't have kept getting lost if our guides had been selected from the same set of imbeciles, but had been fewer in number.

There is a second transformation, namely Gapping, for which *NP as X* constituents should provide a domain of application, if *NP as X* is a S. However, it appears impossible to tell whether Gapping has applied in potential instances: e.g., *with Reagan as President and Carey governor* could illustrate deletion of *as* by Gapping, but it could just as well illustrate conversion of *be* into *as* in the first conjunct, and deletion of *be* in the second conjunct—each of which should be independently possible.

One important respect in which *NP as X* could be argued not to be a S is that, when it contains negation, we can more easily get inversion, and interpret the negation as having wide scope, than in the case of 10a–b: *?With no one as President would I feel happy*.

If the nexus constituent is a S, even when it has the form *NP as X*, what exactly underlies such a constituent? The possibilities for treating it as a S appear to be the following:

(i) Consider *as X* to be a predicate prepositional phrase. This is implausible, since *as X* does not occur in predicate position in other types of S:

- (29) a. *Schwartz is as goalie.
- b. *With Schwartz being as goalie, our team is sure to lose.

(ii) Treat *with NP as X* like the examples in 27, i.e. set up *our team has Schwartz as goalie* as the underlying object of *with* in 27a and invoke the deletion of *have* and its subject. Besides encountering a semantic difficulty pointed out by Riemsdijk,¹¹ this conflicts with the apparent necessity to treat the NP of *NP as X* as a subject, in view of the possibility of Quantifier Float (*all* can be floated only from a subject NP) and the oddity of adverbs before the NP:

- (30) ??With currently Reagan as President, there is no hope for disarmament.

(iii) Consider *as* to be a replacement of underlying *be*; i.e., set up *Schwartz is goalie* as underlying object of *with* in 27a, and allow conversion of *be* into *as* under certain conditions. If we use the conception of syntactic category presented in McCawley 1981a, 1982—in which category names are informal abbreviations for sets of syntactically relevant properties of the constituent, one of which is the lexical category of its head—then replacing the V *be* by the P *as* will convert the V' that it heads into a P'. The hypothesized replacement must be restricted to copula *be* with a predicate NP or N' (31a–b), and the subject must be a THEME in the sense of Gruber 1976 (31c–d):

- (31) a. With Reagan (*as) eating jellybeans, ...
- b. With pounds of jellybeans (*as) on the President's desk, ...
- c. With Reagan (as) President, we're in grave danger of war.
- c'. With Reagan (*as) a former movie actor, the press conferences should run more smoothly than they did under Carter.
- d. Why don't you become a student again? With you (as) a student, we could subscribe to lots of magazines at reduced rates.
- d'. With all of your children (*as) students, you must have a hard time making ends meet.

The status of the subjects in 31c,d as themes, and of those in 31c',d' as non-themes, can be verified by noting that 31c admits a paraphrase with *Considering who is President*, while 31c' admits one with *Considering what Reagan is*, but not vice-versa; similarly (mutatis mutandis) with 31d,d'. I tentatively adopt possibility (iii), not out of any affection for the '*be* into *as*' rule with its odd

¹¹ Riemsdijk points out that 27a is indeterminate with regard to whether it is our team or the opposing team that has Schwartz as goalie. This falls short of a conclusive refutation of (ii), because the deletion of the subject of *have* in sentences like 19 is not always under the control of the main-clause subject; e.g., *With a girl in every port, Otto envies Harry* allows an interpretation in which it is Harry, not Otto, who has a girl in every port.

restrictions, but because (of the possible analyses with which I am familiar) it is the only one that can at least claim viability.

Another class of 'with absolutes' for which the status of the nexus constituent as a S is unclear (discussed by both Riemsdijk and Ruwet) is illustrated below (English versions of Riemsdijk's ex. 81):

- (32) a. With this bad weather, we had better stay home.
- b. With all that, we haven't made any progress yet.
- c. With such a soccer game, there is naturally nobody on the streets.

Among possible analyses of these examples in terms of an embedded S, the only one I regard as worth considering is that in which they have an understood existential *be*; e.g., 32a would have the same underlying structure as *With there being this bad weather, ...* This possibility is not mentioned by Riemsdijk, though he may well have had it in mind when he said (p. 74) that 'Unless one resorts to some highly implausible derivation of these absolute P – N''' combinations from some sentential source, a unified account of all absolute prepositional phrases is not possible under [the hypothesis that absolutes have embedded S's]'.¹²

Let us ask to what extent 'a unified account of all absolute prepositional phrases' is possible under ANY assumptions. Riemsdijk's own treatment of the various instances of the 'with absolute' construction is unified only in that it takes them all to instantiate a phrase structure rule whereby P' may consist of P followed by N''' and an optional X'''. I have already remarked that X''' does not accurately summarize the items that may follow the noun phrase, and that the constituent structure corresponding to Riemsdijk's formula (Fig. 1) is incorrect. However, even if an alternative set of phrase-structure rules could be given that avoided those two defects, they would unify Riemsdijk's account of absolute constructions only in the same respect that an account involving embedded S's could do—provided that one takes SYNTACTIC phrase-structure rules to express the gross combinatorics not of syntactic deep structure, but of surface structure (or perhaps of 'shallow' structure). I have argued for such a picture of grammar in McCawley 1981a, 1982—where I maintain, e.g., that the evidence offered by Emonds in favor of his 'structure preserving' conception of transformations is actually evidence only for surface combinatoric rules, and has no implications regarding deep structure. However, the 'with absolute' construction has more unity than the restriction on surface form that can be expressed by a phrase-structure rule like Riemsdijk's: the construction presents the proposition expressed by the nexus constituent in a certain relation to the proposition expressed by the main clause,¹² and the uniformity of that contribution to the meaning of the whole sentence must be incorporated into an account of the construction. What is non-uniform is the relationship between the proposition expressed by the nexus constituent and its surface form. Riemsdijk has given no reason to suppose that the relationship can be described without reliance on rules which are restricted to special cases of the construc-

¹² See Stump and Nathan for some of the details of the contribution of 'with absolute' constructions to the meanings of sentences.

tion—e.g., the *be* deletion, *have* deletion, and *be-as* conversion proposed above, and the deletion of existential *be* suggested in connection with 32. In any event, what little evidence can be mustered regarding the syntax of the last examples suggests that the NP represents the remains of an embedded S. Specifically, the NP can be conjoined with nexus constituents which on other grounds can be identified as S's (33a); it supports adverbs (33b); and it can serve as scope of negation (33c):

- (33) a. With all this bad weather and my arthritis acting up, ... [example from Barbara Hall Partee]
- b. With such a soccer game today, there is naturally nobody in the streets.
- c. With nothing to be done about the weather, everyone had to just put up with it.

I turn now to the relationship between the absolute construction and rules of surface syntactic structure. The instances of the construction discussed above have a variety of shapes: in some, the nexus constituent is an intact [NP V'] combination; in others, it is a NP followed by the remains of a V' from which a *be* has been deleted; in still others, it represents the remains of a V' from which a *have* has been deleted (see Figure 3, overleaf).¹³

It is far from clear how notions of syntactic category apply to constituents like *currently the world's largest city* in Fig. 3b. Since this expression does not have a verb as head (indeed, does not have a head at all), it is not clear that it should qualify as a V', or indeed as anything-prime. Even if the notion of V' is stretched so as to include such cases (e.g. by taking V''s to remain V''s even after they have lost their head V''s),¹⁴ it will be necessary to distinguish S's that require a predicate constituent with a V as surface head from S's that are subject to the more modest requirement that can be met by a constituent whose head V has been deleted, extracted, or replaced. I maintain that this distinction is one of morphology more than of syntax. Most S's are subject

¹³ Ishihara offers impressive arguments against one detail of the structures in Fig. 3, namely the NP node over the S node. She has convinced me that the nexus constituent of a '*with absolute*' is less of a NP than is the NP's *V-ing X* constituent of, e.g., *upon Fido's biting his leg*; but I remain unconvinced that the (accusative vs. genitive) morphology is a predictable concomitant of a syntactic category difference, rather than vice versa. The labeling in Fig. 3 does not reflect my conception of NP: I consider it a fuzzy category, whose core consists of items which express lexical arguments and have the internal and external syntax typical of logical arguments (i.e., they consist of DET + N', and occur in NP positions), and whose periphery consists of items sharing some of but not all the characteristics of core NP's.

¹⁴ Such a move is supported by the observation by Akmajian et al. (1979:25–30) that the rule which deletes repeated V''s also deletes a repeated NP, A', or P'—but only if it represents the remains of a V' whose V has been extracted (e.g., by their *Be* Shift transformation):

- (a) Tom must be A GOOD DOCTOR, and Alice must be \emptyset too.
- (b) *Tom became a good doctor, and Alice became \emptyset too.
- (c) *Tom was being A NUISANCE, and Alice was being \emptyset too.

Be Shift, which moves a *be* out of its V', is inhibited if the *be* is preceded by another *be*; thus it does not apply in (c), and *a nuisance* is not left as the remains of a \bar{V} in the way that *a good doctor* is in (a).

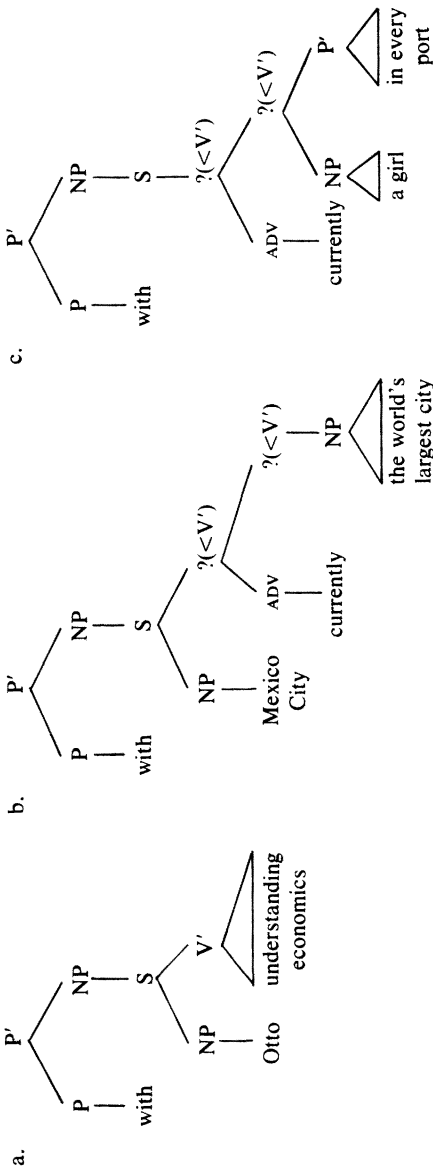


FIGURE 3.

either to the requirement that they bear a surface tense (e.g. independent declarative and interrogative S's, *that* clauses), or the requirement that they bear a complementizer (*to* or *-ing*) which is implicated in verb morphology. Either way, the S is subject to a morphological demand that can be met only if a verb is present: only verbs (in English) have tenses, or a *to* infinitive form, or an *-ing* form. The '*with* absolute' construction, by contrast, is not subject to morphological demands that only a verb can meet; indeed, the only morphological demand on the S of an absolute construction is that it NOT bear a surface tense. This is a demand on its surface form, not on its underlying form—which is in fact tensed, as evidenced by the possibility of an auxiliary *have* that represents an underlying past tense:¹⁵

(34) With Fred having left an hour ago, I wonder who's minding the store?
We find all four combinations of deep and surface, tensed and tenseless, as indicated in Figure 4.

		SURFACE TENSE	
		YES	NO
UNDERLYING TENSE:	YES	John is in jail.	With John in jail, ...
	NO	Jap. <i>Sugu itta hoo ga</i> ii 'It would be best to go immediately.'	John managed TO OPEN THE DOOR.

FIGURE 4.

I know of three other English constructions in which S's are subject to no morphological demands that require a surface verb, namely 'incredulity responses' (35); one of the constructions that have been indiscriminately labeled 'Accusative *-ing* complement' (36);¹⁶ and the complements of *want*—this last case brought to my attention by Geoffrey Nathan (37):

- (35) a. Lawyers (perpetually) subject to attacks from the press? What is the world coming to!
Everybody yelling about taxes (these days)? You can't be serious.
Otto understand economics? That's absurd.
b. Max (still) afraid of flying? That's laughable.
c. Fred in prison (again)? That's shocking.
d. Mexico City (currently) the world's largest city? Are you kidding?
(36) a. Lawyers (perpetually) subjected to attacks from the press is a shocking idea.
Everybody yelling about taxes (these days) is an interesting development.
Otto understanding economics is an absurd idea.

¹⁵ See Hofmann 1966 and McCawley 1971, 1981b for discussion of the correlation between tenses and time adverbs (e.g. that *an hour ago* requires a simple past) and justification of a rule that deletes present tense and replaces past tense by *have* in non-finite positions, i.e. positions that do not allow tensed forms.

¹⁶ Not all types of 'Accusative *ing* complements' allow the verbless forms that appear in 36: *I've just heard about Emil being/*∅ afraid of snakes.*

- b. Max (still) afraid of flying is a laughable thought.
 - c. Fred in prison (again) is a shocking development.
 - d. Mexico City (currently) the world's largest city is something we had never expected.
- (37) a. Do you want lawyers subjected to attacks from the press?
- b. Max doesn't want his children afraid of flying.
 - c. I don't want you in prison again.
 - d. We want this university the most exciting center for onomastic research in the country.

The three constructions exhibit all the forms tabulated in 14—except that the incredulity response, in view of its non-subordinate status, does not take the subordination marker *-ing*.¹⁷ They allow verbless surface forms because of their status as surface tenseless S's without true complementizers that would require the presence of a V.¹⁸

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¹⁷ To a limited extent, the incredulity response allows forms that reflect a deletion of *have*:

(a) A girl in every port? You can't be serious.

Note that almost any constituent that makes up a whole phrase can serve as an incredulity response (*With a chainsaw?*), but incredulity responses consisting of two separate constituents are not generally possible; thus some special device (such as the *have* deletion proposed above) is required in an account of (a). Cf. the following:

(b) A: Alice gave Harry a birthday present.

B: *Harry a birthday present?

Mitchell Marks (p.c.) has pointed out that constructions which otherwise behave very like the 'with absolute' do not allow *have* deletion: **What with a girl in every port, Harry feels pretty contented*.

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