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"C'est" or "Sé" ? On the Cartography of Clefts

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C'EST OR SÉ? ON THE CARTOGRAPHY OF CLEFTS[*]

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INTRODUCTION

Clefts make use of a bi-clausal syntax to express a single proposition. The mono-clausal sentence and its clefted counterpart, although not necessarily interchangeable in all discourse contexts, have the same truth-values (a.o., Lambrecht 1988, Karssenberg and Lahousse 2018). Clefts (minimally) consist of a quasi-argumental pronoun (Reeve 2010[1]), the copula, the focused element and a relative-like clause. The latter contains a *syntactic gap* co-indexed with the focalized element – a *long-distance dependency* is established within cleft sentences (1):

(1)   C'est [mon père]ᵢ qui ___ᵢ est allé à la messe ce matin   French
         *C'*COP my father that is gone at the mass this morning
         'It's my father that attended Mass this morning'

Although any argument or adjunct can be focalised, the focal element of *it*-clefts is predominantly the subject or an adjunct. For Collins (1991), this preference follows from thematic prominence – in ordinary declaratives, subjects and adjuncts are by far the most frequent elements, thus it is unsurprising that they should need *clefting* to become thematically even more prominent. According to the existing literature, clefts constitute a form of *focalisation*. Belletti (2015, and earlier related works) argues that, cross-linguistically, at least two types of focalisation can be realised through clefting: (a) subject clefts *can* express focus of new information or contrastive focus; (b) non-subject clefts can *only* be associated to a contrastive reading.

Within the cartographic enterprise, Belletti (2015, and related works) provides a convincing analysis for the fine structure of *declarative* clefts. Her model makes use of the focal position within the matrix *vP* (in Belletti 2004 terms) and the matrix and embedded *FocusP*s to explain the morpho-syntactic and semantic properties of clefts, as explained in detail in section 2 of this work. Belletti's analysis, despite its perfect applicability to standard French, is challenged by the morpho-syntax of declarative clefts in some *non*-standard oral languages, and appears difficult to extend to interrogative clefts, as shown throughout this work.

This paper presents novel data on the syntax of *clefting* in two Romance languages: Trevigiano (Bonan, 2018), a Venetan dialect, and contemporary oral European French (henceforth, "French"). Following systematic *intra*- and *inter*- linguistic comparisons between

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[1] Reeve (2010) provides cross-linguistic evidence in favour of treating cleft pronouns as non-expletive: (i) their *obligatoriness* in V2 Germanic languages; (ii) the fact that they observe the referentiality restriction on Aux-to-COMP subjects in Italian; (iii) the fact that, just like referential DPs, they block experiencer raising in French. The curious reader will find arguments (i-iii) discussed in detail in Reeve's original works.

declarative (1.1) and *interrogative* clefts in these varieties (1.2), Belletti's (2015) analysis of clefts is presented and discussed (2.1), and minor modifications thereof are suggested to accommodate the previously presented data (2.2).

1. CLEFT SENTENCES IN TREVIGIANO AND NON-STANDARD ORAL FRENCH

In both Trevigiano[2] and French, cleft sentences differ minimally from their non-clefted, informationally unmarked counterparts in that they focalise a verb-selected argument or an adjunct, giving it syntactic prominence over the following comment. In declarative contexts, (at least) two types of *it*-clefts are possible, which will hereafter be referred to as *regular* and *reverse* clefts throughout this work. The respective linear orders are given in (2a) and (2b). The quasi-argument *it* is given between brackets because it is not phonetically realized in all varieties:

(2)   a.   (It) COPULA [$_{focus}$ X] that [$_{TP}$ …t_x]   Regular cleft
      b.   COPULA (it) [$_{focus}$ X] that [$_{TP}$ …t_x]   Reverse cleft

In (2), the English terminology is used simply for of clarity: *it* stands for the quasi-argumental *S* of the copula[3], *that* for any COMP that introduces the relative-like part of the cleft, and *X* for any focalised argument or adjunct, which is extracted from the lower clause (hence the *trace*). Henceforth, the focal part of clefts will be referred to as the *high* clause, and the presupposed part as the *low* clause.

1.1. Clefting in declarative Sentences

The declarative clefts of Trevigiano and French differ in the presence of a phonetically realised quasi-argument, unavailable in Trevigiano, and in the availability of reverse constructions, categorically excluded in French. Other minor instances of micro-variation will be highlighted in 1.1.1-3. In section 2, it will be shown that the differences between these two Romance varieties can actually be narrowed down if we rethink the nature of French *c'est*.

1.1.1.   *Declarative Subject Clefts*

Declarative *S*-clefts can express both focus of new information or contrastive focus. In Trevigiano, similarly to Italian, the quasi-argument is never phonetically realized (3a). However, French obligatorily makes use of the reduced form of *ce* (3b). In both languages, the COMP that introduces the low clause *must* be realized. A summary is given in (4a-b):

(3)   a.   Ze Toni *(ke) ga bevuo tuto el vin   Trevigiano
             COP Antony that has drunk all the wine
             'It's Antony that drank up the wine'
      b.   C'est Antoine *(qui) a bu tout le vin   French
             *C'*COP Antony that has drunk all the wine

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[2] The variety of Trevigiano described here has an incomplete series of declarative proclitics (1PS and 1-2PP pronouns are lacking, along with an overt expletive). The enclitic non-assertive series is richer (1PS is available with auxiliaries and modals, 2PP is systematically realized and the expletive has an overt form, *-o*), yet not complete.

[3] Please notice that here only French *c'est*-clefts are taken into consideration, leaving *il y a*-clefts aside. For further details on the latter, refer to Karssenberg and Lahousse (2018).

(4)   <u>Subject cleft</u> (regular type)
    a.   Trevigiano: Copula [$_{focus}$ S] *ke* t$_S$ V (DO) (IndO)
    b.   French : *C '* copula [$_{focus}$ S] *qu(i)* t$_S$ V (DO) (IndO)

In French, the well-known *que/qui alternation* is at work here (3b and 4b). The fact that *que* surfaces as *qui* has been explained as a consequence of the *S* being extracted from the tensed complement clause and moved across it to a higher functional position (Kayne 1976, Rizzi 1990, Rizzi and Shlonsky 2007). Because of special restrictions on *S*-extraction, from *that*-trace effects (Perlmutter 1968, Chomsky and Lasnik 1997) to more recent Criterial freezing (Rizzi and Shlonsky 2007), the morphology of the *that*-COMP is altered *iff* the *embedded S* is extracted. Thus, the presence of *qui* here signals that the *S* has been moved from the canonical position to the focal region. Predictably, here the use of *que* leads to ungrammaticality (5a); differently, the phonetically reduced form *qu'* is perfectly fine (5b):

(5)   a. * C'est Jean que a bu ton vin   French
              *C'*COP John *que* has drunk your wine
              'It's Jean that drank your wine'
    b.   C'est Jean qu'a bu ton vin
              *C'*COP John *qu'*has drunk your wine

No such alternation is at work in Trevigiano. Please note that, in both languages, long-distance constructions require for the higher and the lower COMPs to be realized (6a-b). In French, the embedding COMP is expectedly *not* subject to the *que/qui alternation*, because it is not crossed-over by the *S*:

(6)   a.   A Maria a pensa *(ke) ze Giani *(ke) ga bevuo tuto el vin   Trevigiano
              The Mary she thinks *ke* COP John *ke* has drunk all the wine
              'Mary thinks it's John that drank up the wine'
    b.   Marie pense *(que) c'est Jean *(qui) a bu tout le vin   French
              Mary thinks *que c'*COP John *qui* has drunk all the wine

In Trevigiano, finite *V*s are always construed with the corresponding *S*-clitic. Thus, a lexical *S* is systematically followed by the corresponding *S*-clitic (7a) (Bonan 2018). Curiously though, this generalization does not hold in clefts, where the *S*-clitic can neither follow the lexical *S* (7b) nor appear in the embedded part of the cleft (7c):

(7)   a.   Toni *(el) ga magnà tuti i pomi   Trevigiano
              Antony he has eaten all the apples
              'Antony ate up the apples'
    b.   Ze Toni (*el) *ke* ga magnà tuti i pomi
              COP Antony he *ke* has eaten all the apples
              'It's Antony that ate up the apples'
    c.   Ze Toni ke (*el) ga magnà tuti i pomi
              COP Antony *ke* he has eaten all the apples

Rizzi (2006) claims that, in unmarked sentences, the *S* position expresses (at least) an *aboutness* property. Since *scope-discourse criteria* are encoded by heads, the *Subject Criterion* must involve a head in *TP* (plausibly *Subj°*) that triggers movement of the subject-*DP* to its *Spec*, thus determining the *aboutness* interpretation at the *Interface*. Differently from French, in Northern Italian dialects this functional head is made morphologically visible as a *subject*

clitic (Poletto 2000, Manzini and Savoia 2005). The absence of a *S*-clitic from the low part of *S* clefts and the impossibility for the focalized *S* to be construed with a clitic is evidence that the former has been moved from its canonical position. This is further confirmed by the fact that, in *S*-clefts, the *S* does not express *aboutness*, which is rather encoded in the low clause. Interestingly, in TV the same behaviour is observed in *S*-relative clauses, as discussed in 2.1. Finally, notice that in Trevigiano also *reverse* clefts are possible (8a-b), but *exclusively* with a contrastive focus reading. The relevant structure is given in (9):

(8)   a.   Toni ze ke ga magnà tuti i pomi (no a Maria)!   Trevigiano
            Antony COP *ke* has eaten all the apples (NEG the Mary)
            'It's Antony that ate up the apples (not Mary!)'
      b.   To fiol ze ke ga assà el cancel verto (no to fia)!
            Your son COP *ke* has left the gate open (NEG your daughter)
            'It's your son that left the gate open (not your daughter!)'

(9)   Subject cleft (reverse type)
            Trevigiano: [$_{focus}$ S] copula *ke* t$_S$ V (DO) (IndO)

        The fact that these structures are not available in French is probably due to the very limited availability of *focus fronting* in this language, even outside of clefts[4].

1.1.2. *Declarative Object Clefts*

Just as *S*-clefts, the declarative *DO*-clefts of Trevigiano and French require for an overt COMP. Regular clefts are possible in both languages (10a-b), whereas reverse clefts are only available in Trevigiano, and only with a contrastive focus interpretation (11a-b). The data are summarized in (12a-c):

(10) a.   Ze Nane *(ke) i[5] gà visto al marcà   Trevigiano
            COP John *ke* they have seen at the market
            'It's John that they saw at the market'
      b.   C'est Jean *(que) nous avons vu au marché   French
            *C'*COP John *que* we have seen at.the market
            'It's John that we saw at the market'

(11) a.   Nane ze *(ke) i gà visto al marcà!   Trevigiano
            John COP *ke* they have seen at.the market
            '(False!) It's John that they saw at the market!'

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[4] As suggested to me by my reviewer, whom I wish to thank.
[5] Let me point out that in non-*S* clefts, realizing a lexical *S* along with the *S*-clitic sounds very degraded (Ia-b):
(I)   a.   ?? Ze Nane ke <u>e tose</u> e gà visto al marcà
            COP John that the girls they$_F$ have seen at.the market
            'It's John that the girls saw at the market'
       b.   ?? Ze el me can ke <u>i tosati</u> i gà moeà
            COP the my dog that the boys they have let.out
            'It's my dog that the boys let out'
This unexpected property suggests that *SubjP* might be ill-realized also in non-*S* clefts. The possibilities are two: either *SpecSubjP* is truncated, which is theoretically undesirable, or the whole *SubjP* is inactivated and *S*-clitics actually realize a head structurally lower than *Subj°*. I leave this question open for further investigation.

b. * Jean c'est que nous avons vu au marché!   French
   John *c'*COP *que* we have seen at.the market
   '(False!) It's John that we saw at the market'

(12) <u>Object cleft (regular)</u>
   a.   Trevigiano: Copula [$_{focus}$ DO] *ke* (*$S_{lexical}$) S-cl V t$_{DO}$ (IndO)
   b.   French: *C '* copula [$_{focus}$ DO] *qu(e)* S V t$_{DO}$ (IndO)

(12) <u>Object cleft (reverse)</u>
   c.   Trevigiano: [$_{focus}$ DO] copula *ke* (*$S_{lexical}$) S-cl V t$_{DO}$ (IndO)

Predictably, in Trevigiano the *S*-clitic can (and indeed *must*) appear in the low clause here - it *does* occupy its canonical position. In French object clefts, the COMP that introduces the low part is *que*, which is predicted because it is not crossed over by *S*-movement. The phonetically reduced version of the COMP, *qu'*, is compulsory when the embedded *S* has a vocalic onset (13a), whereas *qui* is always excluded (13b):

(13) a.   C'est Jean qu'ils ont croisé au théatre   French
   *C'*COP John *qu'*they have met at.the theater
   'It's John that they met at the theater!'
   b. * C'est Jean qui nous avons croisé au théatre
   *C'*COP John *qui* we have met at.the theater
   'It's John that we met at the theater'

1.1.3 *Declarative Indirect Object and Adjunct Clefts*

In French and Trevigiano, focus via clefting of an indirect object or adjunct is possible (14a-b and 15a-b, respectively). Again, the regular construction is available in both languages:

(14) a.   Ze a Toni *(ke) a ghe ga dato tuti i pomi   Trevigiano
   COP to Antony *ke* she DAT has given all the apples
   'It's to Antony that she gave all the apples'
   b.   C'est à Jean *(que) Marie a filé des sous   French
   *C'*COP to John *que* Mary has given some money
   'It's to John that Mary gave some money'

(15) a.   Zé al marcà *(ke) go catà to santoea   Trevigiano
   COP at.the market *ke* have$_{1PS}$ met your godmother
   'It's at the market that I met your godmother'
   b.   C'est au Rex *(qu')ils passent Spiderman   French
   *C'*COP at.the Rex *qu'*they project Spiderman
   'It's at the Rex that Spiderman is on'

Reverse clefts, expressing contrastive focus, are only possible in Trevigiano (16a-b):

(16) a.   Al marcà ze *(ke) go catà to santoea!   Trevigiano
   At the market COP *ke* have$_{1PS}$ met your godmother
   '(False!) It's at the market that I met your godmother!'
   b. * Au marché c'est que j'ai croisé ta marraine!   French
   At.the market *c'*COP *que* I'have met your godmother

The relevant orders are summarized in (17a-c):

(17) <u>Indirect Object / Adjunct cleft</u> (regular)
      a. Trevigiano: Copula [focus IO/Adv] *ke* (*S_lexical) S-cl V (DO) t_IO/Adv
      b. French : *C* ' copula [focus IO/Adv] *qu(e)* S V (DO) t_IO/Adv
(17) <u>Indirect Object / Adjunct cleft</u> (reverse)
      c. Trevigiano: [focus DO] copula *ke* (*S_lexical) S-cl V (DO) t_IO/Adv

      All observations made in 1.1.2 for *DO*-clefts also apply here.

1.1.4 *Intermediate remarks*

In both languages under investigation, in long-distance questions the clefted element is
realized either in the embedded part (18a-b) or undergo total fronting (19a-b):

(18) a. A Maria a pensa [ke <u>ze Nane</u> ke te ga catà al marcà]   Trevigiano
          The Mary she thinks *ke* COP John *ke* you have met at.the market
          'Mary thinks that it's John that you met at the market'
      b. Marie pense [que <u>c'est Jean</u> que tu as croisé au marché]   French
          Mary thinks *que c'*COP John *que* you have met at.the market

(19) a. <u>Ze Nane</u> ke a Maria a pensa [ke te ga catà al marcà]   Trevigiano
          COP John *ke* the Mary she thinks *ke* you have found at.the market
      b. <u>C'est Jean</u> que Marie pense [que tu as croisé au marché]   French
          *C'*COP John *que* Mary thinks *que* you have met at.the market

      The *que/qui alternation* creates interesting patterns in long-distance *S*-clefts (20):

(20) a.   Marie pense <u>que</u> c'est Jean <u>qu(i)</u> a tout bu   Cleft in embedded
            Mary thinks *que c'*COP John *qu(i)* has all drunk
            'Mary thinks it's John that drank everything up'
      b.   C'est Jean <u>que</u> Marie pense <u>qui</u> a tout bu   Cleft in matrix
            *C'*COP John *que* Mary thinks *qui* has all drunk
      c. * C'est Jean qui Marie pense qu'a tout bu   Cleft in matrix
            *C'*COP John *qui* Mary thinks *qu'*has all drunk
      d. * C'est Jean qui Marie pense qui a tout bu   Cleft in matrix
            *C'*COP John *qui* Mary thinks *qui* has all drunk

      Example (20a), where clefting is realized in the embedded part is accepted by all
speakers. (20b), where the focalised *S* is in the matrix, is accepted by most speakers. All
speakers refuse (20c-d), and those who refuse (b) recognise that it is indeed better than (c-d).
(20b) is the only possible structure for long-distance clefts with matrix focus – the fact that it
displays the *que/qui alternation* in the low clause but not in the matrix part suggests that the
focalised *S* has indeed been raised from an embedded position, as in (21):

(21)   **C'est Jean** que [Marie pense t_[c'est Jean] **qui** t_Jean a tout bu]
          ↑_____—_____↑_____—_____|

      That the higher *que* is not subject to the *que/qui alternation* raises the question of how
such sentence is derived – either (i) via complex computations involving movement of

remnants to the matrix (21), or (ii) COP-*foc* does not move to the high *LP* from an embedded position because the COPULA itself selects a long-distance sentence as its complement (22):

(22)   C'est **Jean** que [Marie pense t[Jean] **qui** tJean a tout bu]
            ↑_____↑_____|

The latter option is theoretically more desirable than the former, and follows the direction of extensive literature on *locality* (Rizzi 1990 and further related works, Rizzi and Shlonsky 2007). In fact, the alternation is active only when *S*-extraction is *local* (i.e. when it targets the first *CP*) and fails to apply in case of non-local movement. Let us tentatively suggest that there might be more than just *locality* at play here, and that the *que/qui alternation* is at play *iff* the *S* that crosses over *Fin°* is also the *S* of the clause where it lands.

To summarize, declarative clefts in both varieties require for an overt COMP *ke/qu(e)/qu(i)*, and the major difference between the two seems to lie in the presence of *ce* in French. Trevigiano also has *reverse* clefts, but only in the contrastive focus interpretation, which is excluded in (all varieties of) French. Also, it has been argued that a special property of clefted subjects in Trevigiano, namely the impossibility for them to be followed by the corresponding clitic and the lack of a *S*-clitic from the low part of *S*-clefts, constitutes evidence in favour of an analysis where the focalized *S* is *moved* from its canonical position.

1.2.   Clefting in interrogative Sentences

Clefts are the most unmarked question formation strategy in many Northern Italian dialects (Poletto 1993, Poletto and Vanelli 1993, Benincà and Poletto 2004, a.o.). In Trevigiano, *SClI* is compulsory. In clefts, the COP inverts with the enclitic pronoun *o* – the presence of this dummy pronoun, that has no overt declarative counterpart, is unsurprising in a language whose *interrogative* pronominal series, in line with much literature on Northern Italian dialects (Poletto and Pollock 2000-2015, Munaro et al. 2001), is richer than the *assertive* one. Trevigiano has three types of wh-clefts - *regular* (23a), *reverse* (23b) and *reduced* (23c):

(23) a.   COP-(o) Wh-phrase *k e* V...?   Trevigiano
      b.   Wh-phrase COP-(o)[6] *ke* V…e
      c.   Wh-phrase *k e* V…?[7]

Regular clefts are very productive, whereas not all speakers accept reverse and reduced clefts. For the speakers who *do* accept all wh-clefts, all three are possible with *any* wh-item, also with wh-subjects, which are excluded from "regular" wh-questions. As in other Northern Italian dialects (a.o., Munaro 1999, Poletto 2000) in fact, genuine *S*-questions are degraded in TV in the absence of clefting.

In French, regular (24a-a') and reverse (24b-b') clefts are possible. Despite the availability of *SClI* as a question formation strategy in this language, *ce*-COP is never inverted (25a-b), which constitutes a first argument in favour of treating it as *reanalysed* unit:

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[6] In (23a-c) the interrogative clitic *–o* is between brackets because it is not available for all speakers. Here, it is used in all examples - kindly note// it needs to be noted that the exact same structures minus *-o* are perfectly fine for some speakers.

[7] One of my reviewers correctly pointed out that *doubly-filled COMP* questions are widespead in NIDs and nothing suggests they could actually be reduced biclausal structures. This question is, therefore, left open for further investigation.

(24)   a.   *C'*copula Wh-phrase que/qui…?   French
       b.   Wh-phrase *c'*copula que/qui V…?

(24)   a'.   C'est qui qui a terminé le vin?
             *C'*COP who qui has ended the wine
             'Who is it that drank up the wine?'
       b'.   Qui c'est qui a terminé le vin?
             Who *c'*COP qui has ended the wine

(25)   a. * Copula-*ce* Wh-phrase que/qui…?
       b. *   Wh-phrase copula-*ce* que/qui V…?[8]

The availability of reduced clefts of the (23c) type in French has almost gone unnoticed in the literature, yet it is not questionable (26). It is, however, subject to geographical constraints:

(26)   Qui que t'as vu au marché?   Rural or Canadian French
             Who *que* you'have seen at.the market
             'Who did you see at the market?'

In 1.2.1, an overview of the morpho-syntax of interrogative clefts is provided – the most relevant properties will be summarized and discussed in section 2.

1.2.1. *Interrogative Subject Clefts*

In Trevigiano, as in declarative *S*-clefts, the COMP *ke* must be realized in all three types of wh-*S*-clefts, and the insertion of a *S*-clitic in the low part of the cleft sentence is excluded (27). The relevant orders are given in (28)[9]:

(27)   a.   Ki ze-o *(ke) (*el) gà bevuo tuto el vin?   Trevigiano
             Who COP-o *ke* he has drunk all the wine
             'Who is it that drank up the wine?'
       b.   Ze-o ki *(ke) (*el) gà bevuo tuto el vin
             COP-o who *ke* he has drunk all the wine
       c.   Ki *(ke) (*el) gà bevuo tuto el vin?
             Who *ke* he has drunk all the wine

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[8] For reasons discussed in 2.3, *est-ce que* (IIa-b) is not considered an inverted COP-expl but an INT-marker:
(II)   a.   Qui est-ce qui arrive ?
             Who INT qui arrives
             'Who's arriving?'
       b.   Qui est-ce que tu vois ?
             Who INT que you see
             'Who do you see?'
[9] The [-animate] wh-words of Trevigiano, *kossa* and *ke* ("what"), have different distributions - the former is used in *reverse* (IIIa) and *regular* (IIIb) clefts, the latter in *regular* clefts (IIIc):
(III) a.   Kossa / *ke ze-o *(ke) ga spakà el piter?   Trevigiano
             Kossa / ke COP-o *ke* has broken the vase
             'What is it that broke the vase?'
       c.   Kossa / *ke *(ke) ga spakà el piter?
             Kossa / ke *ke* has broken the vase
       b.   Ze-o ??kossa / ke *(ke) ga spakà el piter?
             COP-o kossa / ke *ke* has broken the vase

(28) Interrogative subject clefts:
      a.   Regular: copula-o Wh-S *ke* (*Scl) V (DO) (IndO)
      b.   Reverse: Wh-S copula-o *ke* (*Scl) V (DO) (IndO)
      c.   Reduced: Wh-S *ke* (*Scl) V (DO) (IndO)

Yes/no *S*-clefts can be regular (29a), or reverse (29b). The latter either express surprise/disappointment or have an echo reading (kindly note that, in such cases, the interrogative syntax is lost altogether – *SCII* is in fact ruled out) (29c):

(29) a.   Ze-o giani ke te gà parlà de sta roba?   Trevigiano
            COP-o John *ke* to.you has spoken of this thing
            'Is it John who told you about this?'
      c.   Giani ze-o ke te gà parlà de sta roba?
            John COP-o *ke* to.you has spoken of this thing
      b.   Giani ze(*-o) ke te gà parlà de sta roba ?!   ECHO
            John COP(*-o) *ke* to.you has spoken of this thing

The higher *ke* of indirect wh-questions can be omitted (30b), whereas the one that introduces indirect y/n-questions is compulsory (31b). In addition, the lower *ke* cannot be left out (30b-31b) – quite clearly, the three COMPs must realize distinct heads (*Force°* vs *Fin°*):

(30) a. * Vorja saver ki ze-o ke ga bevuo tuto el vin   Indirect wh-
            Would$_{1PS}$ know who COP-o *ke* has drunk all the wine
            'I would like to know who is it that drank up the wine'
      b.   Vorja saver ki (ke) ze *(ke) ga bevuo tuto el vin
            Would$_{1PS}$ know who *k e* COP *ke* has drunk all the wine

(31) a. * A Maria pens-ea ke ze Giani ke ga-eo bevuo tuto el vin?   Indirect y/n
            The Mary thinks-she *ke* COP John *ke* has-he drunk all the wine
            'Does Mary think it's John that drank up the wine?'
      b.   A Maria pens-ea *(ke) ze Giani *(ke) gà bevuo tuto el vin?
            The Mary thinks-she *ke* COP John *ke* has drunk all the wine

In French, both regular (32a) and reverse (32b) clefts are available. Predictably, in the interrogative *S*-clefts of French the COMP surfaces either as *qui* or its reduced form, *qu'*[10]. The relevant orders are given in (33):

(32) a.   C'est qui *(qu(i)) a mangé toute la tarte?   French
            *C'*COP who *qui* has eaten all the cake
            'Who is it that ate up the cake?'
      b.   Qui c'est *(qu(i)) a mangé toute la tarte?
            Who *c'*COP *qui* has eaten all the cake

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[10] When the focalised *S* is [-animate], the wh-clitic *qu(e)* is excluded from all clefts. The wh-word *quoi* is used instead, which is only compatible with the *regular* construction (IV):
(IV) a. * Quoi c'est qu(i) a cassé le vase?   French
            Quoi *c'*COP *qu(i)* has broken the vase
            'What is it that broke the vase?'
      b.   C'est **quoi** qu(i) a cassé le vase?

(33)   <u>Interrogative subject clefts</u>   French
  a. Regular: C'copula Wh-S *qu(i)* V (DO) (IndO)
  b. Reverse: Wh-S c'copula *qu(i)* V (DO) (IndO)

Reverse yes/no clefts are possible, whereas regular ones are excluded (34a-b):

(34)   a. C'est Jean qui a bu tout le vin?   French
    C'COP John *qui* has drunk all the wine
    'Is it John that drank up the wine?'
  b. * Jean c'est qui a bu tout le vin?
    John c'COP *qui* has drunk all the wine

   Long distance questions are compatible with regular and reverse structures (35a-b), whereas indirect wh-questions can only be regular (36a-b). Interestingly, in *regular* clefts the (reduced version of the) COMP *que* can be inserted between the wh-word and the *ce*-COP cluster (35a-37a). The distribution of COMPs follows the same patterns seen in (30-31):

(35)   a. Qui (qu') c'est *(que) Marie pense qu(i) a bouffé tes artichauts? Indirect wh-
    Who *qu' c'*COP *que* Mary thinks *qu(i)* has eaten your artichokes
    'Who is it that Mary thinks ate your artichokes?'
  b. C'est qui *(que) Marie pense qu(i) a bouffé tes artichauts?
    *C'*COP who *que* Mary thinks *qui* has eaten your artichokes

(36)   a. Jean se demande qui (qu') c'est qu(i) a bouffé tes artichauts Indirect y/n
    John himself asks who *qu' c'*COP *qui* has eaten your artichokes
    'John wonders who it is that ate your artichokes'
  b. * Jean se demande c'est qui qu(i) a bouffé tes artichauts
    John himself asks *c'*COP who *qu(i)* has eaten your artichokes

1.2.2.   *Interrogative Object Clefts*

In Trevigiano, when a [+animate] *DO* is questioned, all wh-clefts are available (37)[11]:

(37)   a. Ki ze-o *(ke) **l** ga fregà?   Trevigiano
    Who COP-o *ke* he has ripped.off
    'Who is it that he ripped off?'
  b. Ze-o ki *(ke) **l** ga fregà?
    COP-o who *ke* he has ripped.off
  c. Ki *(ke) **l** ga fregà?
    Who ke *he* has ripped.off

---

[11] If the focalized direct object is [-animate], only *kossa* can be used in regular (Va) and reduced (Vb) clefts, whereas *ke* must be used in reverse structures (Vc):
(V)   a. Kossa / *ke ze-o ke te ga magnà?   Trevigiano
    Kossa / ke COP-o *ke* you have eaten
    'What is it that you ate?'
  b. Kossa / *ke ke te ga magnà?
    Kossa / ke *ke* you have eaten
  c. Ze-o ??kossa / ke ke te ga magnà ?
    COP-o kossa / ke *ke* you have eaten

Interestingly, non-*S* wh-clefts are inconsistent with a lexical *S* doubled by a clitic (38a) – there must be a quasi-adjacency between COMP and the *S*-cl in the low part of the cleft. This is also supported by the impossibility of using unreduced pronominal clitics like *el* ("he", realized here as /l/) (37a-c). The only way of successfully inserting a lexical *S* here is by dislocating[12] it (38b). Summaries are given in (39):

(38) a. ?? Ki ze-o ke Toni l̲ ga fregà?   Trevigiano
           Who COP-o *ke* Tony he has ripped.off
           'Who is it that Toni ripped off?'
      b.   Ki ze-o ke l̲ ga fregà, Toni̲?
           COP-o who *ke* he has ripped.off # Toni
           'Toni, who is it that he ripped off?'

(39) Interrogative direct object clefts: Trevigiano
      a.   Regular: Copula-o Wh-DO *ke* (*$S_{lexical}$) Scl V (IndO)
      b.   Reverse: Wh-DO copula-o *ke* (*$S_{lexical}$) Scl V (IndO)
      c.   Reduced: Wh-DO *ke* (*$S_{lexical}$) Scl V (IndO)

When it comes to yes/no *DO*-clefts, only regular structures are real questions (40a). The reverse cleft is only fine in the echo reading, hence the lack of *SClI* (40b):

(40) a.   Ze-o Giani *(ke) te gà ciamà stamatina?   Trevigiano
           COP-o John *ke* him have called this.morning
           'Is it John that you called this morning?'
      b.   Giani ze̲ *(ke) te gà ciamà stamatina?!   ECHO
           John COP *ke* you have called this.morning

In French, as in Trevigiano, both regular and reverse clefts are possible (41a-b). Yes/no clefts are only compatible with regular structures (42a-b)[13]:

(41) a.   Qui c'est que t'as croisé au marché?   French
           Who *c'*COP *que* you'have met at.the market
           'Who is it that you met at the market?'
      b.   C'est qui que t'as croisé au marché?
           *C'*COP who *que* you'have met at.the market

(42) a.   C'est Jean que t'as vu?   French
           *C'*COP John *que* you'have seen
           'Is it John that you saw?'
      b. * Jean c'est que t'as vu?
           Johan *c'*COP *que* you'have seen

---

[12] In the gloss, I naively use the symbol # to signal the presence of a prosodic break.
[13] And so is the [-animate] wh-phrase *quoi* (VIb):
(VI) a.   C'est quoi que tu manges?
           *C'*COP *quoi que* you eat
           'What is it that you are eating?'
      b. * Quoi c'est que tu manges ?
           *Quoi c'*COP *que* you eat

1.2.3. *Interrogative Indirect Object and Adjunct Clefts*

In Trevigiano, with [-animate] *DO*s all clefts are possible[14]. With [+animate] and [-animate] *DO*s, long-distance and indirect questions work exactly as they do when the questioned element is the *S*. The same observations apply to both languages with a wh-*IO* (43-44):

(43) a. A chi ze-o ke te ghe ga regaeà e rose?   Trevigiano
          To whom COP-o *ke* you DAT have given the roses
          'To who is it that you gave the roses?'
     b. A chi ke te ghe ga regaeà e rose?
          To who *ke* you DAT have given the roses
     c. Ze-o a ki ke te ghe ga reaeà e rose?
          COP-o to who *ke* you DAT have given the roses

(44) a. A qui c'est que t'as offert le bouquet?   French
          To who *c'*COP *que* you'have given the bouquet
          'To who is it that you gave the bouquet?'
     b. C'est à qui que t'as offert le bouquet?
          *C'*COP to who *que* you'have given the bouquet

Only *ki* and *kossa* can be construed with a preposition. In French, only *qui* and *quoi*. The [-animate] *IO*s of Trevigiano and French are only compatible, respectively, with the reverse and the regular construction (45a-b):

(45) a. A cossa ze-o ke te ghe ga dato na peada?   Trevigiano
          To what COP-o *ke* you DAT have given a kick
          'What is it that you kicked?'
     b. C'est à quoi que t'as filé un coup de pied?   French
          *C'*COP to what *que* you'have given a kick of foot

As for wh-adverbials, all the structures discussed so far are possible.

Intermediate Remarks

The wh-clefts of Trevigiano display the linear orders in (46). Two wh-landing sites are available, *Wh1* and *Wh2*. The COP-*expletive* cluster is placed right after *Wh1* or right before *Wh2*. *Wh2* is not available to all speakers, and neither is the possibility of using *reduced* clefts. The [-animate] wh-*DO*s have different distribution - *kossa* occupies *Wh1* (and very marginally *Wh2*), whereas *ke* is only grammatical in *Wh2*:

(46) a. <u>Matrix cleft</u>:   Trevigiano
        {Wh1} (COP(-o)) {Wh2} *(ke) (S) S_{CL} (DAT) V (DO) (IO) (Adv*[15])
     b. <u>Long-distance cleft</u>:
        {Wh1} (COP(-o)) {Wh2} *(ke) X thinks that (S) S_{CL} (DAT) V (DO) (IO) (Adv*)
     c. <u>Indirect clefts</u>:
        X wonders {Wh1} (ke) (COP(*-expl)) *(ke) (S) S_{CL} (DAT) V (DO) (IO) (Adv*)

---

[14] The distribution of *kossa* and *ke* is the same as their *S* counterparts.
[15] I use the asterix here to signal that adverbial "adjuncts" can be more than one.

In French, the main peculiarities are firstly the impossibility for *c'est* to undergo *SClI*, which in turn raises questions regarding its very nature as an element, and secondly, the marginality of reduced clefts. The COMPs behaviours in both languages hint to their respective nature. In indirect wh-questions, the *ke/que* COMP that follows the wh-phrase directly is optional, whereas the one that introduces indirect yes/no questions is compulsory. The latter, likely to realize *Force°*, is distinct from the former, which realizes the head of a low left peripheral *WhP* (Bonan, 2018). The main differences between the two projections are their position (high *LP* vs a position lower than all topics), and the (un)availability of their *Spec* as a wh-landing site. A third COMP, the clefting homophonous *ke/que*, can never be omitted; also, it is the only one subject to the *que/qui alternation* – plausibly a *FinP* head.

To conclude, as aforementioned, clefting is *focus*. Wh-questions are *also* focus (Rizzi 1997 and related works), and as such question the status of interrogative wh-clefts. Are they informationally richer than non-clefted wh-questions? How are they derived? These questions will be addressed in the next section.

2. THE FINE STRUCTURE OF CLEFTS

This section overviews Belletti's (2015) cartographic analysis of clefts, and discusses the modifications thereof needed to accommodate the data presented in section 1. This would be preceded by discussing some properties of *S*-extraction in Trevigiano that are relevant under any theoretic frameworks.

2.1. Subject-Extraction in TV

The data on the unacceptability of *S*-clitics in the low part of *S*-clefts (7a-c) clearly support the claim that in *S*-relatives the *S* must be extracted from a *vP*-internal position, rather than from the higher, *criterial* position (Rizzi 1982, Rizzi and Shlonsky 2007). In fact, this pattern is observed not only in the relative-like part of *S*-clefts (47a), but also in *S*-relatives (47b):

(47)   a.   Zé el bocia che (*el) ze drio magnar tuti i biscoti   Trevigiano
           COP the boy that he is PROGR eat all the biscuits
           'It's the boy that's eating up the biscuits'
      b.   El bocia che (*el) ze drio magnar tuti i biscoti el ze to fiol
           The boy that he is PROGR eat all the biscuits he is your son
           'The boy that's eating up the biscuits is your son'

Plausibly, the same pattern, namely direct *S*-extraction out of *vP*, must be at play in both *S*-relatives and *S*-clefts. Also, since in French the reduced COMP *qu'* can be used instead of *qui* (48a-b), there must be a *quasi-adjacency requirement* between COMP and the *V* in *T°*:

(48)   a.   C'est la jeune femme qu'a mangé tous les biscuits   French
           *C'*COP the young lady *qu'*has eaten all the biscuits
           'It's the young lady that ate up the biscuits'
      b.   La jeune femme qu'a mangé tous les biscuits est ma copine
           The young woman *qu'*has eaten all the biscuits is my girlfriend
           'The young lady that ate up the biscuits is my girlfriend'

Following this observation, the *TP* of *S*-relatives and *S*-clefts must be subject to an *inactivation* of its higher portion[16], and the extraction of the *S* must be modelled as in (49):

(49)   [ForceP Force° … [FinP *qui/ke* [SubjP Subj° [TP V … [vP t$_S$ v° [vP tv …]

(with annotations: "adjacent" bracket above SubjP–TP region, and an arrow from below FinP to the lower position)

Either *S*-extraction is done directly from *vP* because *SubjP* is unavailable, or *SubjP* is not activated to circumvent a possible violation in terms of Criterial Freezing (Rizzi 2006, and extensive research) and the *S* is extracted straight from the lower, non-canonical *S* position. Either way, here *SubjP* is clearly not available to host cyclic movement of the *S*.

Let us tentatively suggest that at least the *S*-movement to the high clause of clefts is *case-driven*. In fact, if in *S*-clefts the structure of the COP-selected clausal argument is deficient at both *CP* and *TP* levels, it is unsurprising that NOM Case assignment might fail. To save the structure, the *S* moves to the focal region, where the COP assigns it NOM Case. Let us refer to this phenomenon as *Exceptional Case Assignement* (ECA). That movement of the *S* might be case-driven is further evidenced by clefts whose focalised element is a clause (50):

(50) a.   C'est que [TP j'ai croisé mon ex en sortant de la gare]   French
            *C'*COP *que* I'have met my ex while leaving from the station
            'It's that I met my ex while I was leaving the station…'
      b. * C'est [TP j'ai croisé mon ex en sortant de la gare] que
            *C'*COP I'have met my ex while leaving from the station that

Quite clearly, here the focalised *S* does not move to the high focal region because its clausal nature excludes the need for it to be assigned Case. Note also that the lack of movement does not derive from the "complexity" of the focalised element but just from its clausal nature, since very complex *DP*s can indeed be moved to the high part of the cleft (51):

French

(51) C'est [DP le fait d'avoir croisé mon ex en sortant de la gare] qui m'a rendue triste
      *C'*COP the fact of'have met my ex while leaving of the station qui me'has made sad
      'It's crossing paths with my ex while getting out of the station that made me sad'

The exact same observations can be extended to *interrogative S*-clefts.

2.2. The Cartography of Clefts

Haegeman et al. (2015) argued that *it*-clefts are structurally and semantically similar to focus fronting, to wh-questions, and to relativization. As the authors show, two cartographic models have been proposed for cleft-structures: the "embedded" (Belletti 2009-2015), and the "matrix" analyses (Meinunger 1997, Frascarelli and Ramaglia 2013).

The former derives clefts via *A'-movement* of the focalised element to the low *SpecFocP*. Throughout the derivation, clefts are *bi-clasual* - the COP projects a clausal domain called *TP1*, whereas the cleft relative is an embedded clausal projection called *TP2*, as in (52):

(52)   [TP1 it be [vP ~~be~~ [FocP the CAT [FinP that [TP2 Mary saw ~~the cat~~]]]]

---

[16] In the first version of this paper, the existence of a *truncated IP* in *S*-clefts was posited. Samo, who I wish to thank for the useful comments on a draft of this paper, suggested not mentioning truncation of any kind and rather positing that the COMP is generated inside IP and then raises to *Fin°* - the *S*-clitic is not realized otherwise it would cause intervention when the COMP raises. However, this fails to capture the fact that it is *indeed* possible to have a *S*-clitic in non-subject clefts. Let us rather posit the presence of some kind of *inactivation* of *SubjP*, operated to avoid cyclic movement of the *S* and a violation in terms of Criterial Freezing.

SpecTP1, the canonical *S* position, hosts the dummy *S*. The derivation is made via wh-movement within *TP2*. This account captures both the interpretive similarities of clefts and focus fronting (the focalised element moves to *SpecFocP*), and the parallelism with the derivation of relatives, which would be otherwise lost in matrix analyses.

In the next sections, an overview of Belletti (2009-2015) analysis for clefts (2.2.1) will be followed by a presentation of the arguments in favour of a refinement thereof to account for the morpho-syntax of declarative (2.3.1) and interrogative (2.3.2) clefts in Trevigiano and French.

2.2.1 *Belletti (2015)*

Belletti's analysis (2009) is comprised of two essential aspects. First, the COP of clefts selects a complement Small Clause (*SC*) reduced at least at the level of *ForceP*, very likely right above *FocusP* (2012) (53):

(53)   COP-selected *SC*: [ForceP...[TopP [FocP Foc° [TopP Top° ...[FinP Fin° [TP T°]]]]]]

Second, given that a *predication relation* is established within the *SC* of clefts, the existence of a specialized *Pred* projection in the *LP* of the *SC* is posited (54):

(54)   COPULA [ForceP...[TopP [FocP Foc° [**PredP** **Pred°** ...[FinP *that/che* [TP T°]]]]]]
                  |_____ selects _____↑

Finally, two positions are exploited for the two types of focus. *Focus of New Information* (*S*-clefts) makes use of a *vP*-peripheral *FocusP* - the focalised *S* is interpreted in the same position as the new information *postverbal S* of null-subject languages as Italian (55):

(55)   [TP *Ce* T° [FocP(NI) **Sfoc** [vP COP [CP ... [PredP [S] Pred [FinP C [TP ~~S V~~]]]]]]]
                  ↑_____ |↑_____ |

Contrastive Focus (*S* and non-*S* clefts) uses a *FocusP* in the *LP* of the COP-selected complement (56):

(56)   ...COP [CP ... [Foc(c/c) **Ofoc** ...[PredP [?] Pred [FinP C [TP S V O(/PP)]]]]]]]]
                  ↑_____ |

Crucially, the reason why only *S*-clefts can exploit a *vP*-peripheral *FocusP* follows from *Relativized Minimality* (*RM*, Rizzi 1990, and refinements): in fact, in object clefts, the movement of the *O* out of *TP* into *PredP* would cross over the *S*, giving rise to a violation. This explains why an object cleft cannot function as an answer to a wh-question that requires information.

Given these generalizations, Belletti (2015) argues that, since the *CP* of clefts expresses a predication relation (hence *PredP*), and since the "dummy" *S* of clefts has been proven to be a quasi-argument, this cannot be directly merged in the matric *S* position like real expletives – it rather raises from the *SC*, and more specifically from *SpecPredP*. Thus, in the derivation of a cleft expressing contrastive focus, first the quasi-argument is merged in *SpecPredP*, then the argument to be focalised moves into the specialized *FocusP* and, finally, *ce* moves to the matrix *S* position to satisfy the *Subject Criterion* (Rizzi and Shlonsky, 2007). The last step where *extraposition* is performed to keep *FinP* in a local configuration with the quasi-argument is left out of the discussion here as it does not have an immediate bearing. The derivation is summarized in (57):

(57)   [$_{TP}$ …[$_{FocPni}$ [$_{vP}$ COP [$_{CP}$ … [$_{FocPc/c}$ **O$_{fit}$**[$_{PredP}$ [*ce/it*] Pred° [$_{FinP}$ C [$_{TP}$ S V θ]]]]]]]

If the quasi-argument is merged in *SpecPredP*, in *NI S*-clefts the possibility for the *S* to move directly from the embedded *TP* into the *NI vP*-internal *FocusP* is ruled out by *RM* as the presence of the quasi-argumental *S* would cause intervention. To overcome this problem, Belletti posits a derivation that crucially relies on Kayne and Pollock's (2009) analysis of *ce*, where a *DP* headed by the neutral article *ce*, and containing a silent functional nominal head THING, [*ce* THING], is merged directly in *SpecPredP*. Since THING enters a strictly local relation with *FinP* (through *Pred°*), it is actually identified with it (*ce* THING=*FinP*) – when the *S* moves into *FocusP*, there is no intervention. The derivation is summarized in (58):

(58)   [$_{TP}$ ··[$_{FocPni}$ **S** [$_{vP}$ COP [$_{CP}$ ..[$_{FocPc/c}$ [$_{PredP}$ [*ce* THING=FinP] Pred° [$_{FinP}$ C [$_{TP}$ s̶]]]]]]

Clearly, the analysis of the quasi-argument of the cleft as containing a silent functional *N* is extended by Belletti also to *S* and non-*S* clefts expressing *contrastive* focus.

2.3. Belletti (2015), revisited

The theoretical desire that has animated extensive research in formal linguistics in the last years is for the *left* and the *low* peripheries of the clause to be *structurally identical* across languages. Nonetheless, it does not seem undesirable for different languages to exploit different *left* and *low* peripheral positions to convey similar meanings.

The data discussed in section 1 raise a number of questions, which will be addressed here. First, as discussed at the beginning of section 2, it is crucial to posit that in *S*-clefts the extraction of the *S* is done not via the canonical *S* position, but straight out of the *vP* - it appears capital to posit that the *TP* of the COP-selected clause is deficient. The unavailability of the canonical *S* position is witnessed by the absence of a *S*-clitic from the embedded *TP*, and by the fact that the focalised *S* is *exceptionally* assigned NOM case by the COP via a last-resort strategy, ECA. Crucially, I argued that *S*-movement to the focal region is likely Case-driven, supporting my claim with data on the lack of such movement with clausal focalised elements. Also, the fact that the COP might *always* select a *TP*-deficient complement is partially visible in the non-*S* clefts of Trevigiano, where an adjacency requirement between the COMP *che* that introduces the low part of the cleft and the *S*-cl suggests that a (narrower instance of) inactivation must be at play.

At this stage, it is significant to redefine the status of *c'est*. In fact, it is interesting to consider why *SClI* ought to be banned from clefts in a language where it functions as a productive question-formation strategy, whereas in languages like English and Trevigiano *S(Cl)I* is systematically performed on *it*-COP. Crucially, this property does not derive from the nature of *ce* itself, given that this quasi-argumental pronoun *can* undergo *SClI* in French (59):

(59) a.   Qui *est-ce* qui a vu Jean?   French
             Who is-*ce* qui has seen Jean
             'Who saw Jean?'
      b.   *Serait-ce* possible d'y aller en train ?
             Would-*ce* possible of'there go in train
             'Would it be possible to go there by train?'

This property is not linked to *register* either. In fact, *SClI* is a rather formal question-formation strategy, yet it is not excluded from the oral variety. For this reason, we would rather expect it to remain *optional* in oral French and not altogether ruled out .

It may be tempting to try to argue that the *est-ce que* questions of French are actually clefts with *SClI* on the *ce*-COP. However, this hypothesis seems rather unfounded if one thinks that *est-ce que* also appears in genuine information seeking yes/no questions – which would rather argue in favour of a treatment of *est-ce que* (/ɛsk/) as a pure Q(uestion)-marker. *Est-ce que* might have arisen from clefts with *SClI* at a previous linguistic stage, but it has properties that push for treating it as a re-analysed interrogative cluster in the contemporary spoken variety.

The claim here is that the *c'est* of written French is actually a reanalysed whole, /se/, in the contemporary oral variety. This re-analysed cluster is a fully-fledged COP that realizes the head of a projection whose *Spec* hosts a phonetically null "dummy" pronoun (60):

(60) $[_{CopP}$ Ø$_{expl}$ [**se**]]

Hence the difference between the wh-clefts of French and Trevigiano does not lie in the *absence* of *SClI* in the former, but in the *presence* of an *overt* "dummy" pronoun in the latter.

Finally, the availability of more cleft types in Trevigiano suggests that, cross-linguistically, not all *focal positions* might be activated in the same ways and contexts.

2.3.1 *The fine structure of declarative clefts*

To accommodate the data in section 1, a revision of Belletti's (2015) analysis seems in order. First, if *c'est* is really a crystallized unit /se/, then the pronoun associated with it must be a null *true* expletive, not a quasi-argument. In fact, in oral French it is indeed possible to have null expletives (61a-c) while null quasi-arguments are excluded (62):

(61) a.   (Il) faut que nous appelions mamie   French
           EXPL mus that we call grandma
           'We must call Grandma'
      b.   (Il) vaut mieux que tu l'appelles de suite
           EXPL should better that you he'call of now
           'You had better call him now'
      c.   (Il) manquerait plus que ça…
           EXPL miss que this
           'It's the last thing we want…'

(62)   *(Il) pleut
           'It rains'

The clefts of the oral variety might be undergoing a process of *structural simplification*: the newly-created COP /se/ is associated with a null expletive *S*, which excludes the need to postulate the presence of a null nominal THING identified with *FinP*. In fact, whereas a *S* moved to the Spec of the COP from a *vP*-internal position would be subject to intervention, no intervention is expected to be caused by a *S* merged directly in the *Spec* of the COP. Let us posit a simplified COP-selected truncated LP, where no *PredP* is projected. Then, the possibility for Trevigiano to have *reverse* declarative clefts expressing *contrastive* focus queries the *FocusP* they exploit. Clearly, the relevant *Spec* must be higher than the position targeted by the COP, and hence left peripheral. This projection is bound to lie in the LP of the

COP and take the markedness of this type of cleft to follow from the presence of *further movement* compared to a *regular* cleft expressing contrastive focus.

Let us see how clefts in Trevigiano and French could be derived. Clefts are bi-partite structures, which means that *four* focal positions must be there: two *left* peripheral and two *low* peripheral *FocusP*, as in (66). The presence of a realized *Fin°* in the low clause clearly signals that the *vP*-internal *FocusP* of the low clause is not involved in the derivation, hence only *three* focal positions seem to be available: (**I**) the left peripheral *FocusP* of the COP-selected SC; (**II**) the *vP*-internal *FocusP* of the COP; and (**III**) the left peripheral *FocusP* of the COP (63):

(63) $[_{CP(high)} [_{\underline{FocP}} \textbf{III } Foc° \dots [_{TP} \dots [_{\underline{FocP}} \textbf{II } F o c ° [_{vP} COP [_{CP} \dots [_{\underline{FocP}} \textbf{I} Foc° \dots [_{FinP} \textbf{ C }]]]]$

Positing that (**I**) is the focal position targeted by contrastive focus and (**II**) is the focal position targeted by focus of NI, as in Belletti (2015), allows to derive the linear order of *regular* declarative clefts correctly. The third focal position, (**III**), is made use of also in interrogatives and exploited in the *reverse* declarative clefts of Trevigiano. These clefts, that are informationally richer in comparison with regular contrastive clefts and express a certain degree of annoyance, have a [+EXCL] feature to check in the higher *LP*, which is done by moving the focalised element there (64):

(64) $[_{CP[+EX]} [_{\underline{FocP}} \textbf{Toni } Foc° [_{TP} z e [_{\underline{FocPNI}} F o c ° [_{vP} tv [_{CP} \dots [_{\underline{FocPc/c}} Foc° \dots [_{FinP} \textbf{ ke } \dots]]$

It is theoretically desirable for additional meaning to be paired with a more complex derivation. The unavailability of such structures in French is likely to be bound with inherent properties of this language, a research of which is beyond the scope of this article

2.3.2 *The fine structure of interrogative clefts*

Let us briefly address the computations further needed to derive interrogative clefts, taking for granted that wh-movement is cyclic and that wh-clefts must involve further movement compared to their declarative counterparts. Wh-clefts cannot express focus of *New Information* in Belletti's sense, so wh-words must first be moved to the contrastive *FocusP* (**I**, in the *LP* of the low clause) and then undergo "regular" wh-movement to the matrix *FocusP* (**III**). This captures the fact that both regular and reverse wh-clefts are available in French and Trevigiano, whereas the same is not true in declaratives – this alternation must derive from a property of wh-clefts itself.

In the unmarked case, a focalised wh-word must move from the low left peripheral focalisation site to the matrix *FocusP*, and then the COP moves higher, giving rise to a regular wh-cleft of the *c'est-wh*-type. To derive a reverse wh-cleft of the *wh-c'est*-type, more structure will be needed, hence a further *CP*-domain will be projected (65):

(65) $[_{CP} \text{ wh-phrase } \dots [_{CP(high)} COP t_{wh-} \dots [_{TP} \dots]]]$

Even though this move might seem theoretically unfounded, it is indeed justified by the presence, in related varieties like Canadian French, of structures like (66a-b) (Mathieu 2009), which will henceforth be called *regular doubling* (*RegD*) and *reverse doubling* (*RevD*) clefts:

(66)   a.   <u>C'est</u> où <u>c'est que</u> tu vas?   RevD
            *C'*COP where *c'*COP *qu'* you go
            'Where are you going? '

b.   Où <u>c'est qu'</u> <u>c'est qu'</u> tu vas?   RegD
       Where *c'*COP *qu' c'*COP *qu'* you go

These *tri-clausal* clefts clearly demonstrate that a higher *CP* domain can indeed be projected in wh-clefts. The possibility for Canadian French to have "doubling" clefts might be linked to an ability to pronounce copies. This property merits further scholarly work.

To conclude, the claim that no *PredP* might be projected in the varieties described in this paper is not invalidated by the presence of –o in Trevigiano if one reconsiders Roberts' (2010) claim that interrogative *S*-clitics are base-generated in the *LP*, extending it to non-assertive expletives. If -*o* is the phonetically realized head of the left peripheral projection to which the COP is attracted (or that of an adjacent, directly following one), then no intervention is expected in the derivation, hence excluding the need for *PredP*.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper demonstrated that the declarative and interrogative clefts of Trevigiano, a Venetan dialect, and *contemporary oral French*, have morpho-syntactic peculiarities that set them apart from the *it*-clefts described in Belletti (2015) and Reeve (2000). The crucially innovative claim here is that these derive from a process of structural simplification.

 A systematic comparison between the *it*-clefts of these two Romance languages shed light on lesser-discussed aspects related to the derivation of clefts, namely *S*-extraction, the structure of the *TP* of the COP-selected clause of clefts, but also the very nature of the COP itself and of its dummy *S*. It was argued that Belletti's embedded analysis needs (i) some implementations, and (ii) minor modifications to accommodate the data presented in this paper. In fact, (i) the availability of the matrix *FocusP* in declaratives needs to be posited to derive Trevigiano's reverse structures, which are excluded from French. This same focal position is exploited in the regular interrogative clefts of both varieties, whereas more structure is needed to derive reverse wh-clefts. As for (ii), it was argued that a treatment of the *S* of the COP as a *true* null expletive is desirable for the declarative clefts of both varieties, and as a left-peripheral *overt* head in the case of Trevigiano interrogatives. This follows from the observation that French *c'est* is a reanalysed COP associated to a null *true* expletive, which excludes the presence of a *PredP*.

To conclude, it is worth noting that *c'est* has already been considered to be "partly fossilized" in the literature, because it can only undergo *minimal* variations in tense, mood and (marginally) number (Carter-Thomas 2009). In fact, contrary to English where *it*-clefts are frequently used in the past tense, in French *it*-clefts are systematically employed in the present tense, even when the embedded part of the cleft is [+PAST]. Nonetheless, the singular/plural distinction does not appear to be totally frozen, at least in written French though it is not frequently displayed in the oral variety. Moreover, the range of *relative pronouns* that can be used in French is significantly narrower than it is in English. These observations can be extended to Trevigiano as well, where the use of the past tense is not excluded from the copular part of clefts, even though it is largely less common than in the present tense, and the use of *ke* is over-generalized. Finally, the use of the relative pronoun *que/qui* in French and *che* in Trevigiano is compulsory, which is not always the case with the object pronouns of English (e.g. *that/which*). As a consequence, in the rare cases when the French COP is marked for tense or number agreement, we must be dealing with English-like clefts. Crucially, these are bound to have a different structure compared to those of Romance, as addressed here and in Belletti (2015), resulting in a variety of distinct syntactical properties.

Although this work offers only partial answers to the rich array of questions it raises, it may potentially set the bases for further investigation of clefts in Romance, whose internal structure will hopefully become a privileged subject for future research.

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