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№ 5721

Copular Constructions, Move and Agree

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June 4, 2021

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1 Introduction

In the realms of movement and agreement phenomena, copular constructions have a special significance because of the extraordinary palette of opportunities and restrictions that they evince in both domains. By way of an initial illustration, consider the small constellation of facts in (1)–(5). In (1), we see that an English finite clause with a lexical verb as the head of the predicate allows the predicate to undergo Ā-movement but not A-movement, and permits only the subject to control agreement with the finite verb: even though reading all the papers on Move and Agree must involve a plurality of reading events (after all, the volume of papers on these topics is just too large to make it physically possible to plough through it all in one sitting), the finite verb in (1a) can only bear singular agreement inflection, controlled unequivocally by the subject. But in copular sentences (see (2) and (3), the latter from Dutch), there are circumstances in which the predicate (*the biggest problem* in (2), *moeilijke vragen* 'difficult questions' in (3)) rather than the subject of predication controls agreement with the finite copula. In Dutch, the plural predicate of a copular sentence can agree with the copula when it is *in situ* and the subject is a singular neuter pronoun or demonstrative, as in (3a). In the *wh*-question in (3b), the copula bears plural inflection even though neither term of the copular sentence is morphologically plural: a case of plural *ex nihilo*. In English, the predicate controls agreement with the copula if it undergoes A-movement into the structural subject position, as in (2b), where the raised singular predicate 'defeats' its *in-situ* plural subject in the battle for copular agreement. The fact that A-movement of the predicate to SpecIP is allowed in copular constructions is itself unusual; but the peculiar constraints that such movement imposes on Ā-extraction of the subject of predication (see (2c′, c′′)) add to the challenge presented by movement and agreement in copular constructions.

(1) a. John has read all the papers on Move and Agree
a′. *John have read all the papers on Move and Agree
b. read all the papers on Move and Agree though he has, John remains confused
b′. *read all the papers on Move and Agree has John

(2) a. the agreement facts are our biggest problem
a′. *the agreement facts is our biggest problem
b. our biggest problem is the agreement facts
b′. *our biggest problem are the agreement facts
c. which facts do you think are our biggest problem?
c′. *which facts do you think our biggest problem is?
c′′. what do you think our biggest problem is?

(3) a. dat zijn moeilijke vragen (Dutch)
that are difficult questions
a′. *dat is moeilijke vragen
that is difficult questions
b. wat zijn dat?
what are that

The puzzles surrounding movement and agreement in copular constructions are not confined to clauses: copular predication inside the complex noun phrase exhibits striking restrictions as well. Dutch (4a) shows that despite the occurrence of two tokens of the singular indefinite article *een* 'a', it is possible to have number discord between the predicate (singular *ramp* 'disaster') and its subject (plural *feiten* 'facts'); (4b) shows that Ā-extraction of the subject of predication out of the bracketed noun phrase in (4a) is disallowed. The French facts in (5) are there to show that agreement-related questions in the realm of copular constructions are not confined to number, and that the syntax/semantics interface is sensitive to the resolution of agreement: while gender inflection on the possessive particle in DP-internal predication constructions with a feminine predicate (*vache* 'cow') and a masculine subject (*frère* 'brother') is variably controlled by either of the two constituent nouns, the choice of gender inflection has direct repercussions for the interpretation of the complex noun phrase.

(4) a. [wat een ramp van een feiten] zijn dat! (Dutch)
what a disaster of a facts are that
b. feiten waar dit {voorbeelden/*een ramp} van zijn
facts where this examples/ a disaster of are

(5) a. $\text{mon}_{[\text{Masc}]}$ $\text{vache}_{[\text{Fem}]}$ $\text{de frère}_{[\text{Masc}]}$ (French)
my cow of brother
'my severe brother'
b. $\text{ma}_{[\text{Fem}]}$ $\text{vache}_{[\text{Fem}]}$ $\text{de frère}_{[\text{Masc}]}$
my cow of brother
'my meanie of a brother'

There are many other ways in which copular constructions challenge approaches to the distribution of movement and agreement. Within the confines of this survey, I will attempt to cover the territory as exhaustively as is humanly possible — but truly achieving exhaustive coverage would require reams of text. The upcoming pages should provide the reader with a good sense of the major and subsidiary issues in this complex domain, and to provide pointers for those interested in a more in-depth pursuit of these issues. In order not to clutter the main text with bibliographical references, I have chosen to provide references to important contributions to the issues addressed in the form of footnotes anchored to section titles.

2 The major issues

2.1 Move

In connection with the behaviour of movement in copular sentences, the central issue is the syntax of the familiar word order alternation in specificational and equative copular sentences between 'subject – COP – predicate' and 'predicate – COP – subject'. In binominal noun phrases, similar movement-derived alternations arise, but as we shall see the predicate nominal of a binominal noun phrase can not only end up to the left of its subject via movement but may also be base-generated in its surface position. On the table, then, are the question of whether the word order alternation in copular constructions is a deep alternation (with no movement involved) or a surface alternation (featuring movement of the predicate around its subject), and, for the latter option, whether the movement operation involved is Ā-movement or A-movement.

2.1.1 Copular sentences

2.1.1.1 Copular inversion[1]

Descriptively, in copular sentences it is often (though by no means always) the case that the two terms of the sentence can change places, with the finite copula apparently remaining in the same linear position (i.e., between the two terms in head-initial languages, or following both in head-final languages). For the word order flexibility of the copular sentences in (6)–(8) I will reserve the term 'copular inversion', intended here for use in a descriptive, theory-neutral way, without a commitment to an analysis in terms of movement.

(6) a. the rise of fascism is the biggest problem
b. the biggest problem is the rise of fashism

(6′) a. the rise of fascism is a(nother) big problem
b. a(nother) big problem is the rise of fascism

(7) a. losing in the first primary was particularly embarrassing
b. particularly embarrassing was losing in the first primary

(8) a. the guest room is at the end of the corridor
b. at the end of the corridor is the guest room

Word order alternations of the types seen in (6)–(8) are not information-structurally neutral: as a general rule, the postcopular constituent in the b–sentences is singled out for narrow focus.

A subdomain of the grammar in which copular inversion is especially common is the so-called pseudocleft (or *wh*-cleft) construction — a type of copular sentence in which one of the two terms (the 'superscriptional' term, in the terminology of Higgins 1977) is a *wh*-clause. In pseudoclefts, the *wh*-clause and the constituent which picks a value for the variable in the *wh*-clause (henceforth, the value) can always change places in finite clauses. Because pseudoclefts always place narrow focus on the value, regardless of their surface word order, there is usually no major information-structural effect associated with the word order alternation seen in (9)–(11).

(9) a. the rise of fascism is what is (regarded as) the biggest problem
b. what is (regarded as) the biggest problem is the rise of fascism

(10) a. losing in the first primary was what he considered particularly embarrassing
b. what he considered particularly embarrassing was losing in the first primary

(11) a. the guest room is what you will find at the end of the corridor
b. what you will find at the end of the corridor is the guest room

Alongside the pseudocleft, another construction type that can be recruited by the grammar to place narrow focus on one of the terms of a copular sentence is the (*it*-)cleft. The English cleft shows no word order alternation: the a–sentences in (12)–(14), which have *it* in postcopular position, are unacceptable. One might be inclined to attribute this to the status of the *it* of clefts as an 'expletive', a meaningless filler of the structural subject position (SpecIP). What should give us pause here is that in other Germanic languages (Dutch, German, Scandinavian), clefts do support a word order alternation (see (15)).

1 Heggie (1988) treats the word order alternation in specificational copular sentences in terms of Ā-movement of the predicate. For A-movement analyses and discussion of the copula and Ā-extraction restrictions, see Moro (1997), Hoekstra & Mulder (1990), Den Dikken (2006). On specificational copular sentences, pseudoclefts and equatives, see Higgins (1977), Heycock & Kroch (1999), Mikkelsen (2005, 2011), Den Dikken *et al.* (2000), Den Dikken & O'Neill (2017), Den Dikken (2017), and references there. On *it*-clefts, see Reeve (2012), Den Dikken (2013).

(12) a. *the rise of fascism is *it* that is (regarded as) the biggest problem
b. *it* is the rise of fascism that is (regarded as) the biggest problem
(13) a. *losing in the first primary was *it* that he considered particularly embarrassing
b. *it* was losing in the first primary that he considered particularly embarrassing
(14) a. *the guest room is *it* that you will find at the end of the corridor
b. *it* is the guest room that you will find at the end of the corridor
(15) a. ik denk dat Jan *het* is die het gedaan heeft (Dutch)
I think that Jan it is who it done has
b. ik denk dat *het* Jan is die het gedaan heeft
I think that it Jan is who it done has
both: 'I think that it is Jan who did it'

One logically possible approach to the word order alternation in copular sentences is to take it to be the variable output of the base component of the grammar — in other words, the a– and b–sentences in the above pairs are each base-generated in their own right; neither is derived from the other in the transformational component. This would appear to be particularly plausible for so-called equative copular sentences, in which there is no apparent asymmetry between the two terms: they have equivalent denotata or even serve as alternate names for the same denotatum.

(16) a. my opinion of Montréal is your opinion of Vancouver
b. your opinion of Vancouver is my opinion of Montréal
(17) a. the Morning Star is the Evening Star
b. the Evening Star is the Morning Star
(18) a. Cicero is Tully
b. Tully is Cicero

However, even though there is no semantic asymmetry between the two terms of equative copular sentences, there is an important syntactic restriction on these sentences which they (as pairs) share with the b–sentences in (6)–(14): a ban on serving as the non-finite complement to epistemic verbs such as *consider* in the absence of the copula.

(19) a. I consider the rise of fascism (to be) the biggest problem
b. I consider the biggest problem *(to be) the rise of fascism
(20) a. I consider the rise of fascism (to be) what is (regarded as) the biggest problem
b. I consider what is (regarded as) the biggest problem *(to be) the rise of fascism
(21) I consider *it* *(to be) the rise of fascism that is (regarded as) the biggest problem
(22) a. I consider my opinion of Montréal *(to be) your opinion of Vancouver
b. I consider your opinion of Vancouver *(to be) my opinion of Montréal

The obligatoriness of the copula in the b–sentences in (19) and (20) can be derived from a syntactic account that treats the word order in the b–sentences as the product of a movement operation applied to the predicate of the predication structure underlying both these sentences and their counterparts in the a–examples. The predicate raising analysis of the b–sentences (schematised in (23)) can pin their ill-formedness in the absence of the copula on the absence of the necessary structural space or local domain for the performance of the movement operation in question, or on the need for the trace of the moved predicate to be formally licensed (the Empty Category Principle), or on a combination of these two factors.

(23) $[_{\text{Predicate}}$ *the biggest problem*$]_i$ *(*to be*) $[_{\text{Subject}}$ *the rise of fascism*$]$ t_i

Such an analysis can capture the need for an overt copula in (21) and (22) by treating *it*-clefts and equative constructions in terms of predicate raising. (I return to this at the end of this subsection.) A base-generation analysis of *it*-clefts and equatives sheds no obvious explanatory light on the parallel behaviour of (21) and (22), on the one hand, and the b–sentences in (19) and (20).

The fact that (19b) and (20b) are grammatical provided that *to be* is included not only serves as a recommendation for a movement analysis of the word order alternation in copular sentences like (6) and (9). It also furnishes an argument for an A-movement analysis over its Ā alternative. If Ā-movement were involved in the derivation of (23), one would expect that regardless of whether a copula shows up or not, the output of predicate movement should be ill-formed within the non-finite complement of epistemic verbs, and degraded to a greater or lesser degree in finite clauses that do not serve as complements to bridge verbs — environments in which Ā-movement into the left periphery is either impossible or poor: see (24). Unlike Ā-topicalisation, copular inversion of the type illustrated in (6) and (9) is grammatical in all of the environments in (24), as shown in (25).

(24) a. I think [that he is considered an expert on this topic]
I think [that on this topic, he is considered an expert]
b. I dispute [that he is considered an expert on this topic]
?I dispute [that on this topic, he is considered an expert]
c. I wonder [whether he is considered an expert on this topic]
??I wonder [whether on this topic, he is considered an expert]
d. I would like to know [why he is considered an expert on this topic]
?*I would like to know [why on this topic, he is considered an expert]
e. [if he is considered an expert on this topic], I want to have a meeting with him
*[if on this topic, he is considered an expert], I want to have a meeting with him
f. I consider [him to be an expert on this topic]
*I consider [on this topic, him to be an expert]

(25) a. I think [that the rise of fascism is (what is) the biggest problem]
I think [that (what is) the biggest problem is the rise of fascism]
b. I dispute [that the rise of fascism is (what is) the biggest problem]
I dispute [that (what is) the biggest problem is the rise of fascism]
c. I wonder [whether the rise of fascism is (what is) the biggest problem]
I wonder [whether (what is) the biggest problem is the rise of fascism]
d. I would like to know [why the rise of fascism is (what is) the biggest problem]
I would like to know [why (what is) the biggest problem is the rise of fascism]
e. [if the rise of fascism is (what is) the biggest problem], we should stop it
[if (what is) the biggest problem is the rise of fascism], we should stop it
f. I consider [the rise of fascism to be (what is) the biggest problem]
I consider [(what is) the biggest problem to be the rise of fascism]

Further confirmation for the conclusion that the b–sentences in (6) and (9) are not derived by Ā-movement of the predicate nominal or *wh*-clause into the left periphery comes from the fact that in the formation of the root yes/no-questions corresponding to these sentences, the finite copula inverts with the predicate nominal/*wh*-clause:

(26) a. (what is) the biggest problem is the rise of fascism
b. is (what is) the biggest problem the rise of fascism?

The formation of root yes/no-questions involves movement of I to C, across the occupant of SpecIP. The grammaticality of (26b) thus indicates that the predicate nominal/*wh*-clause in the b–examples in (6) and (9) can find itself in SpecIP, an A-position.

It is important to note that both with regard to embedding in non-bridge contexts and in connection with I-to-C movement in root yes/no-questions, there is an intriguing difference between the cases in (6) and (9), on the one hand, and the examples in (6′), on the other: the inverted version of (25c′) is markedly poorer than its counterpart with *the biggest problem*, and largely on a par with the topicalisation variant of (24c); similarly, (26b′) is much worse than (26b).

(25c′) I wonder whether the rise of fascism is a big problem
??I wonder whether a big problem is the rise of fascism
(26b′) *is a big problem the rise of fascism?

These observations might suggest that Ā-movement is involved in the derivation of (6b′). What militates against this, however, is the fact that both versions of (6′) survive embedding under *consider*, in an infinitival ECM construction with *to be*:

(25f′) I consider [the rise of fascism to be a(nother) big problem]
I consider [a(nother) big problem to be the rise of fascism]

For the b–examples in (7) and (8), all three of the diagnostics for placement of the initial predicate deliver negative responses: finite non-bridge contexts, ECM, and I-to-C movement all fail for these cases. (The reader can easily verify this; I will not illustrate this in order to save space.) For these instances of copular inversion, there is no clear evidence to suggest that A-movement into the structural subject position is involved. It remains rather obscure what the best way to treat (7b) and (8b) might be. But the word order alternations in (6) and (9) are handsomely accounted for by a syntactic analysis that assigns the a– and b–sentences of these pairs the same underlying representation, and derives the linear order of the b–examples by moving the predicate leftward around its subject, into the structural subject position.

An extension of the predicate movement analysis to *it*-clefts is desirable in light of the empirical parallels between them and the b–sentences in (6) and (9). Such an extension is feasible in light of the fact that *it* can serve as a pro-predicate (cf. *Coke is it*).

For equative copular sentences, the fact that *both* members of the alternation exhibit the copula restriction in the same way (see (22)) may fall into place if their syntax starts out from an underlying predication structure and manoeuvres the predicate around the subject, *à la* (23). Both physical noun phrases of equative constructions are themselves fully referential, as is clear from the fact that, if [+HUMAN], each can be modified by a non-restrictive relative clause introduced by *who*: *Dr Jekyll, who is a very amiable person, is Mr Hyde, who is mysterious and violent*. So a certain degree of abstraction from the surface reality is called for in the pursuit of an analysis of equatives that postulates an underlying predication structure for them. A positive side effect of the abstractness of the predicate (e.g., a reduced free relative: [*WHAT Mr Jekyll IS*]$_i$ *is Mr Hyde* t_i) is that it may provide a rationale for fronting of the predicate around its subject, which in turn will deliver an explanation for the fact that a token of the copula is obligatory in (22).

2.1.1.2 Ā-movement restrictions on inverse copular sentences

A uniform predicate raising *qua* A-movement approach to double-DP copular sentences, pseudoclefts and equative constructions may have the further benefit of providing an integrated perspective on the restrictions on Ā-extraction of the postcopular terms of these sentences. The odd man out here is the *it*-cleft, which freely allows Ā-extraction of the postcopular focus: (30).

(27) a. which development do you think is the biggest problem?
b. *which development do you think the biggest problem is?
(28) a. which development do you think is what is (regarded as) the biggest problem?
b. *which development do you think what is (regarded as) the biggest problem is?
(29) a. whose opinion of Montréal do you think is your opinion of Vancouver?
b. *whose opinion of Montréal do you think your opinion of Vancouver is?
(30) which development is *it* that you consider to be the biggest problem?

If *it*-clefts have the same syntactic derivation as the b–sentences in (27)–(29), and if this derivation employs predicate raising (with *it* as the raised predicate), this suggests that predicate raising is not as such an impediment to Ā-extraction of the underlying subject of predication. Accounts of the ungrammaticality of the b–examples in (27)–(29) in terms of some principle of syntax (the ECP, crossover, or locality) face difficulties with (30) if *it* is a raised predicate. If the root of the problem with the b–sentences in (27)–(29) is a ban on movement of the focus around its topic-marked predicate, a treatment of *it*-clefts in terms of predicate raising is not necessarily jeopardised by the contrast between (30), on the one hand, and (27b), (28b) and (29b), on the other: the *it* of *it*-clefts is merely a pro-predicate for the focus; the notional predicate (in the relative clause) *follows* the extraction site of the focus in *it*-clefts.

2.1.2 Complex noun phrases[2]

Predication is not uniquely the province of clausal constructs: predication relations can be established in structural domains that are not themselves (fully) clausal, in the sense that they lack a representation of tense. We find predication in 'small clauses' embedded under epistemic verbs (see the versions of (19a) and (20a) not including *to be*), or in *with*-absolutes (*with John sick, the team will lose the match*). And we also find predication inside the noun phrase, in a variety of forms. The b–examples in (31)–(33) illustrate some of these forms; the a–examples provide copular clausal paraphrases for the complex noun phrases.

(31) a. the book is John's
b. John's book
(32) a. that man is an idiot
b. that idiot of a man
(33) a. ce type est drôle (French)
this guy is funny
b. ce drôle de type
this funny of guy

2 On qualitative binominal noun phrases of various sorts, see Milner (1978), Hulk & Tellier (2000), Doetjes & Rooryck (2001) for French, Napoli (1989) for Italian, Español-Echevarría (1998) and Casillas Martínez (2001) for Spanish, Bennis, Corver & Den Dikken (1997), Leu (2008) for Germanic, Den Dikken & Lipták (1997) for Hungarian. See Den Dikken (2006:Ch. 5) for an integrated discussion and arguments for treating these binominal noun phrases as predication constructions, and analysing (the equivalents of) *of* as copular elements within DP.

The b–examples in (31)–(33) feature the notional predicate to the left of their subject, separated from it by something which has no (stable) meaning associated to it. For *of* in (32b) and *de* in (33b) it is immediately apparent that they make no contribution to the meanings of the noun phrases that contain them; for *'s* in (31b) one might be inclined to think that it contributes the semantics of possession, but such a perspective is compromised by the fact that *'s* also shows up in noun phrases that are not semantically possessive (*yesterday's newspaper*, *the city's destruction*, etc.). A generalisation over the linking elements found in (31b), (32b) and (33b) that ascribes them a stable meaning would be very difficult to arrive at. By contrast, an integrated approach to these morphemes as semantically meaningless but syntactically significant copular elements is both feasible and attractive.

The attractiveness of such an approach lies primarily in the opportunity that it affords us to relate the word orders of the b–examples in (31)–(33) both to those of the a–sentences there and to those of the b–sentences in (6)–(8) in the previous section. An integrated approach to all of these cases has the non-trivial benefit of being in a position to generalise that whenever the predicate inverts around its subject via predicate raising/inversion, a linking element is required in the syntax in order to facilitate the inversion. Minimal pairs of the type in (34) and (35) (the latter from Dutch) illustrate that when the predicative noun phrase follows its subject, an element found in both clausal and nominal predication constructions shows up between the two (*like*, *als*; cf. *he is like his father*, *ik beschouw hem als een vriend* 'I regard him as a friend'), but when the predicate precedes the subject, the presence of a linking element specific to nominal constructs (*of*, *van*) is mandated.

(34) a. a problem like hell
b. a hell of a problem

(35) a. handen als kolenschoppen (Dutch)
hands as coal shovels
b. kolenschoppen van handen
coal shovels of hands

The obligatoriness of the linking element in the b–examples in (31)–(35) is, from this point of view, no different from the obligatoriness of *to be* in the relevant versions of (19)–(22).

From the discussion in section 2.1.1.1, it emerged that predicate raising in copular clauses is a case of A-movement, not Ā-movement. For the noun phrases in (31)–(33), too, it can be argued that Ā-movement is not involved in them. Indeed, the task of determining whether A- or Ā-movement is at work in the derivation of the b–examples in (31)–(33) is easier than it is in the clausal examples discussed previously, because of the paucity of Ā-positions inside the noun phrase. The case for focus movement or topicalisation within the confines of the complex noun phrase is tenuous, especially from a conceptual point of view: for focus–presupposition and topic–comment structures, the things that topics and foci are related to (the utterance in the case of topics, the proposition in the case of foci) cannot be expressed by a nominal, which is neither an utterance (it lacks illocutionary force) nor a proposition (it lacks a truth value). As far as *wh*-movement is concerned, though SpecDP can harbour *wh*-possessors (as in *whose book*) or *wh*-quantifiers (as in *how many books*), almost every attempt to perform terminal movement of some *wh*-constituent originating in the complement of N into the specifier position of DP fails, even in pied-piping contexts: **who(se) book about did you read?* is bad regardless of whether the 'Saxon genitival marker' is employed or not. (The only exception that I am aware of is the case of *wat voor*/*was für*-DPs in Dutch/German (see (56)), for which it has been argued that *wat*/*was*

can undergo terminal Ā-movement to SpecDP.) Intermediate movement to SpecDP, on the way towards a terminal landing-site outside the DP, is commonly assumed to be possible; but for cases of intermediate movement, no [+WH] feature on D is postulated — put succinctly, intermediate movement to SpecDP is not *wh*-movement; *wh*-movement to SpecDP does not exist. Since SpecDP is the only genuine candidate for an Ā-position inside the complex DP, and since SpecDP can be occupied by just a single constituent at a time, all we need to do to verify whether or not Ā-movement to SpecDP is involved in examples of the type in (31)–(33) is to check whether the movement in question is compatible with material for which it is customary to assume that it occupies SpecDP — [+WH] elements, in particular. It turns out that it is:

(36) a. how many of John's books have you read?
b. the woman whose idiot of a husband keeps forgetting her birthday is getting a divorce
c. combien de drôles de types as-tu rencontré? (French)
how.many of funny of types have-you met

With the specifier position of the complex DP occupied in all of (36a–c), it is clear that *John*, *idiot* and *drôles* are not in this position. If the syntax of constructions of the type in (31b), (32b) and (33b) is to involve predicate raising, this must be a case of A-movement. The obligatoriness of *of*/*de* fits in with this, against the background of the copula restriction at work in cases of predicate raising at the level of the clause (recall the discussion of (19)–(23), above). The grammaticality of (36b) and (36c) invalidates a treatment of *of* and *de* as a D-filler.

A word order pattern that looks superficially similar to the ones seen in (32b) and (33b) is found in Hungarian. But (37a) differs noticeably from (32b) and (33b) in not featuring a linking element corresponding to *of* or *de* in between the two terms. This may suggest that no predicate inversion (A-movement of the predicate around its subject) is involved in the derivation of (37a): instead, the Hungarian construction might be a case of Ā-movement of the predicate, to SpecDP. That there is some credibility to this is indicated by the fact (37b) is ungrammatical: for Hungarian demonstratives surfacing in pre-determiner position, the consensus view in the literature is that they occupy SpecDP; if so, *and* if the fronting of *hülye* 'crazy' in (37a) is a case of Ā-movement to SpecDP, the ungrammaticality of (37b) falls into place.

(37) a. (egy) hülye egy férfi (Hungarian)
a crazy a man
'an idiot of a man'
b. *ez a hülye egy férfi
this the crazy a man
intended: 'this idiot of a man'

If Hungarian (37) has a derivation employing Ā-movement of the predicate, this subtracts nothing from any conclusions drawn for the English and French examples presented above. Indeed, the fact that there appears to be a correlation between two differences that set (37) apart from (32b) and (33b) (viz., presence or absence of a linking element *and* (in)compatibility with occupants of SpecDP) seems to confirm the significance of mobilising the A/Ā-distinction in connection with DP-internal movement of predicates. Some instances of predicate fronting inside the complex noun phrase involve A-movement (predicate inversion), others may be instances of Ā-movement.

Regardless of whether the predicate fronts to a DP-internal A-position (the equivalent of the structural subject position in the clause) or to SpecDP, it is never possible to Ā-extract the subject of predication from the complex DP, whether on its own or together with the linking element:

(38) a. *books about linguistics, which I've read [John's *t*], are usually very difficult to read
b. *she hates men, which he in particular is [an idiot of (a) *t*]
*she hates men, of which he in particular is [an idiot *t*]
c. *elle déteste des types dont il est [un drôle *t*] (French)
she loathes INDEF.PL guys of.which he is a funny
d. *utálja a férfiakat, aki/ami ő biztosan [(egy) hülye egy *t*] (Hungarian)
hates the men who/which he certainly a crazy a
*'(s)he hates men, who/which he certainly is an idiot of (a)'

Ellipsis of the string to the right the Saxon genitive in (31b) and *one*-pronominalisation of the string to the right of *of* (including the indefinite article) in (32b) ARE possible: (39). So the ill-formedness of (38a) and the version of (38b) without *a* to the right of *of* is not caused by non-constituency: *book* in (31b) and *a man* in (32b) are constituents, but they are not eligible for Ā-extraction across their raised predicates. We saw this restriction at work in (27)–(29) as well.

(39) a. I like Mary's book, but I really hate John's *ec*
b. to keep the team consistently victorious, it takes a real genius of a coach, and to lose so consistently, it takes a real dunce of *one*

2.2 Agree

Moving on from Move to Agree, we have to face the key issue of whether agreement is a function of (downward) Agree or (upward) Spec–Head agreement. In the context of agreement with the subject, the contrast between downward Agree and Spec–Head agreement factors into the question of where the copula is base generated. Relevant in this connection as well is the distribution of agreement with only a subpart of the subject (so-called 'agreement attraction'). In connection with agreement phenomena in copular constructions, we also need to address agreement with the predicate (both in canonical copular sentences and in inverse ones), and apparent cases of copular agreement *ex nihilo* (recall Dutch (3b), above). For DP-internal predication, the discussion of agreement prompts an investigation of what have been called 'spurious' articles and their number and gender properties.

2.2.1 Canonical copular sentences[3]

The subject of a canonical copular predication construction usually agrees with the finite copula, regardless of the nature of the predicate:

(40) a. the key to the cabinets is missing/rusty/in the drawer/the janitor's responsibility
b. the keys to the cabinet are missing/rusty/in the drawer/the janitor's responsibility

3 For discussion of the base position of the copula, see esp. Williams (1980), Stowell (1983), Hoekstra & Mulder (1990), Moro (1997), and Den Dikken (2006). On upward *vs* downward Agree, see Bjorkman & Zeijlstra (2014, 2019), Preminger (2013), Bárány & Van der Wal (2021).

The answer to the question of how the agreement relationship between the subject and the finite copula is established depends on where the copula is assumed to be base-generated in the structure of the sentences in (40).

Assuming that the copula is the spell-out of the functional head that mediates the predication relation between the two terms of the sentences in (40) leaves us with two logical possibilities for the representation of (40):

(41) a. $[_{IP}\ [_{DP}$ Subject$]\ [_{I'}$ I=COP $[_{XP}$ Predicate$]]]$
b. $[_{IP}\ [_{DP}$ Subject$]_i\ [_{I'}$ I+X=COP$_j\ [_{XP}\ t_i\ [_{X'}$ X=$t_j\ [_{XP}$ Predicate$]]]]]$

In (41a), the finite copula is merged directly under I, and I serves as the mediator of the predication relation between DP and XP. In (41b), the finite copula ends up under I as well: for English sentences with a finite copula, there is, after all, no doubt that the form of the copula is spelled out in I. But in (41b) it is assumed that the copula originates in a lower head, X, and that X moves to I in the course of the derivation. The derivation in (41a) is essentially a 'wysiwyg' ('what you see is what you get') representation of the examples in (40). But it is undeniably the case that the copula is not always born in I: non-finite forms of the copula (as in *the key seems to be missing*, *the key has been missing* or *they reported the key as being missing*) occupy a position lower than I. One could regard it as a benefit of the analysis in (41b) that it allows for a unified perspective on all forms of the copula, whether finite or non-finite. The two syntaxes in (41) are both serious candidates for the analysis of the sentences in (40). They have directly opposite consequences for the syntactic treatment of the agreement relation between the subject and the finite copula.

In (41b), the subject of the finite copular sentence originates in a position in the c-command domain of the head I, which is endowed with a φ-feature bundle that is valued by that of the subject. Valuation of I's φ-features can thus be assumed to take place under Agree, in the same way in which I values its φ-features against the subject whenever the clause is not copular. In (41a), by contrast, the subject is base-generated in a position outside the (strict) c-command domain of I. The head I can still establish a feature-valuation relationship with the subject; but the vehicle to be exploited to this end cannot be Agree if it is assumed that Agree relations are 'downward looking' relations, established under strict c-command. An 'upward looking' agreement relation between the head I and its specifier is called for in (41a) in order to capture the φ-feature matching between I and the subject. Such 'upward looking' agreement is usually referred to as Spec–Head agreement.

2.2.1.1 Long-distance agreement[4]

There can be little doubt that downward Agree exists. It is probably indispensable in the account of a 'special' agreement phenomenon known as long-distance agreement (LDA). The Tsez example in (42b) illustrates LDA:

(42) a. eni-r [už-ā magalu b-āc'-ru-łi] r-iyxo (Tsez)
mother-DAT boy-ERG bread.III.ABS III-eat-PTC-NOMINAL.**IV** **IV**-knows
'the mother knows that they boy ate the bread'
b. eni-r [už-ā magalu b-āc'-ru-łi] b-iyxo
mother-DAT boy-ERG bread.**III**.ABS III-eat-PTC-NOMINAL.IV **III**-knows

4 On long-distance agreement phenomena in several languages, see Butt (1995), Polinsky & Potsdam (2001), Bruening (2001), Branigan & McKenzie (2002), Bobaljik & Wurmbrand (2005), Bhatt (2005), Frank (2006).

A popular analysis of long-distance agreement is that it involves the estabishment of a direct Agree relation between the matrix inflected verb and the DP in the subordinate clause (which must Ā-front to the periphery of that clause). An alternative is that the matrix verb agrees with the entire clause that contains the DP whose φ-features match the verb's, thanks to the fact that this DP agrees with the embedded verb for the relevant φ-features and the agreeing verb's φ-features are visible on the containing clause via percolation. Either way, the agreement relation between the matrix verb and its 'mate' (whether it be the DP itself or the clause containing it) is a case of downward Agree.

But downward Agree likely cannot be the only vehicle for the establishment of φ-feature agreement relationships in syntax. This is perhaps particularly clear from the fact that certain cases of 'special' agreement do not materialise under downward Agree, and require the container of the valued φ-features to be in a Spec–Head configuration with the verb that bears the corresponding initially unvalued φ-feature bundle. In English, two such 'special' agreement cases present themselves: 'agreement attraction' and agreement with *committee*-type noun phrases.

2.2.1.2 Agreement attraction[5]

In the examples in (40), the finite copula agrees in φ-features with the entire subject: singular in (40a), plural in (40b). But in sentences of the type in (40a), it is not unusual to find the copula agreeing instead with the plural noun phrase contained within the complex subject (*the cabinets*), as in (43a). (Hereinafter, the exclamation mark signals the marked nature of the selection of *are*.) Agreement relations that pick 'the wrong target' have been given the title 'agreement attraction': the agreeing verb is 'attracted' to the φ-features of a noun phrase that is not actually its subject (but only a subpart thereof). Attraction effects are especially well documented for copular sentences: indeed, virtually all examples of attraction in the literature involve a form of the copula (where by 'copula' I generalise over all forms of *be*, including those which in traditional grammars are characterised as 'auxiliaries of the progressive/passive'). A sample is given in (43).

(43) a. the key to the cabinets {is/!are} missing/rusty/in the drawer/the janitor's responsibility
b. a set of assumptions {is/!are} placed in the memory of the deductive device
c. the identity of these people {is/!are} to remain a secret
d. the path to the monuments {is/!are} littered with bottles
e. the new executive who oversaw the middle managers {was/!were} dishonest about the company's profits

In the examples in (43), the container of the 'attractor' is in the structural subject position. Importantly, agreement attraction does not occur when this container is further downstream. In (44), the structural subject position is occupied by the 'expletive' *there* or a fronted locative predicate ('locative inversion'), causing the notional subject of these sentences to remain in a lower position in the tree. The contrast between (43a) and (44) shows that agreement attraction is possible when the container of the 'attractor' is in SpecIP but not if it stays within the c-command domain of the agreeing copula. Downward Agree is thus not conducive to attraction; the container of the 'attractor' must be in a Spec–Head relation with the agreeing verb.

(44) a. there {is/*are} a key to the cabinets missing/in the drawer
b. in the drawer {is/*are} the key to the cabinets

5 On 'agreement attraction' in copular sentences, see Jespersen (1924), Bock & Miller (1991), Franck *et al.* (2006), Dillon *et al.* (2017), Den Dikken (2019), and references cited there.

2.2.1.3 *Committee*-type noun phrases[6]

The difference between downward Agree and the Spec–Head relation is also in evidence in the case of agreement with morphologically singular group-denoting noun phrases headed by nouns such as *committee*, *team*, *group*. In some varieties of English, these can co-occur with a plural form of the finite verb when in the structural subject position, as in (45), but not in (46).

(45) the committee {is/%are} in the room/having a meeting
(46) a. there {is/*are} a committee in the room/having a meeting
b. in the room {is/*are} the committee

Again, 'special' agreement is possible under the Spec–Head relation, not under downward Agree.

It is plausible to structurally represent plural-agreeing group-denoting noun phrases as being headed by a null plural pronoun, pro_{PL} (cf. [*they the committee*]). On such an approach to plural-agreeing *committee*-type noun phrases, a generalisation covering both (46) and (44) may be possible: in both cases, the agreement target for the finite verb is a subpart of a complex noun phrase (the plural common noun phrase in number 'attraction' cases, and the silent plural pronoun in *committee*-type plural agreement).

2.2.1.4 Person agreement[7]

If the descriptive generalisation (in light of (44) and (46)) is that downward Agree cannot establish a φ-feature valuation relationship between a finite verb and a subpart of a complex noun phrase, a further extension of the analysis may be possible to account for the fact (in evidence well beyond the confines of English 'special' agreement) that *person* agreement is much less flexible than *number* agreement. In the cases of 'special' agreement reviewed above, the active φ-feature was the number feature. LDA and agreement attraction, while possible for number, are impossible for person:

(47) a. [ę-sau kẹ-dẹi] e-tum ę-tawa (Lokąą)
7-fish GER/5-buy 7SG-be.very 7SG-be.difficult
'buying fish is very difficult'
b. *[min ke-funna] n-tum n-tawa
1SG GER/5-surprise 1SG-be.very 1SG-be.difficult
'surprising me is very difficult'
(48) a. the identity of these people {is/!are} to remain a secret (= (43c))
b. the identity of me {is/*am} to remain a secret
c. the identity of you {is/*are} to remain a secret

A generalisation over all of (43)–(48) may be possible if [PERSON] is structurally represented as a subpart of DP that is not directly visible on the containing DP.

The question of why Agree is not conducive to agreement attraction is a complex one. Space does not give me the opportunity to do this matter any justice here. At the risk of over-simplifying in this survey, I will provide a blanket cover for (43)–(48) by saying, as I did at the outset of this discussion of 'special' agreement, that Agree is more limited than the Spec–Head configuration in the kinds of φ-feature matching relations it can help establish.

6 On agreement with *committee*-type noun phrases, see Den Dikken (2001) and references there.

7 On person agreement and its special locality needs, see Baker (2011), Den Dikken (2019).

2.2.1.5 Agreement with the predicate nominal[8]

Canonical copular sentences with a plural predicate nominal and a neuter singular pronominal or demonstrative subject can give rise to copular agreement with the predicate nominal. The fact that *kooplieden* 'merchants' in (49a) can be modified by a non-restrictive relative introduced by *wat* 'which' shows that the plural noun phrase is the predicate of the copular sentence. The grammaticality of (49c) confirms that the plural noun phrase is a predicate nominal, not the subject of an inverted predication structure. The word order in the first disjunct of (49b) makes it clear that singular *dat*/*dit*/*het* 'that/this/it' here is the occupant of the structural subject position.

(49) a. dat/dit/het zijn kooplieden, wat wij ook zijn (Dutch)
that/this/it are merchants what we also are
'those/these/they are merchants, which we are, too'

b. zijn dat kooplieden of zijn kooplieden dat?
are that merchants or are merchants that
'are they merchants, or are merchants (like) that?'

c. men ziet dat/dit/het als struikelblokken voor een vreedzame oplossing
one sees that/this/it as stumbling.blocks for a peaceful solution
'people view those/these/them as stumbling blocks for a peaceful solution'

One might try to evade the conclusion that in (49) the copula agrees in number with the predicate nominal by setting up a more abstract representation for the apparently simple pronominal subject — one that provides a source for plural agreement between the subject and the finite verb, for instance by assimilating the subject of (49) to what we see in (50):

(50) dat/dit soort/type mensen zijn kooplieden (Dutch)
that/this sort/type people are merchants
'that/this sort/type of people are merchants'

But (50) is not semantically equivalent to (49), which is not about some sort or type of people but about concrete individuals. And at any rate, assimilating (49) to (50) will not carry over to the version of (49) that features *het* 'the$_{NEUT}$/it' rather than a demonstrative: *het soort mensen zijn kooplieden* 'the sort of people are merchants' is incomplete; a relative clause would have to be added to make it work, but in (49) no relative clause is needed when *het* is chosen.

Number agreement between the finite verb and the predicate nominal, as in (49a), is possible only if the finite verb is a copula or semi-copula. This is perhaps particularly clear from a comparison of (51a) and its non-copular paraphrase in (51b). We are looking here, therefore, at an agreement pattern specific to copular constructions: when the subject of predication is a deictic pronoun that, despite making reference to a plurality of individuals, is not morphologically plural, the predicate nominal takes over in controlling agreement with the finite copula.

(51) a. wat deze acteurs betreft, in deze film zijn {ze/het} helden (Dutch)
what these actors concerns in this movie are they/it heroes
'as regards these actors, in this movie they are heroes'

b. wat deze acteurs betreft, in deze film spelen {ze/*het} helden
what these actors concerns in this movie play they/it heroes
'as regards these actors, in this movie they are playing heroes'

8 For discussion of '*kooplieden* sentences' and references, see Broekhuis & Den Dikken (2012:§8.2.3).

A theory of agreement relations which countenances the existence of two formal mechanisms by which these relations can in principle be established, viz., (downward) Agree and the Spec–Head configuration, can make sense of the fact that in (49) the copula agrees with the predicate nominal, as follows. Typically, when the predicate nominal is plural, it shows number concord with the subject (*they are merchants*, not **he is merchants* or **they are merchant*). In (49), such concord (for whatever reason) does not come into effect: the pronoun in subject position is singular. Dutch is one of many languages in which the only number distinction made is between singular and plural — and like most of these languages, Dutch singles out the plural as the marked form. Let us translate this into the hypothesis that in languages such as Dutch, number is a privative feature, marked for plurals but absent from the morphological feature bundle of singulars. With the subject lacking a number feature for the copula to agree with in the examples in (49), the copula could in principle settle for default singular inflection — but in (49) there happens to be a noun phrase in the immediate local domain of the copula with which it can establish an agreement relation for the feature [PLURAL]: the copula is the relator of the predication relation between the predicate and the subject; the two noun phrases are both immediate dependents of the copula, which makes it possible for the copula to Agree with the predicate nominal whenever this noun phrase is marked for [PLURAL] and the subject is not. The reason why such plural agreement with the predicate nominal is not possible in (51b) now follows: here, the mediator of the subject and the predicate nominal is not the inflected verb (which is introduced outside the predication structure). The only DP that is local to the inflected verb in (51b) is the subject of the predication structure; the inflected verb cannot Agree with the predicate nominal because there is a phase head (F) in between the two. The structures in (52) sum this up.

(52) a. $[_{IP}\ [_{DP}$ Subject$]\ [_{I'}$ I=COP $[_{XP}$ Predicate$]]]$
b. $[_{VP}$ V=*spelen* 'play' $[_{FP}\ [_{DP}$ Subject$]\ [_{F'}$ F $[_{XP}$ Predicate$]]]]$

2.2.1.6 Plural agreement *ex nihilo*?

In the Dutch root questions in (53), we find a plural-inflected copula surrounded by a 'bare' *wh*-word to its left and a demonstrative or the neuter singular pronoun *het* 'it' to its right. In the subordinate questions in (54), we see the same material, this time with the [–WH] pronoun to the left of the copula (due to non-application of the Verb Second rule). While Dutch *wie* 'who' (unlike English *who*) is capable of controlling plural agreement in non-copular questions, neuter *wat* 'what' normally cannot do this: (55). The plural potential of *wat* is confined to copular sentences, manifesting itself only when *wat* is one of the terms of the copular sentence.

(53) a. wie zijn dat/dit/het? 'who are they?' (Dutch)
who are that/this/it
b. wat zijn dat/dit/het? 'what are they?'
what are that/this/it

(54) a. wie dat/dit/het zijn is onbekend 'who they are is unknown'
who that/this/it are is unknown
b. wat dat/dit/het zijn is onbekend 'what they are is unknown'
what that/this/it are is unknown

(55) a. wie heeft/hebben hem beïnvloed? 'who influenced him?'
who has/have him influenced
b. wat heeft/*hebben hem beïnvloed? 'what influenced him?'
what has/have him influenced

This may be understood against the background of the *wat voor* construction (56). The *wat voor* expression can contain either a singular noun or a plural one, and depending on the number specification of that noun, the *wat voor* expression controls either singular or plural agreement with the finite verb. The *wh*-pronoun *wat* is invariant, and the expressions in (56) do not contain an overt noun like English singular *kind* or plural *kinds* that could be treated as the syntactic head of the construction and thereby held responsible for outward number agreement.

(56) a. wat voor ding is dat? — wat is dat voor ding? (Dutch)
what for thing is that — what is that for thing
'what kind of thing is that?'

b. wat voor dingen zijn dat? — wat zijn dat voor dingen?
what for things are that — what are that for things
'what kinds of things are those?'

Setting up a silent counterpart to English *kind(s)* in the syntactic representation of the *wat voor* construction may be helpful in accounting for the number agreement facts in (56). (See section 2.2.2 and references given there.) If we postulate an abstract plural noun in the syntax of *wat*-phrases more generally, this abstract plural noun can be held responsible for the plural inflection of the copula in (53b) and (54b).

(57) [*wat* N_{PL}]

The distribution of (57) must be curtailed in such a way that 'bare' *wat* can bring about plural agreement in copular sentences of the type in (53b) and (54b) but not in (55b). Even in raising constructions with semi-copulas like *lijken* 'seem' and *schijnen* 'appear', the finite verb cannot easily plural-inflect — though plural inflection is not absolutely impossible in (58), it is marked compared to singular inflection. Similarly, in copular sentences containing modals, plural agreement with plural 'bare' *wat* is not as easy as it is when the copula is finite: (59).

(58) a. wat {lijkt/?lijken} dat/dit te zijn? (Dutch)
what seems/seem.PL that/this to be

b. wat {schijnt/?schijnen} dat/dit te zijn?
what appears/appear.PL that/this to be
'what does this seem to be?'

(59) a. wat {kan/?kunnen} dat/dit zijn? (Dutch)
what can/can.PL that/this be

b. wat {zou/?zouden} dat/dit kunnen zijn?
what would/would.PL that/this can.INF be
'what could this be?'

For best results, (57) should be a direct dependent of the copula with which it number-agrees. When the copula does not itself number-inflect, as in (59), or when we are dealing with a semi-copula, as in (58), the structural distance between the verbal element with the feature [PLURAL] and the abstract noun N_{PL} in (57) is greater than when the copula bears the [PLURAL] feature. The abstract noun N_{PL} appears to desire a very local licenser: (57) is optimal in an environment in which a plural-inflected finite copula mediates the predication relationship between the *wat*-phrase and its subject. (That *wat* can be a predicate will be confirmed in section 2.2.2.1.)

Analysed this way, the apparent cases of *ex nihilo* plural agreement in the examples in (53b) and (54b) reduce to cases of plural agreement between the copula and the predicate nominal of the type discussed in section 2.2.1.5. The special property of *wat zijn dat?* 'what are that' is the fact that the predicate nominal does not wear its plurality on its sleeve; but *wat* can be analysed as a plural noun phrase by postulating an abstract plural noun as part of its syntax.

2.2.2 Complex noun phrases[9]

2.2.2.1 'Spurious' indefinite articles

In the complex noun phrase, the postulation of a silent noun may be beneficial as well, this time to account for the unexpected appearance of a *singular* indefinite article in an environment in which there is no apparent source for it. Consider the version of the *wat voor* phrase in (56b) given in (60):

(60) wat voor een dingen (Dutch)
what for a things
'what kind(s) of things'

Plainly, plural *dingen* 'things' cannot form a constituent with the indefinite article *een*, which (like its counterparts in other Indo-European languages) cannot ordinarily combine with a plural noun. The indefinite article also cannot form an underlying constituent with *wat* 'what': this *wh*-word cannot take articles of any kind (except in echo contexts, irrelevant here). A solution for (60) seems at hand if we assume a silent singular noun with which *een* can form a constituent. This approach to (60) is illustrated in (61).

(61) [*wat voor een* KIND/SORT/TYPE *dingen*]

While the silent noun hypothesis appears helpful in dealing with 'spurious' *een* in (60), it provides no obvious handle on (62), for which it is implausible to say that the two tokens of *een* are both associated with a silent KIND/SORT/TYPE noun: (62) is not about a kind of darlings or a kind of children; *kinderen* 'children' makes reference to actual flesh-and-blood young individuals of whom it is said that they are darlings.

(62) wat een schatten van een kinderen (Dutch)
what a darlings of a children

An approach to the 'spurious' indefinite article *een* that can generalise over all tokens encountered in (60) and (62) is one that treats *een* as the spell-out of the head mediating the predication relation between a predicate nominal and its subject. Concretely, when we unpack (62), we discover that there are two predication relations established in it: one between *wat* and *schatten* 'darlings', and another between the noun phrase *wat een schatten* and *kinderen* 'children'. Each of these predication relations is mediated by a token of *een*.

9 On 'spurious' indefinite articles and number, see Bennis, Corver & Den Dikken (1997). For the hypothesis that these articles are not spurious but genuine indefinite articles taking a silent noun as their complement, see Leu (2008) (and related work on silent nouns in Kayne 2005). On 'spurious' definite articles and gender marking on bi-nominal noun phrases, see Milner (1978) for French, Napoli (1989) for Italian, Español-Echevarría (1998) and Casillas Martínez (2001) for Spanish. For integrated discussion, see Den Dikken (2006:Ch. 5).

(63) a. [[$_{\text{Subject}}$ *schatten*] [*een* [$_{\text{Predicate}}$ *wat*]]]
b. [[$_{\text{Subject}}$ *kinderen*] [*een* [$_{\text{Predicate}}$ *wat een schatten*]]

The distribution of *een* qua overt mediator of a predication relation must be restricted to cases of nominal predication inside the complex noun phrase. There are technical ways of ensuring this, which I will not go into here. Technicalities aside, an approach to 'spurious' *een* along the lines of (63) raises the prospect of articles serving the role of relating predicates to their subjects more generally in the context of complex nominal expressions.

2.2.2.2 'Spurious' definite articles

Indeed, it appears that in some of the Romance languages, definite articles can be used as mediators of DP-internal predications. French (64a), like English *that idiot of a doctor*, is ambiguous between an attributive reading ('he is an idiot only in his capacity of being a doctor; he is otherwise quite a sensible person') and a reading in which the predicate applies to the individual *per se* ('he is an idiot as an individual; he happens to be a doctor by profession'); there is no way to make a formal distinction between the two interpretations in this language — (64b) is ungrammatical.

(64) a. cet imbécile de médecin (French)
that imbecile of doctor
b. *cet imbécile du médecin
that imbecile of.the doctor

But Italian and (some varieties of) Spanish do make a formal distinction between the two interpretations, using a definite article in front of the second noun only in the latter reading. We see this in the pairs in (65) and (66).

(65) a. quell' ignorante di dottore (Italian)
that ignoramus of doctor
b. quell' ignorante del dottore
that ignoramus of-the doctor

(66) a. ese ignorante de doctor (Spanish)
this ignoramus of doctor
b. %ese ignorante del doctor
this ignoramus of.the doctor

The definite article contracted onto *di*/*de* in (65b) and (66b) makes no contribution to the definiteness of the noun phrase: the fact that the complex noun phrase is definite is marked by the outer demonstrative. The article does nonetheless make an indirect contribution to the interpretation of the noun phrase of which it is a part: it signals that a canonical predication relationship is established between *dottore*/*doctor* and *ignorante* (with the latter as the predicate), a relationship which is inverted in the course of the syntactic derivation ('predicate inversion'), via movement of the predicate around its subject, with concomitant raising of the mediator of the predication relation (the definite article) up to *di*/*de*. In (65a) and (66a), by contrast, the attributive relationship between *ignorante* and *dottore*/*doctor* does not give rise to an overt realisation of the mediator of predication (because no overt realisation is needed to signal inversion).

2.2.2.3 Gender and number agreement in binominal noun phrases

For the 'spurious' definite article and the outer demonstrative in (65b) and (66b), it is impossible to establish whether they are in a φ-feature agreement relationship with *ignorante* (the inverted predicate) or *dottore*/*doctor* (the subject of predication): the two nouns have identical sets of φ-features. In the syntax literature on Romance there are, to my knowledge, no examples of predication-mediating definite articles in which the predicate and its subject differ in φ-features (Italian *i cretini della Mafia* 'the cretins of.the Mafia' does not involve a 'spurious' article: *la* here belongs to *Mafia* and forms a constituent with it). It should be relatively easy to construct the relevant examples to establish which of the two nouns the article sandwiched between the two agrees with. But I will leave this task in the hands of native-speaker linguists.

For the article, demonstrative or possessive particle on the *outside* of binominal noun phrases, there are data available in the literature that allow us to determine some constraints on φ-feature agreement in these constructions. Consider the French pair in (67) (repeated from (5), above) and the Spanish one in (68).

(67) a. mon vache de frère (French)
my.M cow.F of brother.M
'my severe brother'
b. ma vache de frère
my.F cow.F of brother.M
'my meanie of a brother'

(68) a. el rata de tu hermano (Spanish)
the.M rat.F of your brother.M
'your stingy brother'
b. la rata de tu hermano
the.F rat.F of your brother.M
'your rat of a brother'

In both pairs, the a–example semantically construes the first noun as an attributive modifier of the second, just as in the a–examples in (64)–(66). The examples in (67b) and (68b) are best rendered in English as binominal noun phrases featuring *of*, as in the translations offered: *my meanie of a brother*, *your rat of a brother*.

In (67b) and (68b), the possessive particle or definite article preceding N1 must agree in gender with that noun, not with the semantic head of the complex noun phrase. We see such agreement also in French (69) and Spanish (70), further examples of the same type, with (70b) adding the number feature into the mix alongside the gender facts.

(69) a. ce bijou d'église (French)
this.M jewel.M of church.F
'this jewel of a church'
b. ton phénomène de fille
your.M phenomenon.M of daughter.F
'your phenomenon of a daughter'

(70) a. esa mierda de libro redondo (Spanish)
that.F.SG shit.F.SG of book round
'that shit of a round book'

b. un asco de croquetas
a.M.SG disgust.M.SG of croquettes.F.PL
'some disgusting croquettes'

For (70b) one might treat the indefinite article *un* as a constituent of the predicate nominal, which would provide a simple account of its φ-inflection. But the demonstratives/possessive particles in the other examples belong to the complex noun phrase as a whole, not just to N1.

The syntax of the b–examples in (64)–(68) and the additional cases in (69) and (70) involves an underlying canonical predication relation between the two constituent noun phrases, with the projection of the initial noun serving as the predicate of that of the second; this underlying canonical predication relation is inverted in the course of the derivation, via movement, delivering the output order. The φ-feature agreement facts reviewed above reveal that this movement operation manoeuvres the predicate nominal into a position in which it becomes the local goal for the φ-probe in D, and makes the subject of predication inaccessible to D. This is understandable if the inversion of the predicate around its subject 'locks' the subject in place. A technical execution of the predicate inversion hypothesis in terms of local domains ('phases'), along the lines of (71), delivers the desired result:

(71) $[_{DP}$ D $[_{YP}$ $[_{NP1}$ Predicate$]_i$ [Y $[_{XP}$ $[_{NP2}$ Subject] [X t_i]]]]]

With 'YP' as a local domain within the complex noun phrase, the D-head has access to the raised predicate as a goal for the φ-feature valuation relationship that it seeks to establish, because the predicate is on the edge of this local domain and is hence visible outside it. But the subject of predication is deeply ensconced within the local domain, and not accessible to D.

For the attributive a–examples in (64)–(68), by contrast, the syntax should make N2 accessible to the outer D-layer. (The situation is less clear for N1: in Spanish (68a), *la* would be bad; but for French (67a) it has been reported that *ma* is allowed as an alternative to *mon*. I will set this variation aside.) If we follow a classic adjunction approach to attributive modification, the attributive relationship between the two constituent noun phrases is represented as in (72a), where D picks its sister, NP2, as its Agree-goal, rather than the attributive modifier adjoined to NP2. On an approach to attributive modification that represents it as an asymmetrical relationship mediated by a head, as in (72b) (a reverse predication structure), the desired result is delivered if it is assumed that X first agrees with NP2 (the modifiee) after which D agrees with XP.

(72) a. $[_{DP}$ D $[_{NP2}$ $[_{NP1}$ Attribute] $[_{NP2}$ Modifiee]]]
b. $[_{DP}$ D $[_{XP}$ $[_{NP1}$ Attribute] [X $[_{NP2}$ Modifiee]]]]

Of the two representations in (72), the latter provides a straightforward syntactic home for the connective element that shows up between the two nouns of attributive binominal noun phrases: the *de*/*di* of the Romance examples and the *of* of their English renditions can be located in X in (72b). The adjunction approach in (72a) does not provide a syntactic handle on the connector.

The behaviour of binominal noun phrases with respect to φ-features and agreement is more complex than the picture painted by the examples in the foregoing suggests. For instance, one complication is the ineffability that arises in a subset of Dutch non-attributive binominal noun phrases when the two nouns differ in gender and the outer D-layer is occupied by a demonstrative: while the a–examples in (73) and (74) are both fine (thanks to the fact that the indefinite article *een* is gender-invariant in standard Dutch), neither version of (73b) is (fully) acceptable; speakers strongly tend to avoid producing such constructions.

(73) a. een schat van een kind (Dutch)
a darling.NONNEUT of a child.NEUT
b. {*dat/%die} schat van een kind
that.NEUT/NONNEUT darling.NONNEUT of a child.NEUT

(74) a. een vod van een jurk (Dutch)
a rag.NEUT of a dress.NONNEUT
b. {dat/*die} vod van een jurk
that.NEUT/NONNEUT rag.NEUT of a dress.NONNEUT

In light of the discussion of (67)–(71) earlier in this subsection, one would expect that the demonstrative in the examples in (73b) and (74b) will consistently choose the first noun as its Agree-goal. (74b) is directly in line with this, and there is a trend in this direction for (73b) (in the sense that to the extent that (73b) is accepted by speakers at all, *die* is preferred to *dat*, which is uniformly impossible here). But the surprising thing is that there is so much uncertainty among speakers of Dutch regarding (73b), and that for many speakers such binominal noun phrases are impossible with either choice of gender for the demonstrative. It seems that when N2 is neuter, it puts up a bit of a fight with N1 for control of gender agreement with the demonstrative. If [NEUTER] is the marked gender for Dutch, the asymmetry between (73b) and (74b) may be understandable, but it is not entirely clear what speakers' discomfort with (73b) is rooted in.

Complications of this sort aside, the picture painted by the Romance facts reviewed above will serve its purpose in the context of this survey as a close approximation of the empirical lie of the land. I relegate further investigation of φ-agreement in binominal DPs to future research.

2.2.3 Inverse copular sentences

In the discussion of φ-agreement (for number and gender) in binominal noun phrases, we already touched upon the role played by inversion of the underlying predicate around its subject: in (71), movement of the predicate to a position higher up the tree than its subject and local to the outer D-layer of the structure of the complex noun phrase ensures that the predicate controls agreement with D. In the present section, we will examine the complexities of φ-agreement (for number and person) in the syntax of inverse copular sentences.

2.2.3.1 Number agreement in inverse copular sentences with two common noun phrases[10]

Number agreement in double-DP copular sentences can only be verified in cases in which the subject and the predicate have different values for the feature [±PLURAL]. Two logical possibilities arise, and both have been discussed in the literature: *(i)* the predicate is singular and its subject is plural; *(ii)* the subject is singular and the predicate is plural (a *plurale tantum*). I will begin with a discussion of the former case.

In standard English canonical copular sentences with a singular predicate and a plural subject, the plural subject invariably controls number agreement on the finite copula, though in varieties of English obeying the 'Northern Subject Rule', default third person singular agreement is possible in (75a,a′). But when the relative order of the predicate and the subject is inverted, as in (75b) and (75b′), the empirical picture is no longer homogeneous even in standard English:

10 On copular agreement in specificational copular sentences with two common noun phrases (including pseudoclefts with a free relative as the *wh*-clause), see Moro (1997), Heycock (2012), Hartmann & Heycock (2017–2020) (the Icelandic *plurale tantum* cases are from their 2018 paper), Béjar & Kahnemuyipour (2017), Den Dikken (1998, 2017, 2019). On silent-headed DP1 (cf. (83)), see esp. Guéron (1992), Den Dikken (2006, 2017).

(75) a. the agreement facts {are/*is} the biggest problem
b. the biggest problem {is/*are} the agreement facts
(75′) a. the agreement facts {are/*is} a(nother) big problem
b. a(nother) big problem {are/*is} the agreement facts

When the predicate is a definite DP, usually only it can agree with the finite copula; but when the predicate is an indefinite noun phrase, the notional subject takes the reins.

In the discussion in section 2.1.1, above, we noticed another pair of differences between inverse copular sentences with a definite predicate nominal and their counterparts with an indefinite predicate, in the contexts of non-bridge subordination and I-to-C movement:

(76) a. I wonder whether the biggest problem is the rise of fascism
a′. ??I wonder whether a(nother) big problem is the rise of fascism
b. is the biggest problem the rise of fascism?
b′. *is a(nother) big problem the rise of fascism?

The fact that in (75b′) number agreement between the fronted predicate nominal and the copula is impossible arguably fits in with the earlier observations: almost all the evidence suggests that the indefinite predicate nominal in the primed examples is not raised into the structural subject position; hence it cannot control agreement with the copula. (The one piece of evidence that does not align itself with this is the embeddability of inverse copular constructions with an indefinite predicate nominal in ECM contexts: recall (25f′), above.)

The number agreement facts in (75b), with a definite predicate nominal, can be understood if in copular inversion constructions in which the predicate raises to SpecIP, the copula qua φ-probe cannot access the subject of predication. The Romance facts discussed in 2.2.2.3 had already established this, and had derived it from a syntax which moves the predicate past its subject into a position local to the φ-probe, 'locking' the subject of predication in its base position, shielded from the φ-probe by the boundary of a local domain.

In clauses, movement of a predicate does not always prevent the subject of predication from controlling agreement with the finite verb. Ā-movement of the predicate generally has no effect on subject-Vfin agreement:

(77) a. how big (of) a problem are the agreement facts?
b. how big (of) a problem do you think the agreement facts are?

In the examples in (77), the subject of predication (*the agreement facts*) moves into the structural subject position in the usual way, and controls agreement as a result. In inverse copular sentences of the type in (75b), the definite predicate nominal prevents the subject from doing its φ-agreement business as usual by itself taking residence in the structural subject position: a case of movement of the predicate into the structural subject position, SpecIP.

For Dutch, there is ample reason to believe that in inverse copular sentences the definite predicate nominal likewise moves to SpecIP. The fact that the finite copula changes places with the fronted predicate in yes/no-questions and the fact that predicate fronting is possible in structural domains in which Ā-movement into the left periphery is normally forbidden are two solid indications to this effect. Yet, although Dutch behaves just like English in these respects, the two languages are very different when it comes to number agreement in inverse copular sentences with a definite predicate nominal, even in structural environments for which the application of movement to SpecIP is not in any doubt:

(78) a. het grootste probleem {zijn/*is} de congruentiefeiten (Dutch)
the biggest problem are/is these agreement.facts
b. {zijn/??is} het grootste probleem de congruentiefeiten?
are/is the biggest problem the agreement.facts
c. ik vraag me af of het grootste probleem de congruentiefeiten {zijn/*is}
I wonder if the biggest problem the agreement.facts are/is

It is likely that linear proximity plays some role in the difference between English and Dutch inverse copular sentences. The fact that subordinate clauses are head-final in Dutch causes the agreeing copula to be linearly more distant from the fronted predicate nominal in (78c) than in its English counterpart (*I wonder if the biggest problem is the agreement facts*). In line with this, singular *is* is to my ear somewhat less bad in (78b) than in the other two examples in (78). But plainly it is not the case that agreement in Dutch, or English, for that matter, is generally a function of linear proximity. A structural explanation for the striking contrast between Dutch and English in the realm of number agreement in inverse copular sentences is called for.

Though the landing-site of predicate raising in English and Dutch inverse copular sentencces is almost certainly the same (viz., the structural subject position, SpecIP), there is reason, entirely independently of the agreement facts under discussion, to believe that the nature of the position in question is not entirely the same in the two languages. This emerges particularly from an inspection of copular sentences of the type in (79). For English (79a), it is well known that it is ambiguous between an individual-level interpretation ('firemen have the defining property of being available (at all times)') and a stage-level interpretation ('it happens to be the case that there are firemen available (right now)'). The Dutch equivalent in (79b), by contrast, only sports an individual-level reading: to obtain the stage-level interpretation, an expletive must be deployed in the structural subject position, as in (79b′) (whose English counterpart in (79a′) is of course acceptable as well, and is unambiguously stage-level).

(79) a. firemen are available IL/SL
a′. there are firemen available
b. brandweermannen zijn beschikbaar IL/*SL
firemen are available
b′. er zijn brandweermannen beschikbaar
there are firemen available

The chain that is formed by movement of the subject into SpecIP in English easily allows LF to target the trace position for interpretation, yielding the SL-reading for (79a). In Dutch, however, 'reconstruction' of the structural subject into a lower position is not possible nearly as easily. This may be a function of the A or Ā nature of SpecIP: while this position is clearly an A-position in English, it seems less straightforwardly 'A' in Dutch.

In this light, one possible hypothesis regarding the difference between Dutch and English with respect to the goal of number agreement in inverse copular sentences with two DPs is that in English, the I-head probes upwards to its specifier and establishes a Spec–Head agreement relationship with it, whereas in Dutch it does not. For English (75b), whose derivation is shown in (80), we then get the result that the copula (in I) will unequivocally φ-agree with the raised predicate in SpecIP. In Dutch, by contrast, due to the fact that it is difficult to pin down A- or Ā-status for the SpecIP position, the closest A-position with which the copula in I can establish a φ-agreement relationship is the SpecXP position in (80) — i.e., the base position of the subject.

(75b) the biggest problem {is/*are} the agreement facts
(80) $[_{IP}\ [_{DP1}$ Predicate$]_i$ [I=COP $[_{XP}\ [_{DP2}$ Subject] [X t_i]]]]]

In double-DP copular sentences with a singular predicate and a plural subject, Italian is like Dutch in having the copula agree in number with the postcopular notional subject rather than with the precopular predicate nominal. For (81a), a plausible syntactic analysis treats *la causa della rivolta* as a base-generated left-adjunct to IP, as in (81b), with a pro-predicate (*pro*) raising to the structural subject position; this *pro* copies the φ-features of the referential noun phrase of which it is predicated. With I agreeing with *pro* we automatically derive number agreement with the postcopular subject of predication.

(81) a. la causa della rivolta {sono/*è} le foto del muro (Italian)
the cause of.the riot are/is the pictures of.the wall
b. $[_{IP}$ *la causa della rivolta* $[_{IP}$ *pro*$_{\{\varphi\}_i}$ $[_{I'}$ COPULA$_{\{\varphi\}_i}$ [SUBJECT$_{\{\varphi\}_i}$ (...)]]]]

The number agreement facts in the inverse copular sentences of Eastern Armenian and Persian mimic those seen in Dutch and Italian: in (82a,b), as in (78) and (81a), the finite copula agrees in number with the plural subject of predication.

(82) a. moshkel-e asli rahbar-aa-ye enghelaab-∅-an (Persian)
problem-EZ main leaders-EZ revolution-be-3PL
b. iskakan problem-ə heqapoxutyan metz-er-ən en (Eastern Armenian)
main problem-SP revolution.GEN chief-PL-SP are
both: 'the main problem is (lit., are) the leaders the revolution'

It has been proposed that the first noun phrase in these constructions is enveloped in a complex structure whose silent head has no φ-features of its own, forcing the copula to φ-agree instead with the second noun phrase. One logical possibility is that the container of the first noun phrase is a free relative of sorts (*what is the biggest*/*main problem*, *what is the cause of the riot*). The details do not matter here: in (83) '∅' is a cover for whatever concrete proposal one would like to let loose on the inaudible internal constitution of the constituent in SpecIP in inverse copular sentences.

(83) $[_{IP}\ [_{Predicate}\ \varnothing\ [_{DP1}$ ...]]$_i$ [I=COP $[_{XP}\ [_{DP2}$ Subject] [X t_i]]]]]

This hypothesis will cover the English facts if *(a)* the copula in English inverse copular sentences cannot agree with the postcopular subject and *(b)* if the third person singular inflection seen on the copula in these kinds of sentences is default inflection.

The hypothesis that the first noun phrase in double-DP inverse copular sentences is a subpart of a more complex noun phrase may receive support from the observation (made here for the first time, as far as I am aware) that agreement attraction is impossible with copular inversion: while (84a) allows the plural DP contained in the singular subject to 'attract' number agreement towards it, the same DP in (84b) does not.

(84) a. the key to the problems {is/%are} here
b. the key to the problems {is/*are} this

This contrast may suggest that there is a structural difference between the occupant of SpecIP in (84a) and the occupant of SpecIP in (84b), such that while *the problems* is 'reachable' in (84a), it is not in (84b). If it is assumed that *the key to the problems* in (84b) is enveloped in a silent 'wrapper' or 'cloak', this will cause the plural DP *the problems* to be structurally more distant from the matrix I-head in (84b) than in (84a). The deviance of agreement attraction in (84b) will then fit in with the independently known fact that agreement attraction deteriorates with structural distance. A treatment of inverse copular sentences along the lines of (83) thus allows us to make sense of the contrast in (84).

I close this subsection with an investigation of number agreement in double-DP copular sentences in which the predicate is plural and its subject is singular — the exact opposite of (75b). Copular sentences of this sort are not abundant, but they arise naturally for predicate nominals that are *pluralia tantum*. For English, the nouns *misgivings*, *tidings*, *proceeds* and *spoils* are good candidates for the construction of the relevant examples. A search on the internet has unearthed the following specimens:

(85) a. the Crime and Corruption Commission (CCC) says that a $28 million order against two central Queensland bikie gang members is the biggest proceeds of crime order in the state's history
b. the Environment Agency says that the 917,000 Hugh O'Donnell has been ordered to pay is the biggest proceeds of crime order ever secured by the organisation against 1 individual

(86) a. my only short-term misgivings are the continued stress in residential and commercial real estate markets
b. my misgivings are the underlying but erroneous assumption which is that the 'dominent [*sic*] hemisphere' does everything
c. possibly the best tidings are the news that the Leibniz Nachlass was spared the fate of Schelling's
d. the spoils of the war is the acceleration of our personal transition and change

In (85), the *plurale tantum* predicate is in its underlying postcopular position, and its singular subject controls agreement with the copula, unsurprisingly. In (86), the *plurale tantum* predicate nominal is in the structural subject position. This time around, number agreement with the plural predicate is common: indeed, in three of the four examples in (86), we find *are*; only in (86d) do we see the postcopular subject of predication hold sway over the copula's number inflection.

If this indicates that in copular sentences with a *plurale tantum* predicate nominal and a singular subject, the predicate controls agreement with the copula when it inverts with the subject, this suggests that raised predicates can in fact serve as Agree goals. It would certainly be difficult to maintain that in (86a–c) the occupant of the structural subject position is a complex noun phrase headed by a silent element unmarked for number, with the copula agreeing with the physical plural that is enveloped in the silent-headed noun phrase: we know from (84b) that 'agreement attraction' (i.e., agreement with a subconstituent of the occupant of SpecIP) is impossible in predicate raising constructions. The abstract element '∅' in (83) would itself have to be specified for [PLURAL] in order for the raised *plurale tantum* to be able to trigger plural inflection on the copula. It is imaginable that the element '∅' and the *plurale tantum* embedded inside the complex noun phrase constituting the predicate engage in a head–head agreement (or 'concord') relationship whereby '∅' ends up inheriting the [PLURAL] specification of the *plurale tantum*. But why such concord would have to be obligatory is unclear.

Let me amplify the empirical lie of the land for number agreement in double-DP copular sentences with a *plurale tantum* predicate nominal by looking at the only two other languages on which we currently have data that bear on this: Icelandic and Dutch. Icelandic presents basically the same picture as English. In (87), the two word order possibilities for double-DP copular sentences with a singular subject and a *plurale tantum* predicate are produced within a subordinate clause in which no 'embedded root phenomena' are possible, in order to control for the effect of Verb Second:

(87) a. þau spurðu hvort þurrkurinn {væri/??væru} ekki eldsupptökin (Icelandic)
they asked whether drought.the be.SBJ.3SG/3PL not fire.causes
'they asked whether the drought wasn't the cause of the fire'
b. þau spurðu hvort eldsupptökin {*væri/væru} ekki þurrkurinn
they asked whether fire.causes be.SBJ.3SG/PL not drought.the
'they asked whether the cause of the fire wasn't the drought'

The generalisation for Icelandic copular clauses with a singular subject and a *plurale tantum* predicate nominal is that, as in English, the copula agrees in number with the physical occupant of the structural subject position — i.e., with the singular subject in canonical (87a), and with the raised predicate in (87b). (There is a certain degree of speaker variation in the Icelandic judgements.)

For Dutch, (88) presents a constructed pair of relevant cases, adorned with my personal judgements on number inflection. In line with the discussion of *kooplieden* 'merchants' sentences above, the plural predicate 'wins' in the canonical copular sentence in (88a). (An attested example of this type, very helpfully contained in a subordinate clause, is the following: *ik verwacht inderdaad dat verbruik niet de hoogste kosten zijn voor een provider* 'I expect indeed that use not the highest costs are for a provider'.) For (88b), I find it harder to give a clear judgement: though *is* is clearly impossible here, it is not clear just how good plural *zijn* is. In root contexts, the pendulum of uncertainty swings in the opposite direction: here the judgement on (89b) is clear (there are several attested examples of this type, all with plural *zijn*), while for (89a) the acceptability of *zijn* is much harder to assess.

(88) a. ik denk dat de verzekering de hoogste kosten van het project {*is/zijn} (Dutch)
I think that the insurance the highest costs of the project is/are
b. ik denk dat de hoogste kosten van het project de verzekering {*is/?zijn}
I think that the highest costs of the project the insurance is/are

(89) a. de verzekering {*is/?zijn} de hoogste kosten van het project
the insurance is/are the highest costs of the project
b. de hoogste kosten van het project {*is/zijn} de verzekering
the highest costs of the project is/are the insurance

The patterns in (88b) and (89a) seem almost ineffable. By contrast, the ones in (88a) and (89b) are perfectly good, and clearly only possible with *zijn*. The empirical generalisation appears to be that when the *plurale tantum* predicate nominal is left-adjacent to the copula, the output sounds good with plural inflection, but when the singular subject is left-adjacent to the copula neither choice of inflection on the copula feels perfect. We will see ineffability effects rearing their heads again in the discussion of person agreement in inverse copular sentences, to which I will turn shortly (see section 2.2.3.3).

2.2.3.2 Gender agreement in inverse copular sentences with two common noun phrases[11]
Before turning to person agreement, however, I would like to make a brief remark about gender agreement in double-DP copular sentences. For the Indo-European languages, this is not observable: finite verb agreement does not involve gender. But in the Bantu languages, the (pronominal) copula (*li* in Kinande) does show gender (noun-class) agreement. Whenever the agreeing copula is used, it agrees in noun class with the (focused) subject of predication, which in inverse specificational copular sentences is the postcopular noun phrase:

(90) a. olúhi ló mbúga (Kinande)
aug.11war 11COP 9.problem
'the WAR is the problem'
b. émbugá l' ôlúhi
aug.9problem 11COP 11war
'the problem is the WAR'

The gender agreement pattern in (90) is reminiscent of the number agreement pattern for Dutch and Italian double-DP copular sentences with a plural subject and a singular predicate nominal, as shown in (78) and (81). Whether the account of (90) should run along lines similar to the ones sketched for Dutch or for Italian remains to be investigated.

2.2.3.3 Person agreement in inverse copular sentences[12]
Recall from section 2.2.3.1 that in double-DP copular sentences with a singular predicate and a plural subject, Italian has the copula agree in number with the postcopular notional subject rather than with the precopular predicate nominal: see (81a), repeated below along with the analysis in (81b), according to which the structural subject position is occupied by a pro-predicate which copies the φ-features of the referential noun phrase of which it is predicated.

(81) a. la causa della rivolta {sono/*è} le foto del muro (Italian)
the cause of.the riot are/is the pictures of.the wall
b. $[_{IP}$ *la causa della rivolta* $[_{IP}$ *pro*$_{\{\varphi\}_i}$ $[_{T'}$ COPULA$_{\{\varphi\}_i}$ [SUBJECT$_{\{\varphi\}_i}$ (...)]]]]

The analysis in (81b) predicts that when the predicate nominal and the notional subject have non-matching person features, it should be the person feature of the subject that is reflected on the finite copula. For Italian, this prediction is indeed borne out:

(91) a. il colpevole {sono/*è} io (Italian)
the culprit am/is I
b. il colpevole {sei/*è} tu
the culprit are/is you

11 On gender agreement in Bantu specificational copular sentences, see Schneider-Zioga & Hedberg (2015) and Schneider-Zioga (2018). The Kinande example in (90) was taken from the latter work.

12 On person agreement in inverse copular sentences, see Moro (1997) for Italian, Béjar & Kahnemuyipour (2017) for Persian and East Armenian, Schneider-Zioga & Hedberg (2015) for Kinande, and Hartmann & Heycock (2017–2020) for Scandinavian, German and Dutch. Hartmann & Heycock (2020) conducted the experimental studies on Icelandic that the text below draws upon. The judgement and production studies on Dutch are from Hartmann & Heycock (2019). Regarding the Dutch facts, see also Ackema & Neeleman (2018) and Den Dikken (2019). For the Structural Condition on Person Agreement, see Baker (2008, 2011).

The Persian and East Armenian inverse copular sentences in (92) likewise have the copula agree with the second person notional subject, with person agreement aligning itself with number agreement (recall (82)):

(92) a. qaatel to-∅-yi (Persian)
murderer you-be-2SG
b. mart^{h}aspan-ə du es (Eastern Armenian)
murderer-SP you be.PRES.2SG
both: 'the murderer is you'

By contrast, in the English specificational copular sentences in (93), the copula consistently fails to agree with the postcopular noun phrase for person.

(93) a. the culprit {is/*am} me/$^{!}$I
b. the culprit {is/*are} you

This is unsurprising, in light of the fact that the postcopular noun phrase, to the extent that this is verifiable, is typically not nominative: although *I* occurs in prescriptive and stilted English, the natural choice of pronoun in (93a) is *me*. But the fact that in inverse specificational copular sentences in Kinande, proper names and personal pronouns cannot person-agree with the copula *li* (the invariant copula *ni* must instead be used in these cases) is not derivable from case.

German and Dutch present an even more complex picture in the realm of person agreement in inverse copular sentences. The root sentences in (94) and (95) are a red herring: being Verb Second constructions, these sentences allow for a derivation in which the sentence-initial noun phrase is a topic in the left periphery, with the postcopular subject located in the structural subject position, SpecIP. To control for this, we should look at non-root clauses, as in (96).

(94) a. der Schuldige {bin/*ist} ich (German)
the culprit am/is I
b. der Schuldige {bist/*ist} du
the culprit are/is you
(95) a. de schuldige {ben/*is} ik (Dutch)
the culprit am/is I
b. de schuldige {ben/*is} jij
the culprit are/is you
(96) a. ze denken/betwijfelen dat de schuldige ik {*ben/*is} (Dutch)
they think/doubt that the culprit I am/is
b. ze denken/betwijfelen dat de schuldige jij {*bent/*is}
they think/doubt that the culprit you are/is

To my native ear, there is no good option in (96). This changes when the subordinate clause is put in the past tense. The form *was* in (96′) is syncretic for person, showing up for all three persons in the singular; the fact that no potentially uncomfortable choice needs to be made in (96′) between agreement with the occupant of SpecIP and agreement with the notional subject seems to render these examples palatable.

(96′) a. $^{?}$ze denken/betwijfelen dat de schuldige ik was (Dutch)
they think/doubt that the culprit I was

b. ?ze denken/betwijfelen dat de schuldige jij was
they think/doubt that the culprit you was

The sentences in (96′) remain at marginal, however. This is true also when the pronoun *ik* 'I' in them is replaced with the third person pronoun *hij* or *zij*, as in (96′′).

(96′′) a. ?ze denken/betwijfelen dat de schuldige hij was (Dutch)
they think/doubt that the culprit he was
b. ?ze denken/betwijfelen dat de schuldige zij was
they think/doubt that the culprit she was

There is an overall deteriorating effect of pronominality: whenever the focused subject of an inverse copular sentence is a nominative pronoun, the result is less than perfect. This effect is particularly strong in (truncated) clefts: *dat hij het is (die de moord heeft gepleegd)* 'that he it is (who the murder has committed' is fine while **dat het hij is (die de moord heeft gepleegd)* is impossible. I return to this at the end of section 2.2.4.1, below, where the pronoun effect found in Dutch inverse copular sentences is diagnosed as a person effect.

Beyond the effect of pronominality, extant production and judgement experiments conducted on Dutch did not turn up significant effects of person and/or syncretism of the type reported in connection with (96) and (96′). In these experiments, the person-agreeing forms *ben* and *bent* were not categorically rejected by all Dutch speakers in contexts of the type in (96), nor did they fail to be produced in fill-in-the-blank tests. But it seems to me fair to say that no speaker of Dutch will find any version of (96) nearly as natural as the person-agreeing versions of (95). The person effect may even get stronger in the presence of a modal: (97a) is good with *Jan* but impossible with *ik* (the modal *kan* is syncretic for first and third person singular); and (97b), with explicit second person inflection on *kunt*, is unacceptable as well. (Recall that modals also worsen the status of plural marking in *wat zijn dat?* 'what are that' constructions: see (59).)

(97) a. ze denken/betwijfelen dat de schuldige {Jan/*ik} kan zijn (Dutch)
they think/doubt that the culprit Jan/I can be
b. *ze denken/betwijfelen dat de schuldige jij kunt zijn
they think/doubt that the culprit you can be

The fact that person agreement with the subject of predication in inverse copular sentences is just as impossible in Dutch as it is in English is part and parcel of the broad generalisation that, across the world's languages, agreement for first and second person cannot take place under downward Agree but requires the Spec–Head relation (see (98)). In the syntax of inverse copular sentences in (83) (repeated below), the subject of predication remains in its base position, and could establish an agreement relationship with I only under (downward) Agree. For number, this is sufficient (in Dutch); but for person, it is not. Italian does manage to have the notional subject engage in a person agreement relation with the finite copula (recall (91)), thanks to the fact that the *pro* in SpecIP bears a full copy of the φ-feature set of the subject (see (81b)).

(83) $[_{IP}\ [_{Predicate}\ \varnothing\ [_{DP1}\ ...]]_i\ [I{=}COP\ [_{XP}\ [_{DP2}\ Subject]\ [X\ t_i]]]]]$

(98) *Structural Condition on Person Agreement (SCOPA)*
a category F can bear the features +1 or +2 if and only if a projection of F merges with a phrase that has that feature and F is taken as the label of the resulting phrase

I close this section on person agreement in inverse copular sentences by highlighting a remarkable pattern found in Faroese and Icelandic: the 'number-only' effect. I illustrate this effect here with the help of (99), from Icelandic.

(99) hann var að velta fyrir sér hvort aðalvandamálið {væri/væruð/væru} þið (Icelandic)
he was wondering if main.problem.DEF was.3SG/2PL/3PL you$_{PL}$
'he was wondering whether the main problem was you$_{PL}$'

All inflectional options given in (99) are attested to some extent, with *væri* 'was.3SG' being the most common — a reflex of agreement with the precopular predicate nominal. The most interesting option is *væru* 'was.3PL'. Here we find number agreement between the copula and the postcopular subject, but no person agreement between the two. (I assume that 'third person' here is either 'no person' or 'default person'.) This is a striking illustration of the difference between number and person in the φ-agreement systems of the world's languages: *væru* manages to establish a downward Agree relationship with the postcopular subject *þið* 'you$_{PL}$' for number, but cannot also agree in person with this pronoun. This is expected in light of (98). The facts of Icelandic and Faroese φ-agreement in inverse specificational copular sentences are not, however, an unmitigated success for (98): the fact that *væruð* is possible in (99) (indeed, it is the 'best' of the three options, although there is an almost even three-way split between the candidates) is unexpected from the point of view of (98).

2.2.4 Copular sentences with two pronouns[13]

The discussion of the agreement properties of inverse copular sentences with a person mismatch between the subject and the predicate leads us naturally to an investigation of copular sentences whose two terms are both pronouns. These present an empirical picture that is difficult to paint, let alone explain. In this subsection, I will present a concise (though inevitably non-exhaustive) overview of the facts, focusing on the facts of Germanic, with some Slavic data mentioned on the side. (The discussion is based primarily on the references given in fn. 13, rounded out with a more comprehensive set of Dutch data than what is available in the extant literature.)

A key distinction should be made within the family of copular sentences with two pronominal terms between two sets of cases. In the first set (the one that is more directly aligned with the cases discussed above), one of the terms is *it*/*this*/*that*, as in (100)–(101). (Though in English (100b) and (101b) are by and large confined to the specialised context of the game of tag (*I am it*, *you are it*, *(s)he is it*), this construction type has a wider distribution in other languages.)

(100)	a.	it/this/that is me	it/this/that is you
	b.	I am it/this/that	you are it/this/that
(101)	a.	it/this/that is him	it/this/that is her
	b.	he is it/this/that	she is it/this/that

The second set involves sentences in which both terms are *personal* pronouns, as in (102)–(105), where special mention should be made of tautologies (see (106)):

13 Important discussion of agreement in copular sentences with two pronouns is found in Sigurðsson (2006) and Djärv (2021). The biclausal analysis for double-nominative constructions discussed in section 2.2.4.2 is rooted in Djärv (2021). Sigurðsson concentrates entirely on Germanic; Djärv reproduces some examples from the literature on Slavic as well. The discussion of Dutch in sections 2.2.4.1 and 2.2.4.2 is primarily based on my own judgements.

(102) a. I am you
b. you are me
(103) a. I am him/her
b. (s)he is me
(104) a. you are him/her
b. (s)he is you
(105) a. he is her
b. she is him
(106) a. I am me
b. you are you

2.2.4.1 'It is I/me'

Within the Germanic language family, we find instances of (100a) and (101a) in which the post-copular term is nominative as well as cases in which it is accusative. In none of the accusative cases in (108) does the copula agree with the first person pronoun; in English (108a) and Northern Frisian (108b), the copula bears third person singular inflection. In the nominative cases in (107), whenever agreement is explicit, it is between the copula and the postcopular nominative pronoun.

(107) a. dat zijn wij (Dutch)
that are we$_{NOM}$
b. das sind wir (German)
that are we$_{NOM}$
c. det är vi (Swedish)
that COP we$_{NOM}$
d. það erum við (Icelandic)
that are we$_{NOM}$
e. tað eru vit (Faroese)
that are we$_{NOM}$

(108) a. it is us (English)
b. dåt as üs (Northern Frisian)
it is us$_{ACC}$
c. det er os (Danish)
it COP us$_{ACC}$
d. det er oss (Norwegian)
it COP us$_{ACC}$

The literature does not provide as rich a picture of the Germanic playing field for sentences of the type in (100b) and (101b), in which the personal pronoun appears to the left of the neuter or demonstrative pronoun in precopular position. It is to be expected that Dutch and German (109a,b) set the tone for the entire language family: to the extent that (100b)/(101b) is possible, the precopular pronoun is nominative and controls agreement with the copula.

(109) a. wij zijn het (Dutch)
we$_{NOM}$ are it
b. wir sind es (German)
we$_{NOM}$ are it

It is important to bear in mind that although the presentation in (107)–(109) might lead to the inference that we are dealing with a language-based split between nominative and accusative case for the second pronoun, the situation is considerably more complex. While Danish, Norwegian and English are essentially categorical in demanding accusative case here (I set aside largely prescriptive occurrences of *it is I* in English and *det er vi* 'it is we' in Norwegian), in the other Germanic languages we find language-internal variation as a function of a number of factors, at least a subset of which appear to be morphosyntactic in nature.

One such factor is the strong/weak distinction in third person cases. In some of the languages in which the personal pronoun is normally nominative (as in (107)), the use of the weak pronoun leads to accusative case:

(110) a. dat is hij (Dutch)
that is $\text{he}_{\text{strong}}$
a′. dat is {'m/*hem}
that is him_{weak}
b. dat is hy (West Frisian)
that is $\text{he}_{\text{strong}}$
b′. dat is {'m/*hem}
that is him_{weak}
c. das isch (e)n och (Alemannic)
that is him_{weak} DPRT

The weak-pronominal examples differ not only from their strong-pronominal counterparts with respect to the morphological case form of the pronoun. In Dutch, at least, there is also a sharp difference between them in their tolerance of a modal: the primeless examples in (111) are ungrammatical; the primed examples in (111) are fine. (Two notes on prosody are in order in connection with these examples. In the primeless examples, the main prosodic peak is located on the personal pronoun; focus on *dat* makes these sentences well-formed, but this is irrelevant in the present context. In the primed examples, there is a striking difference between Dutch and English: in Dutch the pronoun has a schwa as its nucleus, and is hence unstressed; the English renditions, on the other hand, have stress and a full vowel on the pronoun.)

(111) a. *dat zal hij zijn (Dutch)
that will $\text{he}_{\text{strong}}$ be
a′. dat zal 'm zijn
that will him_{weak} be
'that'll be him'
b. *dat zullen zij zijn
that will $\text{they}_{\text{strong}}$ be
b′. dat zullen ze zijn
that will $\text{they}_{\text{weak}}$ be
'that'll be them'
c. *dat zal/zul jij zijn
that will $\text{you}_{\text{strong}}$ be
c′. dat zal je zijn
that will you_{weak} be
'that'll be you'

These facts probably dovetail with a trend seen also in (96)–(97), where we saw that the addition of a modal renders inverse copular sentences with a nominative personal pronoun even more robustly unacceptable than they are in the absence of a modal. We will return to the effect of modality in the discussion of copular sentences in which both terms are personal pronouns, in section 2.2.4.2.

Apart from factors influencing the case form of the second pronoun, the picture emerging from (107)–(109) is also muddied by word order. Except for English, all the Germanic languages are Verb Second languages, which (as we already saw in section 2.2.3.2) obscures the syntax of agreement in copular sentences. To weed out the Verb Second noise, we should look at non-root clauses or at root yes/no-questions.

(112) a. ik ben dit en jij bent dat (Dutch)
I am this and you are that
b. dit ben ik en dat ben jij
this am I and that are you

(113) a. ze denken/betwijfelen dat ik dit ben en dat jij dat bent
they think/doubt that I this am and that you that are
b. *ze denken/betwijfelen dat dit ik ben en dat dat jij bent
they think/doubt that this I am and that that you are

(114) a. ben ik dit/dat? ben jij dit/dat?
am I this/that are you this/that
b. *ben dit/dat ik? *ben dit/dat jij?
am this/that I are this/that you

While in (112), the nominative personal pronoun can either precede or follow the demonstrative *dit*/*dat* 'this/that', in verb-final subordinate clauses and in yes/no-questions with I-to-C movement of the finite copula only the order in which the personal pronoun precedes *dit*/*dat* is good. The same is true for examples featuring the neuter pronoun *het* 'it', as shown below:

(115) a. ik denk/betwijfel dat wij het zijn (Dutch)
I think/doubt that we_{NOM} it are
b. *ik denk/betwijfel dat het wij zijn
I think/doubt that it we_{NOM} are

(116) a. zijn wij het?
are we_{NOM} it
b. *zijn het wij?
are it we_{NOM}

The b–examples in (112)–(116) are entirely impossible; the a–sentences, by contrast, are perfectly fine. The word order facts are exactly the same for *it*-clefts and for specificational copular sentences featuring the expressions *de ene* 'the one' and *de andere* 'the other' in place of *het* or a demonstrative (see (117)–(119)). All of this is exactly what (98) leads us to expect.

(117) a. ik ben de ene en jij bent de andere (Dutch)
I am the one and you are the other
b. de ene ben ik en de andere ben jij
the one am I and the other are you

(118) a. ze denken/betwijfelen dat ik de ene ben en dat jij de andere bent
they think/doubt that I the one am and that you the other are
b. *ze denken/betwijfelen dat de ene ik ben en dat de andere jij bent
they think/doubt that the one I am and that the other you are

(119) a. ben ik de ene of de andere? ben jij de ene of de andere?
am I the one or the other are you the one or the other
b. *ben de ene ik of de andere? *ben de ene jij of de andere?
am the one I or the other are the one you or the other

These sentences do not improve with third person inflection on the copula. This is on a par with what we saw in (96). The syntax of *it is I/me* type constructions should thus arguably run parallel to that of inverse copular sentences with a personal pronoun as the subject of predication.

The contrasts canvassed above remain the same (*mutatis mutandis*) when the nominative pronouns are replaced with *hij*/*zij* 'he/she', as shown in (120)–(122):

(120) a. hij is dit en zij is dat (Dutch)
he is this and she is that
b. dit is hij en dat is zij
this is he and that is she

(121) a. ze denken/betwijfelen dat hij dit is en dat zij dat is
they think/doubt that he this is and that she that is
b. *ze denken/betwijfelen dat dit hij is en dat dat zij is
they think/doubt that this he is and that that she is

(122) a. is hij dit/dat? is zij dit/dat?
is he this/that is she this/that
b. *is dit/dat hij? *is dit/dat zij?
is this/that he is this/that she

But with a plural common-noun phrase replacing *wij*, all the examples in (115)–(116) are grammatical: recall the *kooplieden* 'merchants' sentences in section 2.2.1.5, from which the examples in (49a,b) are repeated below.

(49) a. dat/dit/het zijn kooplieden, wat wij ook zijn (Dutch)
that/this/it are merchants what we also are
'those/these/they are merchants, which we are, too'
b. zijn dat kooplieden of zijn kooplieden dat?
are that merchants or are merchants that
'are they merchants, or are merchants (like) that?'

In light of (98), the facts in (120)–(122) indicate that while common-noun phrases lack an explicit person feature, for pronouns 'third person' is 'real' person, and that, concomitantly, third person nominative pronouns must person-agree with I, which they fail to do in (121b) and (122b).

2.2.4.2 'You are me'

Consider the Dutch data in (123)–(125):

(123) a. ik ben jij/?jou en jij bent ik/?mij (Dutch)
I am you_{NOM}/you_{ACC} and you_{NOM} are I/me
b. jou/*jij ben ik en mij/*ik ben jij
you_{ACC}/you_{NOM} am I and me/I are you_{NOM}

(124) a. ik ben haar/*zij en zij is mij/*ik
I am her/she and she is me/I
b. haar ben ik en mij is zij
her am I and me is she

(125) a. jij bent hem/*hij en hij is jou/*jij
you are him/he and he is you_{ACC}/you_{NOM}
b. hem ben jij en jou is hij
him are you and you is he

The examples in (123) feature combinations of two non-third person pronouns. Here we see that when the pronoun that agrees with the copula precedes the copula, the second pronoun is preferably realised in its nominative form, but that when the non-agreeing pronoun is in clause-initial position, accusative is the only option. In copular sentences with a combination of a third person pronoun and a non-third person pronoun, nominative case is impossible on the pronoun that is not the controller of agreement with the finite copula, even in the a–examples in (124) and (125). Note that this ban on nominative on the non-agreeing pronoun manifests itself not just on the third person pronoun: when the structural subject is third person *zij*/*hij* 'she/he', the non-third person pronoun must be accusative, too, in stark contrast to what we see in (123), where neither pronoun is third person. This case pattern does not fit in directly with any known generalisation about agreement and case in copular sentences, as far as I am aware.

The case and agreement facts of copular sentences with a personal pronoun on each side of the copula are even more complex than the ones previously canvassed for copular sentences with just one personal pronoun, or for cases with two pronouns in which one of the pronouns is *it*/*that*/*this*. It is impossible within the scope of this survey to do full justice to the facts on a comparative scale. Here I will present an in-depth investigation of the facts of (my own) Dutch, larded wherever possible/relevant with facts from other languages. I will concentrate exclusively on combinations of two non-third person pronouns, as in (123), for which more comparative material is available than there is for sentences of the type (124)–(125).

The sentences in (123)–(125) are root clauses with Verb Second. As we have seen, subject-initial Verb Second clauses often paint a distorted picture of the case and agreement pattern of copular sentences. So at this point, let us turn our attention to subordinate clauses and root yes/no-questions. The examples in (126) and (127) present the Dutch data.

(126) a. ze denken/betwijfelen dat ik jij/jou ben en dat jij ik/mij bent
they think/doubt that I you_{NOM}/you_{ACC} am and that you_{NOM} I/me are
b. *ze denken/betwijfelen dat jou ik ben en dat mij jij bent
they think/doubt that you_{ACC} I am and that me you_{NOM} are

(127) a. ben ik jij/jou of ben jij ik/mij?
am I you_{NOM}/you_{ACC} or are you_{NOM} I/me
b. *ben jou ik of ben mij jij?
am you_{ACC} I or are me you_{NOM}

While the nominative is (to my ear) clearly preferred in (123a), I find that in the a–examples in (126) and (127) the accusative is no worse (indeed, probably better) than the nominative. From the b–examples in (126) and (127), we learn that when the accusative personal pronoun precedes the nominative pronoun in non-root clauses or root yes/no-questions with I-to-C movement, the nominative pronoun cannot agree with the finite verb. In the b–sentences, the nominative pronoun is not in the structural subject position, hence cannot control person agreement with the finite verb.

In Verb Second contexts, if the pronoun in clause-initial position does not agree with the copula it must be accusative: the contrast between *jij bent ik* 'you$_{NOM}$ are.2SG I' (in the second disjunct of (123a)) and *jou*/**jij ben ik* 'you$_{ACC}$/you$_{NOM}$ am.1SG I' (the first disjunct of (123b)) is sharp. The version of (123b) with clause-initial accusative pronouns is probably the result of Ā-movement into the left periphery. This appears to be consonant with the situation in Swedish, where topicalisation is possible only with the accusative form as well:

(128) a. i mitt näste liv vill jag vara dig/du (Swedish; Djärv 2021)
in my next life want I be you$_{ACC/NOM}$
b. dig/*du vill jag inte vara
you$_{ACC/NOM}$ want I not be
'I don't want to be you'

In Swedish (128) the presence of a modal does not appear to have an effect on the case form of the postcopular pronoun. But in Dutch it clearly matters for the case form of the first or second person pronoun that does not control agreement with the finite verb whether the finite verb is the copula or a modal. While (123a) prefers nominative case on the second pronoun, the examples in (129) strongly favour the accusative form. West Frisian patterns with Dutch in this respect. But Afrikaans reportedly continues to insist on nominative even with modals. These facts further corroborate the trend set by (96)–(97) and (111): the addition of a modal severely narrows the empirical playing field for copular sentences with a nominative personal pronoun, in ways that an integrated account of these copular constructions should provide a robust explanation for.

(129) a. ik zal jou/*jij zijn en jij zult mij/*ik zijn (Dutch)
I will you$_{ACC}$/you$_{NOM}$ be and you$_{NOM}$ will me/I be
b. ik wil jou/*jij zijn en jij wilt mij/*ik zijn
I want you$_{ACC}$/you$_{NOM}$ be and you$_{NOM}$ want me/I be
c. ik kan immers niet jou/*jij zijn en jij kunt niet mij/*ik zijn
I want after.all not you$_{ACC}$/you$_{NOM}$ be and you$_{NOM}$ can not me/I be

(130) ik wol dy wêze, do kinst my wêze (West Frisian)
I want you$_{ACC}$ be you can me be

(131) ek wil jy wees, jy kan ek wees (Afrikaans)
I want you$_{NOM}$ be you can I be

Something that probably fits in with the picture seen in (129) is that in counterfactuals, the pronoun that does not control agreement with the finite copula must also be accusative, as shown in (132). Here again, West Frisian patterns with Dutch and Afrikaans does not. Swedish takes a bit of a middle ground, although the trend for Swedish counterfactuals appears to be going in the direction of Afrikaans rather than Dutch, with accusative *dig* reportedly being somewhat worse, and certainly not better, than *du* in (135).

(132) a. als ik jou/*jij was en als jij mij/*ik was (Dutch)
if I you$_{ACC}$/you$_{NOM}$ were and if you$_{NOM}$ me/I were
b. *als jou ik was en als mij jij was
if you$_{ACC}$ I were and if me you$_{NOM}$ will me/I be

(133) at ik dy wie (West Frisian)
if I you$_{ACC}$ were

(134) as ek jy was (Afrikaans)
if I you$_{NOM}$ were

(135) om jag vore du/?dig (Swedish)
if I were you$_{NOM}$/you$_{ACC}$

A generalisation that covers Dutch (129) and (132) and West Frisian (130) and (133) is that in the presence of mood (subjunctive) and modality, no nominative case is available for the non-agreeing pronoun. One thing that mood and modality have in common is IRREALIS semantics; but it is difficult to see how the semantics could be in charge when it comes to case selection. More likely, what we are looking at is an effect of distance between I and the non-agreeing pronoun: modals and non-indicative mood introduce an extra layer of structure between I and the non-agreeing pronoun; this extra layer of structure appears to make it impossible, in a subset of the Germanic languages, for the second pronoun to establish a relationship with finite I for case.

More precisely, in the wake of the discussion of agreement in canonical copular sentences in section 2.2.1, what we can say about the availability of nominative case for the second pronoun is the following. When there is no mood or modality represented in the syntax of the copular clause, the head I (spelled out as the finite copula) can serve as the mediator of the relationship between the two terms of the copular sentence, and I can establish a case-Agree relationship with both terms (see (136a); cf. (52a), above). When the syntactic structure instead features a projection of mood or modality between I and the projection of the copula (as in (136b)), I cannot be the head that relates the two pronouns. I in (136b) is in a direct structural relationship with the first pronoun (the occupant of the structural subject position) but not with the second. As a consequence, I can engage in a case-Agree relation with the first pronoun (under Spec–Head agreement) but not with the second. This, in turn, entails that the first pronoun will be nominative but the second pronoun cannot be. (I will return to the question of how the second pronoun is case-licensed.)

(136) a. $[_{IP}$ [pronoun$_1$] $[_{I'}$ I=COP [pronoun$_2$]]]
b. $[_{IP}$ [pronoun$_1$] $[_{I'}$ I $[_{MoodP/ModalP}$ Mood/Modal $[_{XP}$ t_1 [X=COP [pronoun$_2$]]]]]]

If it is correct to think of the effect of mood and modality in this way, it suggests that the nominative case form of the *non*-agreeing pronoun is just as much dependent on a relationship with I as the nominative case form of the agreeing pronoun. That is, in Dutch and West Frisian copular sentences with two nominative personal pronouns, finite I engages in a case-valuation dependency with *both* pronouns, a case of multiple Agree — although of course only one of these pronouns can control φ-feature agreement with the finite verb. If this is right, it sheds serious doubt, for the languages in question, on a biclausal approach to copular constructions with two nominative personal pronouns according to which each nominative is in a case-valuation relation with its own I-head, in a syntactic structure in which each nominative is the subject of its own IP: in (137b,c), nominative case on the second person pronoun is perfect (indeed, the only possibility).

(137) a. ik ben wat jij/*jou bent (Dutch)
I am what you$_{NOM}$/you$_{ACC}$ are
b. ik kan niet zijn wat jij/*jou bent
I can not be what you$_{NOM}$/you$_{ACC}$ are
c. als ik was wat jij/*jou bent
if I were what you$_{NOM}$/you$_{ACC}$ are

For Dutch or West Frisian, an analysis of copular sentences with two nominative pronouns that treats them as biclausal constructions, with each nominative engaging in an Agree relation with an I-head of its own, is not suitable. But such an analysis may be beneficial for languages in which the second pronoun remains nominative even in the presence of a modal or subjunctive mood, such as Afrikaans and (to a lesser extent) Swedish.

For Hungarian, a biclausal analysis is probably called for as well: in both plain and modalised copular sentences, the second pronoun is nominative:[14]

(138) a. én te vagyok (Hungarian)
I you$_{NOM}$ am
b. én nem lehetek te
I not can.be you$_{NOM}$
c. én nem tudok te lenni
I not can you$_{NOM}$ be
d. én szeretnék te lenni
I would.like you$_{NOM}$ be

An interesting picture is presented by Hungarian counterfactuals. (139a) is very awkward. Focus on the agreeing pronoun, as in (139b), makes the result perfect (in a role-play context; see also below). And in substandard varieties of Hungarian, the second pronoun can bear dative case (see (139c)). The dative case on *neked* in (139c) is indicative of a treatment of the second pronoun as a predicate nominal: Hungarian often realises predicates of copular sentences (both adjectival and nominal) as datives (see (140)).

(139) a. ??ha én lennék te (Hungarian)
if I were you$_{NOM}$
b. ha ÉN lennék te
if I(FOC) were you$_{NOM}$
c. ha *pro* neked lennék
if *pro* you$_{DAT}$ were

(140) a. óvatosnak lenni jó
careful$_{DAT}$ be good
'it is good to be careful'
b. óvodásnak lenni jó
preschooler$_{DAT}$ be good
'it is good to be a preschooler'

14 For the Hungarian examples and judgements in this section, I am grateful to Éva Dékány.

The question of what could possibly be responsible for all the cross-linguistic variation (even on a microscopic scale) in the availability of nominative case for the second pronoun in copular sentences with two personal pronouns is impossible to answer satisfactorily given our present state of knowledge. Given the current empirical state of the art, what we can say is that there appear to be two different routes towards a double-nominative pattern in copular sentences with two personal pronouns: *(i)* the Dutch/West Frisian route, whereby both nominatives are in a case-valuation relationship with a single finite I (rendered impossible in the presence of the extra layer of structure imposed by mood and modality), and *(ii)* the Afrikaans route (taken at least to a certain extent by Swedish and Hungarian as well), by which each nominative is in a case-valuation relation with its own I-head, in a biclausal structure (probably involving a reduced free relative as one of the terms of the copular sentence: see (137a)).

So far, I have looked only at double-pronoun copular sentences with an interpretation of mistaken, exchanged/swapped or uncertain identity. When we are dealing instead with role play, the accusative is always strongly preferred in Dutch, even in the absence of subjunctive mood or modality:

(141) in dit toneelstuk ben ik jou/*jij en jij mij/*ik (Dutch)
in this play am I you_{ACC}/you_{NOM} and you_{NOM} me/I
'in this play, I am you and you (are) me'

The effect of role play on the case form of the second pronoun is also observed in Swedish (142): although the nominative is usually the norm (even in counterfactuals: recall (135)), the postcopular pronoun can be accusative for some speakers in role-play contexts. A near-minimal pair that brings out the significance of (permanent) identity *versus* (temporary) role play in connection with the case form of the postcopular pronoun in Swedish is (143).

(142) a. %jag låtsas inte vara dig (Swedish)
I pretend not be you_{ACC}
'I'm not pretending to be you'
b. %jag vill vara dig, du kan vara mig
I want be you_{ACC} you can be me
'I want to be you, you can be me'

(143) a. CONTEXT: I believe in reincarnation; in my current life I am this person but...
i mitt förra liv var jag han/#honom
in my last life was I he_{NOM}/he_{ACC}
b. CONTEXT: I am an impersonator, and like to pose as other people
på semestern var jag honom/#han
on vacation was I him_{ACC}/he_{NOM} (Djärv 2021)

It is sensible to think that in the syntax of the role-play examples, the non-agreeing pronoun is contained in a structure that makes an accusative case assigner available for the second pronoun in the form of a silent P. This silent P could be akin to *as*, *for* or *like* (see (144)), serving as a copula-like element; or it could be a locative P taking a complement containing a silent noun ROLE (as in (145)). Either way, a hypothesis of this sort will readily account for the ban on nominative case for the non-agreeing pronoun: it is, after all, contained in a PP; in such a structural environment, nominative case is not possible because the structural distance between finite I (the nominative case assigner) and the second pronoun is too great.

(144) a. he is speaking as the president of the organisation, not as a private individual
b. the prince wants you for his wife; I take you for a fool
c. he looks/seems like a nice guy

(145) I am IN THE ROLE OF you

Outside role-play contexts, the assignment of accusative case to the second pronoun (whether across the board, as in English, Danish, (colloquial) Norwegian and Northern Frisian (recall (108)), or only in the presence of mood or modality) cannot plausibly be treated with an appeal to a silent preposition. One might seek to establish a link between the case facts in (108), (129)–(130) and (132)–(133), on the one hand, and the fact, on the other, that in some Slavic languages the predicate of a copular sentence can be marked with a dedicated case — instrumental case in Polish and Russian. It is customary in the literature on Slavic copular sentences to take this special case to be assigned by the functional head that mediates the predication relation (often referred to as 'Pred' in the literature on Slavic).

(146) a. Jan to (jest) lekarz/*lekarz-em (Polish)
Jan PRON is doctor.NOM/doctor-INST
b. Jan jest lekarz-em/*lekarz
Jan is doctor-INST/doctor.NOM
both: 'Jan is a doctor'

(147) a. moj najlepszy przyjaciel to Jan
my best friend.NOM PRON Jan
b. móim najlepszym przyjaciel-em jest Jan
my best friend-INST is Jan
both: 'my best friend is Jan'

Alternatively, one might say that in (108), (129)–(130) and (132)–(133) dependent accusative case is assigned to the second pronoun in order to morphologically distinguish it from the first. Languages that systematically employ accusative case on the second pronoun (English, Northern Frisian, Danish, colloquial Norwegian; (108)) can then be taken to differ from languages which (except in role-play contexts or in the presence of an extra layer of structure introduced by mood or modality) realise this pronoun with nominative case by saying that the latter languages exploit head-based case valuation (*à la* the standard approach in the minimalist programme) while the former are dependent case systems. Regardless of whether the second pronoun gets dependent accusative case or is one of the two participants in nominative case checking against I, its case behaviour mimics that of argumental noun phrases: only argumental noun phrases value I's case or are the beneficiaries of dependent case. So if the second pronoun copular sentences with two personal pronouns has structural case (whether nominative or (dependent) accusative), we must either be dealing with an argumental noun phrase or assume (as does Sigurðsson 2006, for whom the second pronoun is a predicate) that nominative/accusative differentiation can also apply to constructions in which the second noun phrase is predicative.

Is the second pronoun in copular sentences with two personal pronouns a predicate? Substandard Hungarian (139c) may suggest that it can be, at least occasionally. For Germanic, however, the answer to this question is probably negative across the board. Ordinarily, predicate nominals are *wh*-questioned with *what* (and its cognates in the other Germanic languages), even when [+HUMAN]: see (148A).

(148) A: what do you think I am?
B: I think you are a linguist

But in copular sentences with two personal pronouns, *who* (or its cognate) is used to question the second pronoun, regardless of whether nominative or accusative case is realised on this pronoun in the answer: (149)–(150). This suggests that the second pronoun is not a predicate nominal.

(149) A: who do you think I am?
B: I think that you are you
(150) A: wie denk je dat ik ben?
who think you that I am
B: ik denk dat jij jij bent
I think that you you are

The answers in (149) and (150) are a natural segue to a discussion of copular sentences with two pronominal terms with identical sets of φ-features: tautologies like *I am me* and *you are you*. This is the topic of the next subsection.

2.2.4.3 'I am me': Tautologies

Just as there is variation among languages and individual sentences within languages in the realm of copular constructions with two personal pronouns with distinct φ-features (see the previous subsection), so there is variation in copular constructions with two personal pronouns with *identical* φ-features. English uses accusative case on the second pronoun even here:

(151) a. I am me
b. we are us

Danish is like English here (see (152)), just as in the case of φ-distinct double-pronoun cases. But Swedish and Dutch instead have a nominative second token of the pronoun: (153), (154).

(152) jeg er mig/*jeg og du er dig/*du (Danish)
I am me/I and you are you_{ACC}/you_{NOM}
(153) jag är jag/*mig och du är du/*dig (Swedish)
I am I/me and you are you_{NOM}/you_{ACC}
(154) ik ben ik/*mij en jij bent jij/*jou (Dutch)
I am I/me and you are you_{NOM}/you_{ACC}

It is important to note that in Dutch, modality plays no role in the case realisation of the second pronoun in tautologies — unlike what we saw in (129) (repeated below), the presence of a modal auxiliary does not alter the preference for a nominative second pronoun in (155), regardless of whether the pronoun is third person or non-third person.

(129) a. ik zal jou/*jij zijn en jij zult mij/*ik zijn (Dutch)
I will you_{ACC}/you_{NOM} be and you_{NOM} will me/I be
b. ik wil jou/*jij zijn en jij wilt mij/*ik zijn
I want you_{ACC}/you_{NOM} be and you_{NOM} want me/I be
c. ik kan immers niet jou/*jij zijn en jij kunt niet mij/*ik zijn
I want after.all not you_{ACC}/you_{NOM} be and you_{NOM} can not me/I be

(155) a. ik ben ik/*mij en jij bent jij/*jou (Dutch)
hij is hij/*hem en zij is zij/*haar
b. ik zal altijd ik/*mij zijn en jij zult altijd jij/*jou zijn
hij zal altijd hij/*hem zijn en zij zal altijd zij/*haar zijn

Related to this is the fact that in control infinitives we also find a 'second' nominative pronoun in copular constructions with two φ-identical pronouns — not just in Dutch but also in Afrikaans, German, and Swedish:

(156) a. het is voor mij genoeg om gewoon ik/?*mij te zijn (Dutch)
it is for me enough COMP just I/me to be
b. dit is vir my genoeg om ek/*my te wees (Afrikaans)
it is for me enough COMP I/me to be
c. es reicht mir ich/*mich zu sein (German)
it suffices me I/me to be
d. det räcker för mig att vara jag/*mig (Swedish)
it suffices for me to be I/me
all: 'it is good enough for me to be me' (Sigurðsson 2006)

The 'persistence' of nominativity on the second pronoun presses home the importance of treating copular sentences with two φ-identical pronouns differently from other copular sentences with two personal pronouns. I have no analysis to offer for these copular constructions. One clue towards an account is offered by the behaviour of tautologies in the context of embedding under epistemic verbs: in sentences such as (157a) it is considerably easier to leave out *to be* or to use *as* than it is in (157b) (involving copular inversion).

(157) a. they consider me (*to be*) me they can't see me *as* me
b. they consider the culprit *(*to be*) me *they can't see the culprit *as* me

Another clue may be the metalinguistic nature of these constructions. I cannot pursue the matter here, for lack of data and insight.

3 Further issues in the syntax of Move and Agree in copular sentences

3.1 Agreement in pseudoclefts and their ilk

A thriving subfamily of (specificational) copular sentences is formed by pseudocleft constructions, in which one of the two terms of the copular construction is a *wh*-clause. Intensive research on pseudoclefts over several decades has made it clear that the *wh*-clause can be treated in either of two ways: *(a)* as a free relative that serves as the predicate of the copular sentence (with the focused constituent as the subject of predication), as in (158); or *(b)* as a non-root *wh*-question whose answer is the other term of the copular construction, an elliptical clause that is linked to the *wh*-question by the copula *qua* topic particle, as in (159). The underlying predication relation in (158a) can be inverted by raising of the predicate (the free relative), yielding (158b); in pseudoclefts with a question–answer pair syntax, by contrast, the word order is strict (questions must precede their answers).

(158) a. $[_{XP}\ [_{Subject}\ \text{FOCUS}]\ [_{X'}\ \text{X=COP}\ [_{Predicate}\ \text{FREE RELATIVE}]]]$
b. $[_{YP}\ [_{Predicate}\ \text{FREE RELATIVE}]_i\ [_{Y'}\ \text{Y+X=COP}\ [_{XP}\ [_{Subject}\ \text{FOCUS}]\ [_{X'}\ t_X\ t_i]]]]]$

(159) $[_{TopP}\ [_{CP}\ \textit{WH}\text{-QUESTION}]\ [_{Top'}\ \text{Top=COP}\ [_{IP=Answer}\ \ldots\ \text{FOCUS}\ \ldots]]]$

There are circumstances under which pseudoclefts are known to support only a syntax of the type in (159). One such circumstance is the occurrence as the focus of a negative polarity item apparently licensed by a negation enclosed in the *wh*-clause: (160). For such pseudoclefts, the syntax in (159) provides a simple solution: the focus is contained in an elliptical answer clause in which it is locally c-commanded by the negation that is supposed license it.

(160) a. what nobody bought was any wine
what they didn't buy was any wine
b. $[_{TopP}\ [_{CP}\ \textit{what nobody bought}]\ [_{Top'}\ \text{Top=COP}\ [_{IP=Answer}\ \sout{\textit{nobody bought}}\ \textit{any wine}]]]$
$[_{TopP}\ [_{CP}\ \textit{what they didn't buy}]\ [_{Top'}\ \text{Top=COP}\ [_{IP=Answer}\ \sout{\textit{they didn't buy}}\ \textit{any wine}]]]$

Another circumstance under which only (159) is available is pseudoclefts with multiple *wh*-constituents, and, correspondingly, multiple foci. Such pseudoclefts are often difficult; but they have been attested in English, German and Dutch. That these pseudoclefts demand a question–answer pair parse is clear from the fact that while multiple *wh*-questions exist independently, there are (at least, in the languages in question) no multiple (free) relatives.

(161) a. who ordered what was John (ordered) a beer and Bill a coffee
b. wer hier wem geholfen hat war die Hilde dem Heinz (und nicht umgekehrt)
who here whom helped has was the Hilde the Heinz and not *vice versa*
'who helped whom here was Hilde (helped) Heinz (and not the other way around)'
c. wie wie moet helpen is jij mij (en niet andersom)
who who must help is you me and not *vice versa*
'who should help whom is you (should help) me (and not the other way around)'

3.1.1 Number *vs* person agreement in pseudoclefts with a question–answer pair syntax[15]

An important fact about pseudoclefts with a syntax of the type in (159) is that there is a sharp asymmetry between number agreement and person agreement: the copula can agree in number with the immediately postcopular constituent but not in person. Number agreement in pseudoclefts *à la* (159) can easily be tested in examples with a plural NPI as the focus: see (162).

(162) what nobody bought were any cups and glasses

Because there are no first or second person NPIs, person agreement can only be tested in multiple-*wh* pseudoclefts. Note first that in multiple-*wh* pseudoclefts with a single-pair answer, number agreement between the copula and the noun phrase to its immediate right is possible: (163). Now note that the attempts to have the copula agree in person with the postcopular pronoun in (164) and (165) fail entirely.

15 See Declerck (1988), Den Dikken, Meinunger & Wilder (2000), Den Dikken (2017, 2019). There is not much material (empirical or empirical) on φ-feature agreement in pseudoclefts with question–answer pair syntax — primarily because the existence of such a syntax for pseudoclefts is not universally accepted in the literature.

(163) a. who helped who was/?were the parents their children (and not the other way around)
b. wie wie heeft geholpen is/?zijn de kinderen hun ouders (en niet andersom)
who who has helped is/are the children their parents and not *vice versa*

(164) a. who should help who is/*am I you (and not the other way around)
b. wie wie moet helpen is/*ben ik jou (en niet andersom)
who who must help is/am I you and not *vice versa*

(165) a. who should help who is/*are you me (and not the other way around)
b. wie wie moet helpen is/*ben jij mij (en niet andersom)
who who must help is/are you$_{NOM}$ me and not *vice versa*

To the extent that the examples in (164) and (165) work at all (recall that multiple-*wh* pseudoclefts are always somewhat difficult), it is clear that they never allow person agreement with the nominative pronoun that immediately follows the copula.

That person agreement is stricter than number agreement is familiar from the foregoing discussion. While there is long-distance agreement for number in a variety of syntactic contexts and languages, the generalisation that person agreement requires a Spec–Head relation between the probe and the goal (recall (98)) renders long-distance person agreement impossible.

3.1.2 Person agreement in semi-clefts[16]

The semi-cleft is a construction widespread in parts of the Romance-speaking world (both European and Brazilian Portuguese, and many varieties of Latin-American Spanish, incl. Colombian, Dominican, Ecuadorian, Panamanian, and Venezuelan Spanish; but it does not occur in Iberian Spanish). There is a syntax for a *subset* of semi-cleft constructions which is monoclausal, and in which the copula truly 'cleaves' the argument structure of the verb — by spelling out a predication-mediating head in the structure of the clause. But other semi-clefts yield only to a syntax *à la* (159).

Semi-clefts with subject foci exhibit φ-feature agreement facts that show that at least some semi-clefts cannot be derived from pseudoclefts. When the verb agrees with the focused subject of a semi-cleft, the copula *must* also agree with it: (166a)~(166b). In pseudoclefts, by contrast, the verb in the *wh*-clause cannot agree with a first-person focused subject — it must instead agree with *quem* 'who', which is third-person singular (see (167a,b)~(167c,d)).

(166) a. telefon*ei* *fui* eu
called.1SG was.1SG I
b. ??telefon*ei* *foi* eu
called.1SG was.3SG I
c. (?)?telefon*ou* *fui* eu
called.3SG was.1SG I
d. telefon*ou* *foi* eu
called.1SG was.1SG I

(167) a. *quem telefon*ei* *fui* eu
who called.1SG was.1SG I
b. *quem telefon*ei* *foi* eu
who called.1SG was.3SG I
c. quem telefon*ou* *fui* eu
who called.3SG was.1SG I
d. quem telefon*ou* *foi* eu
who called.1SG was.1SG I

16 See Resenes & Den Dikken (2012) (and references cited there for data on languages other than Brazilian Portuguese, which the text examples represent). To my knowledge this 2012 paper is the only work in the generative framework that has provided a full empirical account and theoretical explanation for the person agreement facts of semi-clefts.

The grammaticality of (166a) (in sharp contrast to (167a)) makes it clear that a monoclausal derivation for semi-clefts with subject foci is available. The analysis in (168) treats the copula as the spell-out of the *v* that mediates the predication relation between the subject and its VP predicate, which gets inverted as a result of predicate raising in the course of the derivation. This syntax uniquely delivers φ-feature agreement between the subject, the lexical verb and the copula, as in (166a); it cannot deliver the agreement patterns in (166b–d). For (166b), this is a good thing: it is ungrammatical. But the fact that (166d) is fine indicates that there is an alternative derivation for semi-clefts that is similar to that of the specificational pseudocleft in (167d), with the *wh*-operator unpronounced, along the lines of (169).

(168) $[_{IP}\ [_{VP}$ *telefonei*] [I+*v*=*fui* $[_{vP}$ *eu* $[t_v\ t_{VP}]]]]$

(169) $[_{TopP}\ [_{CP}$ ~~*quem*~~ *telefonou*] $[_{Top'}$ Top=*foi* $[_{IP}$ *eu* ~~*telefonei*~~]]]

Note that (166c) is at best quite marginal for most speakers, and contrasts as such with the pseudocleft in (167c). This follows from the fact that the particular type of pseudocleft required for the second derivation of semi-clefts is the question–answer pair type in (159). Omission of a *wh*-pronoun is possible in *wh*-questions (see *wh*-drop in Dutch and German: *(wat) heb je nou gedaan?* 'what have you done now?'), but not in free relatives (which always require an explicitly [+WH] left periphery). So while (159) is amenable to *wh*-drop, (158) is not. Person agreement between the finite copula and the focus is possible in (158); but as we have seen in the previous subsection, the question–answer pair syntax of pseudoclefts does not support person agreement between the copula in Top and the subject embedded within the answer clause.

The person agreement picture seen in (166) is precisely the one that falls out from a two-pronged syntax for semi-clefts, one that tolerates (168) and (169) side by side. The structural ambiguity of semi-clefts is teased apart by person agreement: when the copula person-agrees with the focused subject, we are dealing with a monoclausal syntax of the type in (168), in which the lexical verb must also person-agree with the focus; when the copula does not show person agreement with the focused subject, we are dealing with a question–answer pair syntax *à la* (169), and concomitantly the lexical verb shows third person singular inflection as a reflex of its agreement relationship with the *wh*-word *quem* 'who'. Mixes of (166a) and (166d) are impossible or highly marked: lack of person agreement between the copula and the subject in combination with person agreement between the subject and the lexical verb clashes with what (168) delivers; person agreement between the copula and the subject in combination with third person inflection of the lexical verb clashes with the output predicted by (169).

3.1.3 Tense agreement in specificational copular sentences[17]

The reader will have noticed that in the examples in sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 the copula systematically agrees in tense with the finite lexical verb. Indeed, such tense agreement is typically required in specificational pseudoclefts:

(170) a. what you *are* holding in your hand *is* a small brown butterfly [pred/spec]
b. what you *are* holding in your hand *was* a small brown butterfly [pred]
c. what you *are* holding in your hand *will be* a small brown butterfly [pred]

17 See Akmajian (1979:169–70) for the original observations in (170) and (171), and Heggie (1988) for the facts in (172). There is some discussion of tense agreement in specificational copular sentences in O'Neill (2015), but the topic remains mostly unexplored.

Of the examples in (170), only the a–example, in which the tense of the copula matches the tense of the *wh*-clause, supports a specificational reading; the sentences in (170b,c) can only be read predicationally, with *a small brown butterfly* as the predicate of the free relative in precopular position.

This is part of a broader 'temporal concord' effect seen in specificational copular sentences:

(171) a. his *old* job *was* building radars at Lincoln Labs
b. *his *old* job *is* building radars at Lincoln Labs
c. *his *old* job *will be* building radars at Lincoln Labs

The attributive adjective *old* inside the precopular 'superscriptional' noun phrase conditions the use of the past-tense copula.

Though these tense agreement/concord effects in specificational copular sentences certainly are real, there are reasons to proceed with caution in this area. For instance, the effect of tense agreement/concord is stronger in specificational pseudoclefts when the *wh*-clause is in precopular position than when it is postcopular:

(172) a. where John *met* Mary *was* in the park
b. in the park *is* where John *met* Mary

While *was* is more natural than *is* in (172a), the use of *is* in (172b) is entirely unmarked. It is imaginable that this word order effect can be modelled structurally. If in (158b) the head 'Y' in whose specifier position the *wh*-clause lands is I, the head that harbours the matrix clause's tense specification, the matching of the tenses of the copula and the *wh*-clause can be thought of as a reflex of Spec–Head agreement, if the tense of the free relative is represented on the top node of the free relative. In (158a), by contrast, there is no Spec–Head relation between the finite copula and the *wh*-clause. If (for reasons that would need to be spelled out) tense matching is the strictly the privilege of Spec–Head agreement, contasts of the type seen in (172) may be accounted for.

(158) a. $[_{XP}\ [_{Subject}\ \text{FOCUS}]\ [_{X'}\ \text{X=COP}\ [_{Predicate}\ \text{FREE RELATIVE}]]]$
b. $[_{YP}\ [_{Predicate}\ \text{FREE RELATIVE}]_i\ [_{Y'}\ \text{Y+X=COP}\ [_{XP}\ [_{Subject}\ \text{FOCUS}]\ [_{X'}\ t_X\ t_i]]]]]$

Pseudoclefts with a question–answer pair syntax *à la* (159) (repeated below) also participate in tense harmony: it is more natural to say *what nobody bought was any wine* than *what nobody bought is any wine*. Here, too, the tense matching effect can be thought of in structural terms: the *wh*-clause finds itself in the specifier position of the TopP whose head is lexicalised as the finite copula.

(159) $[_{TopP}\ [_{CP}\ \textit{WH}\text{-QUESTION}]\ [_{Top'}\ \text{Top=COP}\ [_{IP=Answer}\ \ldots\ \text{FOCUS}\ \ldots]]]$

3.1.4 'Double-*is*' and copular amalgams[18]

For 'double-*is*' sentences of the type in (173) and copular amalgam sentences such as (174), the tense restrictions that they exhibit have been investigated in some detail as well.

18 On 'double *is*', see Massam (1999, 2013), Coppock & Staum-Casasanto (2004), O'Neill (2015). This last work also discusses other types of copular amalgam sentences at length, including their tense agreement behaviours.

(173) a. my problem is, is I ran out of cash
b. what troubles me is, is I ran out of cash
(174) that's what I worry about is my finances

On its face, a sentence such as (173a) seems similar to a Romance-style semi-cleft (section 3.1.2) in that a perfectly ordinary sentence with only one finite verbal element is 'infused' with an additional expression of finiteness in the form of a finite copula. Such 'infusion' can happen even in sentences that are explicitly pseudoclefts, as shown in (173b), where there are three finite verbs (*troubles* and two tokens of *is*). This shows that it is unlikely that (173a) can be treated as a partial spell-out of a pseudocleft (i.e., a reduction of *what my problem is is I ran out of cash*): for (173b) there is no 'unreduced' pseudocleft underlier (**what* [*what troubles me*] *is is I ran out of cash*). If we do consider setting up a pseudocleft source for (173a), the expectation arises, in light of the fact that pseudoclefts themselves can give rise to 'double-*is*', as (173b) shows, that there should be a version of (173a) with *three* tokens of *is*. This expectation is not borne out: **my problem is is is I ran out of cash*.

I do not have the space to do justice to the details of these 'peculiar' copular constructions and their tense agreement behaviour here. Instead, in the remaining subsections I will briefly review a number of agreement phenomena which, while not strictly speaking tied to copular constructions, manifest themselves most clearly or most robustly in the presence of a finite copula. I should emphasise that these phenomena may not reveal anything *per se* about the syntax of copular sentences. But for a full picture of what is special about copulas in the arena of movement and agreement, these data are worth including.

3.2 Agreement in relative clauses attached to a personal pronoun[19]

Though restrictive relatives as a rule do not accept pronominal 'heads' (an exception being cases in which pronouns are 'nounified' by the addition of an outer definite article: *the me who you are seeing now*), they can readily be modified by non-restrictive relative clauses. When the pronominal heads serve as subjects within these non-restrictive relatives, interesting effects present themselves in connection with person and (to a lesser extent) number agreement — which in the Germanic languages can only or optimally be observed in relative clauses with a finite copula.

The following examples paint a picture of the person and number agreement facts found in English non-restrictive relatives with a nominative pronominal head:

(175) a. I, who {am/?is} tall, was forced to squeeze into that VW
b. you$_{SG}$, who {are/?is} tall, were forced to squeeze into that VW
b′. you$_{PL}$, who {are/*is} tall, were forced to squeeze into that VW
(176) a. I, who Mary claims {is/*am} responsible, was not even there at the time
b. you$_{SG}$, who Mary claims {is/*are} responsible, were not even there at the time
b′. you$_{PL}$, who Mary claims {are/*is} responsible, were not even there at the time

Two things are noteworthy here: *(i)* the striking difference between highest-subject relatives (175) and long-distance relativisation (176); *(ii)* the difference between singular and plural *you* in the form of the copula that they sanction in the relative clause.

19 For relevant discussion and empirical material, see Akmajian (1970:153–4), Ross (1970:251), Heck & Cuartero (2012), Douglas (2015), Den Dikken 2019). On the idea that English *you* is grammatically plural, see Kayne (2000). On the agreement facts in (177)–(178), see Kimball & Aissen (1971), Kayne (2000), Baker (2011), Den Dikken (2019).

The difference between (175b) and (175b′) and (even more strikingly) between (176b) and (176b′) indicates that despite the fact that *you* in its 'own' clause always co-occurs with a verbal form from the plural paradigm (*you are*, *you were*), the relative operator *who* is endowed with a number feature of its own. The English pronoun *you* itself comes in just one variety: the local agreement behaviour of *you* tells us that it is consistently grammatically plural. The fact that within the non-restrictive relative clause a number distinction manifests itself in the agreement form of the finite verb then indicates that agreement inside the relative clause is autonomously controlled by the relative operator, *who*, and that this operator is specified for number based not on the morphological number feature specification of the head but on the notional plurality of the head: when *you* refers to a multiplicity of addressees, the proxy of the pronoun inside the relative clause is endowed with a plural feature thanks to notional concord between the relative operator and the head, and concomitantly *who* controls plural verb agreement with the verb in the relative clause.

The relative operator is specified not only for number but also, in highest-subject relatives, for the person of the head: in (175a), the person-marked form *am* is generally preferred to the third person form *is*. This preference is turned on its head, however, under long-distance relativisation: now only *is* is possible; the use of *am* in (176a) is unacceptable. A way to analyse the impossibility of person agreement in (176a) is to assume that there is no long-distance Ā-movement in non-restrictive clauses: instead, the relative operator originates in the matrix clause, as a proleptic pronoun; it is linked to a silent pronoun in the subordinate clause, with which it entertains a relationship of concord for number (see (176b~b′)) but not for person. The fact that person is not implicated in this concord relationship fits in with (98), above: the relationship between matrix *who* and the silent pronoun in the subordinate clause is not of the restrictive structural type required for person matching — the structural distance between the proleptic *wh*-operator in the matrix clause and the resumptive pronoun in the embedded clause is too great to support person matching.

What lends support for this is the distribution of agreement on the matrix verb under long-distance subject relativisation. In certain varieties of (East-Coast) American English, long-distance subject relativisation can cause the verb in the matrix clause to number-agree with the head of the relative clause (see (177)). Importantly, however, person agreement between the matrix verb and the head is impossible, as (178) shows. The relative operator *who* can match the number feature of the null resumptive in the subordinate clause but not its person feature.

(177) the people who Clark {thinks/'think} are in the garden

(178) a. I, who Clark {is/*am} hoping will marry his daughter

b. you, who Clark {is/*are} hoping will marry his daughter

How, then, do we derive the person agreement facts in highest-subject relatives such as (175a)? A perspective on this question is to assume that concord takes place between the head and the entire relative CP, which are in a predication relationship. (Concord is common between subjects and their predicates, cross-linguistically.) This concord relation causes CP to have the same φ- and case-feature set as the head:

(179) $[_{RP}\ [_{\#P}\ \#\ [_{NP}\ N]]]_{\{\varphi,\ CASE\}}\ [_{R'}\ RELATOR\ [_{CP}\ RELCLAUSE]_{\{\varphi,\ CASE\}}]]$

COPYING UNDER CONCORD

By standard feature percolation along X-bar projection lines, CP's concordial feature set is present on C as well. C, in turn, is in a feature-sharing relationship with I, by which the local I of a highest-subject relative clause ends up agreeing with the head for all φ- and case-features.

This predicts that person agreement between the subject-head and the finite verb of the relative clause is possible only when the head has nominative case: otherwise there will be a clash with I's nominative case specification. This prediction is borne out: in (180), person agreement between the accusative head of the relative clause and the finite copula is impossible.

(180) he assigned the job to me, who {is/*am} tall

Note that person agreement in the relative clause is also ungrammatical when the accusative form of the head is not the result of a structural case-assignment relationship but instead the default case, as in the *it*-cleft in (181):

(181) it is ME who {is/*am} tall

The accusative case form in (181) is probably a purely phonological (PF) property of the pronoun in question. Concord is a PF operation, so it copies not just structural accusatives but also default accusatives over onto the relative clause and, ultimately, onto the I-head of the relative clause, which has a nominative case feature. For both (180) and (181), this results in a feature clash at I, which causes these sentences to be rejected with concord.

Unlike concord for person, number agreement between the head of a highest-subject relative clause and the finite verb is not ruled out in non-nominative environments (see (177)). This is because there is a way for the relative operator *who* to be equipped with a plural feature based on the notional plurality of the head (recall the discussion of (175b~b′) and (176b~b′)). Person-feature sharing between the head and the finite verb, by contrast, is entirely dependent on a concord relationship of the type in (179), which requires case-feature identity.

I have no full picture of the person and number agreement facts in pronominally headed non-restrictive relative clauses across the Germanic languages (or beyond). From the literature, I can only quote the facts reported for Dutch and German. For highest-subject relatives with a nominative head, the Dutch facts are as follows:

(182) a. ik, die moe {ben/is}, ... (Dutch)
I who tired am/is
b. jij, die moe {bent/*is}, ...
you_{SG} who tired are/is
b′. jullie, die moe {zijn/*is}, ...
you_{PL} who tired are/is

Dutch (182) is by and large on a par with English (175). A slight twist is that third person *is* is relatively better in (182a) and relatively worse in (182b), compared to the situation in English. But the general trend is the same in the two languages: the copula in the relative clause preferably person-agrees with the pronominal head of the relative clause.

The German examples in (183) feature a full copy of the pronominal head inside the relative clause. Unsurprisingly, this copy, being inherently specified for person and number, controls full agreement with the copula inside the relative clause.

(183) a. ich, der ich müde {bin/*ist}, ... (German)
I who I tired am/is
b. du, der du müde {bist/*ist}, ...
you_{SG} who you_{SG} tired are/is
b′. ihr, die ihr müde {seid/*sind/*ist}, ...
you_{PL} who you_{PL} tired are_{2PL}/are_{3PL}/is

(I will not include a discussion of long-distance relativisation with a pronominal head in Dutch and German. Non-highest subject relatives are extremely unnatural without overt resumption in these languages. The fact that even the equivalent of English *John, who Mary thinks committed the crime, is innocent* is extremely tenuous in Dutch and German makes it rather pointless to investigate the number and person agreement behaviour of these constructions.)

3.3 Agreeing adverbials as underlying copular sentences

There are languages in which (certain) adverbial modifiers agree in φ-features with the subject of the clause in which they appear. I will present two such cases here, only in the broadest of outlines.

3.3.1 Agreeing 'how' and 'thus' in Bantu[20]

In the Luhya languages of narrow Bantu, 'how'-questions present an agreement pattern that is unusual from an Indo-European perspective: the *wh*-word translating as 'how' obligatorily shows agreement with the subject. A similar pattern presents itself for the non-*wh* counterpart of 'how', i.e., 'so/thus'.

(184) a. ny-emba en-die? (Lusaamia)
1SG-sing 1SG-how
'how do I sing?'
b. w-emba o-tie?
2SG-sing 2SG-how
'how do you sing?'
b′. w-emba o-rio
2SG-sing 2SG-thus
'you sing thus'

For the analysis of these agreement patterns, one could postulate a mechanism whereby the φ-features of the *v*P-adjoined manner adverbial and the φ-features of the subject can engage in an Agree relationship in a monoclausal syntax. This Agree relation will then have to be independent of the Agree relation that I is involved in. This is particularly clear from the agreement facts for 'how' questions featuring locative inversion: in Lubukusu, there exist locative inversion constructions in which the finite verb (I) agrees with the fronted locative but 'how' agrees with the thematic subject.

20 For data and discussion of two different analytical perspectives, see Carstens & Diercks (2013), Den Dikken & O'Neill (2020).

An alternative outlook on the agreeing 'how' and 'thus' would be to treat the adverbial as a predicate of a clause of its own, linked paratactically to a preceding clause, with a silent pronoun (*pro*) coindexed with the subject of the preceding clause. This second clause could be a copular clause: note that in copular (185) there is agreement between the subject and 'how'.

(185) o-riena? (Lubukusu)
2SG-how
'how are you?'

Alternatively, we could be dealing with a clause that has the same predicate as the first clause but which is stripped down to the adverbial, with agreement morphology docking on to the adverbial. Either way, these biclausal approaches can account insightfully for the complex patterns for locative inversion constructions in Lubukusu, and they allow us to eschew any complications in the realm of the Agree mechanism.

3.3.2 Agreeing manner adverbials in Tundra Nenets[21]

In Tundra Nenets (a Uralic language spoken in Russia), manner adverbials show agreement with the notional subject, in active and passive clauses alike. For passive (186b), the facts are particularly interesting in light of the fact that the passivised verb agrees in number with the surface subject (i.e., the promoted object), while it continues to agree in both person and number with the notional subject.

(186) a. mən′° s′it° m′in°xə-n′i/*m′in°xə-nt° xanaə-dəm-s′° (Tundra Nenets)
1SG you.ACC quickly-1SG/quickly-2SG take-1SG-PST
'I quickly took you away'
b. m′in°xə-n′i/*m′in°xə-t′ih mən′° xo-we-xəyu-n°
quickly-1SG/quickly-3DU 1SG find-PASS-DU-1SG
'they (DUAL) were quickly found by me'

Again, accounting for the adverbial agreement facts in a monoclausal syntax introduces complications for the Agree mechanism. Such complications may be circumvented by positing a biclausal syntax for these constructions, with the 'agreeing adverbial' represented as the predicate of a copular clause. For (186), English can provide the relevant biclausal paraphrases quite straightforwardly:

(187) a. I was quick to take you away
b. I was quick to get them found

The benefits of biclausal approaches to agreeing adverbials, both in Bantu and in Tundra Nenets, probably outweigh the departure from pure 'wysiwyg' ('what you see is what you get') that such approaches entail. I would encourage future research to investigate the pros and cons of biclausal representations of sentences with agreeing adverbials in greater detail. The present remarks serve more as a definition of a research agenda than as a full report on the vicissitudes of a biclausal analysis, which I am not in a position to give at this stage.

21 The data reported here are from Nikolaeva (2014:179). The biclausal analysis suggested in the text is original to the present paper.

3.4 The role of agreement in licensing ellipsis in copular sentences (and beyond)[22]

The last thing that I would like to briefly address in connection with agreement in copular sentences is the role of Spec–Head agreement in the licensing of ellipsis in these constructions.

3.4.1 Copular inversion and ellipsis

As we have seen in the discussion of copular inversion earlier in this paper, the structural subject position of a copular clause can be occupied either by logical subject of predication or by the logical predicate.

(188) a. the agreement facts are my biggest worry
b. my biggest worry is the agreement facts

There is a broad consensus that in English double-DP specificational copular sentences, the copula as a rule does not agrees in number with the noun phrase to its right. But an important question which there is considerable disagreement on in the literature is whether the copula in (188b) engages in an agreement relation with the predicate nominal to its left. There is a strand of research that takes the φ-features of the copula in (188b) to be a default feature set (third person singular), not the reflex of agreement between the copula and the 'superscriptional' noun phrase, the occupant of SpecIP.

Directly relevant to this debate is the distribution of VP ellipsis. It can be established on independent grounds that the head I can only license ellipsis of its complement if it is in an agreement relationship with the subject in SpecIP. This being the case, the distribution of VP ellipsis in sentences of the type in (188) should be able to reveal whether I agrees with the occupant of SpecIP. The facts are as follows:

(189) a. for this theory, the agreement facts have turned out to be my biggest worry; for that theory, the ELLIPSIS facts have __
b. *for this theory, my biggest worry has turned out to be the agreement facts; for that theory, YOUR biggest worry has __

The contrast between the canonical copular sentence in (189a) and the inverse copular sentence in (189b) is robust. VP ellipsis is not licensed in the latter. The ungrammaticality of VP ellipsis in (189b) falls out from an analysis of inverse copular sentences on which the occupant of the structural subject position is not in an agreement relationship with the head I, the prospective licenser of ellipsis.

In copular inversion constructions in which the finite verb is inflected for plural number (as in (190)), VP ellipsis *is* licensed: (191b) is grammatical.

(190) a. Austen and Heller are my favourite authors
b. my favourite authors are Austen and Heller
(191) a. twenty years ago, Austen and Heller were my favourite authors; nowadays, TOLSTOY AND CHEKHOV are ___
b. twenty years ago, my favourite authors were Austen and Heller; nowadays, MY DAUGHTER's favourite authors are __, too

22 The discussion in this section is based on Griffiths & Den Dikken (2021). The examples in (190), of plural agreement in specificational copular sentences with conjoined proper names as the subject, are from Heycock (2012).

This appears to confirm that ellipsis of I's complement is possible only if I is in an agreement relation with something.

For (190b) it is difficult to say with certainty whether I number-agrees with the precopular noun phrase or with the postcopular conjoined names. It may be possible to establish this by looking at copular sentences featuring *plurale tantum* predicates with singular subjects. Recall from (85) and (86), above, that in such constructions, the copula agrees with the singular subject in sentences with canonical word order but (usually) with the *plurale tantum* predicate in inversion constructions. Constructing examples in which two *pluralia tantum* are contrasted in such a way that the result is pragmatically natural is a difficult task — after all, nouns like *misgivings*, *tidings* and *spoils* are sufficiently unrelated to one another semantically to make it implausible for them to have the same subject. The logic of the experiment is clear; but its execution awaits cleverly constructed stimuli.

3.4.2 Locative inversion and ellipsis

Locative inversion constructions such as (192b) *prima facie* seem to involve the placement of a locative PP predicate in SpecIP, similarly to what is going in inverse copular sentences. What pleads against this, however, is the fact that locative inversion cannot take place within the confines of an infinitival clause: see (193). This has been taken to indicate that the fronted PP in (192b) occupies an Ā-position in the left periphery of the clause, with the structural subject position being occupied by a silent proform linked to the initial PP, as shown in (194).

(192) a. the Confederate flag used to fly on this building
b. on this building used to fly the Confederate flag

(193) a. I believe [the Confederate flag to have flown on this building]
b. *I believe [on this building to have flown the Confederate flag]

(194) [$_{PP}$ *on this building*] [$_{IP}$ $\varnothing_i$ [$_{I'}$ I [... [$_{RP}$ *the Confederate flag* t_i]]]]

The question that arises is whether the silent occupant of the structural subject position in (194) engages in an agreement relation with I. VP ellipsis can serve as a guide in answering this question. The ungrammaticality of (195) shows that VP ellipsis is not licensed in locative inversion constructions in English.

(195) *on this building used to fly the Confederate flag; on THAT building did __, too

The fact that locative inversion is incompatible with VP ellipsis indicates that I is not engaged in an agreement relation with the silent element occupying SpecIP in English locative inversion constructions. The silent proform in SpecIP is linked to the initial PP but is not itself equipped with featural content that would enable it to engage in an agreement relation with I.

4 Concluding remarks

We have reached the end of an exhilarating journey through the maze of movement and agreement restrictions presented by copular constructions, both in the clause and in the complex noun phrase. A few things stand out, by way of a conclusion:

- There can be no doubt that copular elements play an essential role in mediating the predication relation between the predicate and its subject.
- It is equally uncontroversial (by now) that predication relations in copular constructions can be inverted, and that such inversion can involve movement of the predicate into the structural subject position.
- Predicate raising has clear and overall cross-linguistically constant effects on the mobility and φ-agreement behaviour of the subject of predication.
- In the realm of φ-agreement, number and person behave markedly differently in inverse copular constructions, which motivates a restriction on person agreement that implicates the Spec–Head relation.
- Spec–Head agreement also seems implicated in the licensing of ellipsis in copular constructions.
- Finally, a number of otherwise peculiar agreement phenomena (especially apparent subject agreement with adverbial expressions) can be better understood if the constructions in question are analysed as biclausal, with one of the constituent clauses being a copular sentence.

The morphosyntax of movement and agreement in copular constructions will be a productive laboratory for linguistic theory in the decades that lie ahead. Although I have striven for exhaustiveness and have done my level best to provide analytical perspectives on all the phenomena addressed in the above, plenty of food for further thought remains on the plate. I wish the interested reader *bon appétit*.

Acknowledgements

This paper was prepared for presentation as a tutorial at the Move & Agree Forum 2021, co-organised by the University of British Columbia and McGill University by James Crippen, Rose-Marie Déchaine and Hermann Keupdjio. I am very grateful to the organisers for thinking of me as a presenter, and for the support provided in the preparation of the tutorial. For all inaccuracies, (inevitable) lacunae and oversights in this survey, I alone bear full responsibility.

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second draft • 25 May 2021

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