

# Epithets as *De Re* Pronouns

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This paper outlines the distribution of epithets (e.g. *the idiot*) that occur in a c-command relation with their antecedents in environments where Condition C obviation effects occur. It argues that epithets have the syntax of null pronouns that are modified by a nominal appositive. Cases where their distribution differs from that of pronouns are explained as follows: Epithets cannot modify null pronouns that are uninterpreted, e.g. to receive a *de se* construal. This derives different contrasts in the distribution of epithets, shedding new light on the nature of anti-locality and the Binding Conditions.

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## 1 The Empirical Scope

### 1.1 What are Epithets?

Epithets are anaphoric expressions that look like definite descriptions, in the sense that they consist of a nominal component and a determiner. However they differ from definite descriptions in that they involve a negative or positive evaluative component, as in the case of *the idiot* in (1a) and *the great man* in (1b), respectively. Any noun can be construed as an epithet if the relevant world view is constructed, as shown in the examples in (2)<sup>1</sup>, where *the whistleblower* and *the Naxalite* are used to convey a negative evaluation of the referent.

- (1) a. Yesterday **John**<sub>1</sub> bumped into a fan who really loves **the idiot**<sub>1</sub>  
b. Yesterday **John**<sub>1</sub> bumped into a fan who really loves **the great man**<sub>1</sub>
- (2) a. Yesterday **John**<sub>1</sub> bumped into a fan who really loves **the whistleblower**<sub>1</sub>  
b. Yesterday **John**<sub>1</sub> bumped into a fan who really loves **the Naxalite**<sub>1</sub>

As shown in (1) and (2), epithets can occur in configurations where they are c-commanded by a coreferential DP (here: *John*). This is generally assumed to be impossible with definite descriptions that do not qualify as epithets (*Binding Condition C*, cf. Chomsky 1981). The core question of this paper is how to account for such 'Condition C obviation' effects and how they are constrained. An initial question that arises at this point concerns the nature of the relationship between the epithet and the antecedent, i.e. whether it involves (*accidental*) *co-reference* or *referential dependency*.

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<sup>1</sup>Thanks to Noam Chomsky (p.c.) for these examples.

### 1.2 Co-reference vs. Referential Dependency

There are different ways in which DPs can co-refer. Example (3) illustrates a case of *accidental co-reference* (cf. Evans 1980, Higginbotham 1985); in this case, there are two determiner phrases that refer to the same individual because of the context. In other words, in (3), the DP *Harry Wormwood* and the DP *the actor on TV* both denote the same entity and accidentally co-refer due to the context (and crucially, without a so-called *referential dependency*, see below).

- (3) *Context: the actor on TV is Harry Wormwood, who does not realise it.*  
 [Harry Wormwood]<sub>1</sub> thinks that [the actor on TV]<sub>2</sub> is popular.

By contrast, *referential dependency* is a relation that holds between two determiner phrases if the meaning of one is dependent on the other (cf. Evans 1980, Reinhart 1983b). It can be shown that the relationship between epithets and their c-commanding antecedents that we have seen in (1) is one of referential dependency and not one of accidental coreference.

The importance of referential dependency is illustrated in (4a) vs. (3). While (3) is acceptable, (4a) is unacceptable. Reinhart (1983a, 1983b) explains the unacceptability of examples like (4a) by defining Condition C as a restriction that states that a non-pronominal DP (such as *the actor*) cannot be c-commanded by an antecedent DP that it is referentially dependent on. Reinhart (1983a, 1983b) attributes the role of c-command to the possibility/impossibility of syntactic binding; (4a) is unacceptable for *Harry Wormwood* is in a position from where it can syntactically bind a DP in the location of *the actor*. By contrast, (4b) is acceptable for *Harry Wormwood* is not in such a position.

- (4) *Context: out of the blue, i.e. the name 'Harry Wormwood' introduces a referent.*  
 a. \* [Harry Wormwood]<sub>1</sub> thinks that the actor<sub>1</sub> is popular.  
 b. [Harry Wormwood's mother]<sub>1</sub> thinks that the actor<sub>1</sub> is popular.

It is thus surprising that we find cases like (1)-(2), given that these examples appear to involve referential dependency, rather than accidental co-reference. The observation that epithets can obviate Condition C in certain contexts goes back to Dubinsky & Hamilton (1998), who present examples like (5a) (adapted from Dubinsky & Hamilton 1998:687); here, the epithet *the idiot* is contained in a relative clause c-commanded by the epithet's antecedent *Harry Wormwood*. The example in (5b) shows that Condition C obviation is specific to epithets, and does not concern R-expressions in general; if we replace *the idiot* with *the actor*, the sentence becomes unacceptable.

- (5) a. Harry Wormwood<sub>1</sub> ran over a man who was trying to give the idiot<sub>1</sub> directions.  
 b. \* Harry Wormwood<sub>1</sub> ran over a man who was trying to give the actor<sub>1</sub> directions.

These data show that it is not trivial that epithets obviate Condition C in relative clauses. One may conjecture that such configurations simply involve Quantifier Raising (QR) followed by late merge of a relative clause (cf. Lebeaux 1988); while this type of QR is known to exist, it is not unconstrained. Fox (1999) discusses the examples in (6), which are ungrammatical even though QR should give rise to the LFs in (7). (Examples from Fox 1999:181.)

- (6) a. \* You bought him<sub>1</sub> every picture that John<sub>1</sub> liked.  
 b. \* He<sub>1</sub> bought you every picture that John<sub>1</sub> liked.
- (7) a. [every picture that John<sub>1</sub> liked] [you bought him<sub>1</sub> t]  
 b. [every picture that John<sub>1</sub> liked] [he bought you<sub>1</sub> t]

Crucially, epithets can obviate Condition C even in the cases that Fox (1999) takes to be ungrammatical, as shown by (8) vs. (9). The examples in (8) (from Fox 1999:181) are unacceptable, whereas the same examples with an epithet in (9) are acceptable.

- (8) a. \* You sent him<sub>1</sub> the letter that John<sub>1</sub> expected you would write.  
 b. \* You reported him<sub>1</sub> to every cop that John<sub>1</sub> was afraid of.
- (9) a. You sent him<sub>1</sub> the letter that the idiot<sub>1</sub> expected you would write.  
 b. You reported him<sub>1</sub> to every cop that the idiot<sub>1</sub> was afraid of.

This indicates that epithets can quite generally obviate Binding Condition C. At this point, one may ask if Dubinsky & Hamilton's (1998) observation is confined to English. The next section shows that it is not.

### 1.3 Relative Clauses Cross-Linguistically

The following set of cross-linguistic examples<sup>2</sup> shows that epithets may quite generally be commanded by a co-referent antecedent when contained in a restrictive relative clause.

- (10) *Czech*  
<sup>OK</sup> Včera Honza narazil na fanouška, který toho idiota úplně zbožňuje.  
 yesterday Honza bumped on fan who that idiot totally adores  
 'Yesterday, John<sub>1</sub> bumped into a fan who really loves the idiot<sub>1</sub>'.

- (11) *Croatian*  
<sup>?OK</sup> Jučer je John<sub>1</sub> naletio na obožavatelja koji stvarno  
 yesterday aux.3sg John bumped.ptcpl on fan who really  
 obožava tog idiota<sub>1</sub>  
 adores that idiot  
 'Yesterday, John<sub>1</sub> bumped into a fan who really loves the idiot<sub>1</sub>'.

- (12) *Dutch*  
<sup>OK</sup> Gisteren kwam Jan<sub>1</sub> een fan tegen die helemaal dol is op de idioot<sub>1</sub>  
 yesterday met Jan a fan prt who entirely fond is of the idiot  
 'Yesterday John met a fan who is really fond of the idiot.'

<sup>2</sup>The aim throughout this paper is not to provide a comparative analysis for all of the empirical data presented, but to show that the observation of epithets in particular configurations that involve Condition C obviation) is cross-linguistically robust.

(13) *French*

<sup>OK</sup> Hier, John<sub>1</sub> est tombé sur un fan qui adore cet imbécile<sub>1</sub>.  
 yesterday John is fallen onto a fan who loves the idiot  
 ‘Yesterday John bumped into a fan who loves the idiot.’

(14) *Russian*

<sup>OK</sup> John včera vstretil poklonnicu, kotoraja bogotvorit ètogo idiota.  
 John yesterday met fan.fem who.fem adores this idiot  
 ‘Yesterday, John bumped into a fan who really loves the idiot.’

At this point, the question arises if and how Condition C obviation with epithets is constrained. Section 1.4 addresses this issue, as well as outlining the core problem to be solved in this paper.

1.4 *The Core Problem*

Once we have established that epithets can sometimes be referentially dependent on a c-commanding antecedent, we expect to find such configurations quite generally. And, indeed, in addition to the examples where epithets are bound inside relative clauses, we also find cases where they are bound in complement clauses. In example (15), the epithet *the idiot* is in a complement clause and it is c-commanded across the clause boundary by a co-referring antecedent, *John* (which is in the matrix subject position). Such examples are cross-linguistically acceptable, as illustrated for Croatian in (16). Observe the difference between (15a)/(16a) and (15b)/(16b), which shows, once again, that a regular NP such as *the janitor* cannot occur in such contexts.

- (15)a. <sup>?OK</sup> John<sub>1</sub> convinced the panel that [the idiot]<sub>1</sub> is smart.  
 b. \* John<sub>1</sub> convinced the panel that [the janitor]<sub>1</sub> is smart.

(16) *Croatian*

- a. <sup>?OK</sup> Peter<sub>1</sub> je uvjerio predstavnike da će prokleti  
 Peter aux.3sg convinced.ptcpl representatives that will.3sg damn  
 izdajnik<sub>1</sub> riješiti problem.  
 traitor solve problem.  
 ‘Peter<sub>1</sub> convinced the representatives that the damn traitor<sub>1</sub> would solve the problem.’
- b. \* Bill<sub>1</sub> je uvjerio predstavnike da će podvornik<sub>1</sub>  
 Bill aux.3sg convinced.ptcpl representatives that will.3sg janitor  
 riješiti problem.  
 solve problem  
 ‘Bill<sub>1</sub> convinced the representatives that the janitor<sub>1</sub> would solve the problem.’

However epithets cannot freely co-refer with a c-commanding antecedent cf. (17) and (18); epithets are less acceptable in complements to *think* than in complements to *convince*, at least when in subject position.

(17) \* Peter<sub>1</sub> thinks that the idiot<sub>1</sub> is smart.

(18) *Croatian*

\* Peter<sub>1</sub> misli da je prokleti izdajnik<sub>1</sub> pametan.  
 Peter thinks that AUX.3sg damn traitor smart  
 'Peter<sub>1</sub> thinks that the damn traitor<sub>1</sub> is smart.'

Contrasts like (19a) vs (19b) show that matters are more complex. Specifically, a bound epithet can occur in the object position of a complement clause under *think*, but not in the subject position.

- (19) a. \* Nero<sub>1</sub> thinks that [the damn traitor<sub>1</sub>] will be invited to the reception.  
 b. <sup>OK</sup> Nero<sub>1</sub> thinks that they will invite [the damn traitor<sub>1</sub>] to the reception.

The reader should be aware that the judgments for such constructions vary greatly. The data presented here were collected via an informed ratings questionnaire. For information regarding number of participants for each language, cf. Patel-Grosz (2012). It should be pointed out that since my Ph.D. thesis, I have carried out follow up surveys for German on an additional 30 speakers.

In the remainder of this paper, I will attempt to explain the distribution of epithets in contexts where they occur with a c-commanding antecedent, as outlined above. My goal is to derive the contrast between (15a) and (17) on the one hand, and the contrast between (19a) and (19b) on the other hand. Section 2 presents a syntactic analysis of epithets that accounts for the fact that epithets are not generally not subject to Condition C even though they take the surface shape of definite descriptions. In section 3, I propose a semantic analysis that derives the examples where Condition C effects appear to resurface, and the contrasts that we have observed.

## 2. The Syntactic Structure of Epithets

There is a long standing debate in the literature which questions the nature of epithets, i.e. whether they are R-expressions or pronouns. I am going to show that for the purposes of the narrow syntax, epithets are pronouns, and present empirical evidence in favour of this claim.<sup>3</sup> Specifically, I argue that epithets are null pronouns modified by a nominal appositive, as illustrated in (20).

(20) [pro [the idiot]] *which corresponds to* [**he**, [the idiot]]

Section 2.1 argues that epithets are pronominal in nature; section 2.2 provides support for the specific analysis in (20).

<sup>3</sup>Further evidence and argumentation are provided in Patel-Grosz (2012).

## 2.1 Epithets as Pronominal Elements

### 2.1.1 In Support of Epithets as Pronouns I

To begin with, consider the discussion in Aoun & Choueiri (2000). Aoun & Choueiri argue that epithets<sup>4</sup> in Lebanese Arabic involve an appositive structure, which contains a pronoun *ha* 'this', cf. (21) (from Aoun & Choueiri 2000:2-3). In other words, an epithet such as *the idiot* has the structure *he the idiot*. This seems to be a more general pattern, also observed in Demirdache & Percus (2011a, 2011b) for Jordanian Arabic.

- (21) ha-l-habiile      Saami  
       this-the-idiot    Saami  
       'this idiot Saami'

My proposal in (20) is motivated by the assumption that expressions with a similar syntactic and semantic behaviour and distribution also share structural properties cross-linguistically<sup>5</sup>.

### 2.1.2 In Support of Epithets as Pronouns II

Further argumentation for the claim that epithets are pronouns can be found in Beller (2011), who observes that epithets have the same prosodic properties as pronouns cf. (22) (adapted from Beller 2011:1); (22b) shows that a pronoun in a sentence with default focus must be unstressed. Beller finds that epithets quite generally pattern like pronouns with respect to prosody. In (23a) (from Beller 2011:1, who attributes it to Ladd 2008), *the butcher* is unstressed, resulting in the epithet reading. In contrast, if we stress the epithet, only the literal interpretation is possible.

- (22) a. [Susan slapped JIM]<sub>F</sub>  
       b. [Susan SLAPPED him]<sub>F</sub>  
       c. Susan slapped [HIM]<sub>F</sub>

- (23) Context: How was your operation?  
       a. Don't ask me about it. I'd like to STRANGLE the butcher (butcher = surgeon)  
       b. Don't ask me about it. I'd like to strange the BUTCHER (butcher = butcher)

### 2.1.3 New Evidence from Quantifier-Variable Binding

The strongest piece of evidence for treating epithets as pronouns stems from the following observation. In many languages, an epithet such as *the idiot* can co-vary with a quantifier such as *every professor* that c-commands it. The epithet in such constructions is thus syntactically bound by the quantifier under c-command. Crucially, a quantifier can bind an epithet in a restrictive relative clause, (24a), but not in an appositive relative clause, (25a). This is the same pattern that we find with bound pronouns, as in (24b) and (25b), thus lending support to the assumption that (24a) involves syntactic binding.

<sup>4</sup>In Lebanese Arabic, the expressive component of epithets is typically negative, cf. Aoun & Choueiri (2000) for further discussions and data.

<sup>5</sup>In Arabic, the pronoun is overt, whereas in languages like English and German, the pronoun is null.

(24) *Dutch*

- a. <sup>OK</sup> Bij de receptie is iedere professor<sub>3</sub> wel een (één of andere) student  
 at the reception is every professor AFF a one or other student  
 tegengekomen die **de idioot**<sub>3</sub> had laten zakken.  
 met who the idiot had let fail
- b. <sup>OK</sup> Bij de receptie is iedere professor<sub>3</sub> wel een (één of andere)  
 at the reception is(AUX) every professor AFF a one or other  
 uitmuntende student tegengekomen die **ze**<sub>3</sub> had laten zakken.  
 excellent student met who she had let fail  
 ‘At the reception, every professor<sub>3</sub> bumped into some student or other who the  
 idiot<sub>3</sub> / she<sub>3</sub> had failed.’

(25) *Dutch*

- a. \* Bij de receptie is iedere professor<sub>3</sub> die geniale Jan tegengekomen die  
 at the reception is every professor that genius Jan met who  
**de idioot**<sub>3</sub> had laten zakken.  
 the idiot had let fail
- b. \* Bij de receptie is iedere professor<sub>3</sub> die geniale Jan tegengekomen die  
 at the reception is every professor that genius Jan met who  
**ze**<sub>3</sub> had laten zakken.  
 she had let fail  
 ‘At the reception, every professor<sub>3</sub> bumped into the genius John who the idiot<sub>3</sub> / she<sub>3</sub>  
 had failed.’

Generally, only pronouns can be bound by quantifiers; therefore, examples like (24a) support the view that epithets are pronouns and not R-expressions (cf. also the German example in (26), which also involves a restrictive relative clause: the pronoun *denjenigen* ‘those’ can only be modified by a restricted relative clause and not by an appositive relative clause).

- (26) Jeder NPÖ-Politiker<sub>1</sub> schickt denjenigen, die den Idioten<sub>1</sub> öffentlich unterstützen,  
 every NPO-politician sends those who the idiot publicly support  
 eine Kornblume.  
 a corn.flower  
 ‘Every NPÖ politician sends a cornflower to those who publicly support the idiot.’

In addition to being bound in a restrictive relative clause by a quantifier outside of the clause, example (27) from Dutch shows that epithets can also be bound in complement clauses. This corroborates the generalisation from above, i.e. that epithets can co-vary with a quantifier and be bound under c-command. In (27), *die idioot* (the idiot) seems to be bound by *iedere uitvoerder* (every performer).

- (27) Iedere uitvoerder<sub>1</sub> overtuigde het panel ervan dat die idioot<sub>1</sub> slim is.  
 every performer convinced the panel of.it that the idiot smart is.  
 ‘Every performer convinced the panel that the idiot is smart.’

Having thus argued that epithets exhibit the behaviour of pronominal elements, we can now turn to the second part of the analysis, i.e. treating epithets as nominal appositives that modify a null pronoun.

## 2.2 *Epithets as Nominal Appositives with a Null Head*

### 2.2.1 *The Proposal*

As briefly discussed above, I propose that epithets have the structure of a nominal appositive, illustrated in (28). Nominal appositives consist of an anchor, such as *John* in (29c), which is the head of the appositive, and an apposition (here: *the idiot*). The analysis in (28) is very much in the spirit of den Dikken (2001) and Kayne (2010), who propose that so-called *committee nouns* actually have the structure *they, the committee* with a null variant of *they*.

(28) [pro [the idiot]] *which corresponds to* [**he**, [the idiot]]

- (29) a. Do you know John? *The idiot* came to my party  
 b. Do you know John? *He, The idiot* came to my party  
 c. *John, the idiot*, came to my party

Note that the idea of treating epithets as nominal appositives is not new, cf. Postal's (1972:247)<sup>6</sup> examples below in (30) and (31). In this vein, although I adopt a different analysis from Postal (1972), I concur in arguing that epithets are pronouns that are modified by an appositive.

- (30) a. I wanted Harry<sub>i</sub> to help me but he<sub>i</sub>, who is a bastard, wouldn't do it  
 b. I wanted Harry<sub>i</sub> to help me but the bastard<sub>i</sub> wouldn't do it
- (31) a. I have never met Melvin<sub>i</sub> but Joan says she has met him, who<sub>i</sub> is a bastard  
 b. I have never met Melvin<sub>i</sub> but Joan says she has met the bastard<sub>i</sub>

Let us now turn to empirical arguments for the analysis in (28).

### 2.2.2 *Arguments for Treating Epithets as Nominal Appositives with a Null Anchor*<sup>7</sup>

Den Dikken (2001), Kayne (2010) and Taylor (2009) have argued for other constructions that there are nominal appositives which have a null anchor, as I assume for epithets. The basic idea is that so called *plurilinguals* or *committee nouns* that can trigger plural-like agreement (given in (33a)) actually involve a singular nominal appositive (*the committee*) with a plural anchor (the null pronoun *THEY* in (33c)). ((33) is based on Kayne 2010:133, footnote 3.)

Kayne (2010) presents the following argument for this analysis: On the one hand, floating quantifiers typically associate with a suitable noun phrase (e.g. *the politicians* in (32)); on the other hand, in plurilingual constructions, although quantifier float is possible, (33a), the

<sup>6</sup>While Postal (1972) suggests on the basis of (30)–(31) that perhaps epithets are underlyingly appositive constructions, he does not explicitly discuss their appositive structure. Since Postal (1972), many others have followed suit in assuming that epithets are appositives (Umbach 2002, Potts 2003, 2005, 2007, and Beller 2011), but the internal structure of the epithet remains controversial.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. Patel-Grosz (2012) for further argumentation supporting this claim.

quantifier cannot be a part of the DP, (33b). This is exactly what we would expect if (33a) is analysed as (33c) and (33b) as (33d), since quantifiers like *all* cannot modify pronouns like *they*.

- (32) a. The politicians have **all** voted yes. / **All** the politicians have voted yes.  
 b. The politicians have **both** voted yes. / **Both** the politicians have voted yes.
- (33) a. The committee have all voted yes.  
 b.\* All the committee have voted yesterday  
 c. THEY, the committee, have all voted yes  
 d.\* All THEY, the committee, have voted yes

To summarise the core point of Kayne's argument, committee nouns can c-command a floating quantifier, (33a), but they cannot combine with the quantifier, (33b); while we can say *all the politicians*, we cannot say *all the committee*. This follows if the phrase *the committee* actually modifies a null pronoun (*they*), for *all they, the committee* is unacceptable as well.

The data in (34) and (35) show how Kayne's argumentation can be applied to epithets. Here, I use the epithet *scum* which is grammatically singular, but can refer to more than one individual; thus *both/all* cannot be a part of the appositive because *both/all* the scum is ungrammatical due to a number mismatch (*both/all* require a plural complement). The data indicate that epithets also have such a structure: a null pronoun modified by a nominal appositive.

- (34) a. John, Bill and Jack were here. The scum have voted yes  
 b. John, Bill and Jack were here. The scum have **all** voted yes  
 c. John, Bill and Jack were here. \* **All** The scum have voted yes
- (35) a. John and Jack were here. The scum have voted yes  
 b. John and Jack were here. The scum have **both** voted yes  
 c. John and Jack were here. \* **Both** the scum have voted yes

I would like to make it clear, however, that *the scum* is not simply a *committee noun* (which would be a possible confound); first, it can refer to individuals, while *committee nouns* cannot, and, second, the judgments in (34) and (35) are shared by speakers of British and North American English; by contrast, *committee nouns* are used only by British English speakers. Based on the data and observations outlined in this section, I conclude that epithets are null pronouns modified by an appositive. We can now turn to the question of why epithets do not always behave like pronouns.

### 3. The Role of the Attitude Predicate

#### 3.1 The Problem

The core problem that we need to address can be stated as follows. First, if epithets are indeed pronouns, as argued in section 2, then we would expect them to pattern alike in all environments, i.e. we would expect them to always have the distribution of pronouns. In rela-

tive clauses, this clearly holds, as shown in (36a-c) vs (36d). In (36), the epithet *the idiot* behaves exactly like the pronoun *him*.

- (36) a. Yesterday, John<sub>1</sub> bumped into a fan who really loves the idiot<sub>1</sub>  
 b. Yesterday, John<sub>1</sub> bumped into a fan who really loves the him<sub>1</sub>  
 c. Yesterday, John<sub>1</sub> bumped into a fan who really loves the him, the idiot<sub>1</sub>  
 d. \* Yesterday, John<sub>1</sub> bumped into a fan who really loves the teacher<sub>1</sub>

However, surprisingly from this perspective, the data in (37) show that when epithets are in complement clauses, they sometimes do not pattern like pronouns, but like R-expressions, cf. (37a) and (37d) vs (37b-c). In (37a), the epithet is unacceptable in a place where a pronoun is acceptable. If epithets are pronominal elements, this raises the question as to why they are unacceptable in certain cases where pronouns are acceptable.

- (37) a. \* John<sub>1</sub> thinks that the idiot<sub>1</sub> is smart.  
 b. John<sub>1</sub> thinks that he<sub>1</sub> is smart  
 c. John<sub>1</sub> thinks that he, the idiot<sub>1</sub>, is smart.  
 d. \* John<sub>1</sub> thinks that the teacher<sub>1</sub> is smart

Moreover, recall the core empirical problem: in many languages we find a contrast between complements of *think* and complements of *convince*. A complement of *think* generally cannot contain epithets in subject position that refer to the matrix subject, (38a), whereas a complement of *convince* can, (38b). The same pattern that we find in English also holds in Russian, as shown in (39); again, an epithet is acceptable in the subject position of the complement of *convince*, (39b), but not in the subject position of the complement clause of *think*, (39b).

- (38) a. \* Peter<sub>1</sub> thinks that the idiot<sub>1</sub> is smart.  
 b. <sup>?OK</sup> John<sub>1</sub> convinced the panel that the idiot<sub>1</sub> is smart.

- (39) *Russian*  
 a. \* John<sub>1</sub>           dumaet, čto ètot idiot<sub>1</sub> umjon.  
    John.NOM thinks    that this idiot    smart  
    ‘John thinks that this idiot is smart.’  
 b. <sup>?OK</sup> John<sub>1</sub>       ubedil       sovet, čto ètot idiot<sub>1</sub>       umjon.  
    John.NOM convinced panel that this idiot.NOM smart  
    ‘John convinced the panel that this idiot is smart’

Do these empirical data challenge the view that epithets are pronominal rather than R-expressions? The short answer to this question is *no*. Epithets systematically differ from regular R-expression; what we see in (40) is, once again, that genuine R-expressions in the complement of *convince* are still ungrammatical. If epithets were R-expressions, they should be unacceptable in the complement of *convince* as well, in contrast to what we see in (38b) and (39b).

- (40) a. John<sub>1</sub> convinced Peter that the idiot<sub>1</sub> is smart  
 b. \* John<sub>1</sub> convinced Peter that the janitor<sub>1</sub> is smart

It is worth pointing out that *think* and *convince* do not form a minimal pair; a more minimal example is provided in (41), where we see that an epithet in the complement of *not know* is more acceptable than an epithet in the complement of *know*.

- (41) a. \* Nero<sub>1</sub> knows that the damn traitor<sub>1</sub> should invite Sarkozy to the peace talks.  
 b. Nero<sub>1</sub> doesn't know that the damn traitor<sub>1</sub> should invite Sarkozy to the peace talks.

### 3.2 My Solution

To account for the difference between *think* and *convince* with respect to epithets, I propose an analysis based on Percus & Sauerland (2003a, 2003b). The main idea is that the semantics of predicates like *think* involve the *belief-self* of its subject (i.e. the individual with whom the subject of *think* identifies in his or her beliefs). A pronoun in the complement clause of *think* can be identified with this belief-self, giving rise to a so-called *de se* construal (cf. Lewis 1979, Perry 1979, and Chierchia 1989). In this vein, (42a) describes a situation where John thinks that John's belief-self is smart, i.e. John has a belief about himself. Here, the pronoun *he* in the complement clause is construed *de se*.

- (42) a. John thinks that he is smart (intended reading: John thinks 'I am smart')  
 b. *de se construal*: John<sub>1</sub> thinks that John's belief-self<sub>1</sub> is smart.  
 (where: John's belief-self = who John is in John's beliefs)

I propose to derive the epithet-pronoun difference from the assumption that epithets cannot modify a null pronoun that receives such a *de se* construal, as reflected by (43).

- (43) \* John thinks that (pro) the idiot is smart  
 (intended reading: John thinks: 'I am smart' and the speaker does not like John)

As we see in section 3.3, the proposal sketched informally in (42) and (43) derives the patterns which are at the heart of the problem, repeated in (44). The core idea is that (44a) (in the reading in which it is unacceptable) allows and, in fact, requires a *de se* construal, whereas (44b) does not have such a *de se* construal.

- (44) a. \* John<sub>1</sub> thinks that the idiot<sub>1</sub> is smart  
 b. John<sub>1</sub> convinced Peter that the idiot<sub>1</sub> is smart.

### 3.3 Formalising my Solution

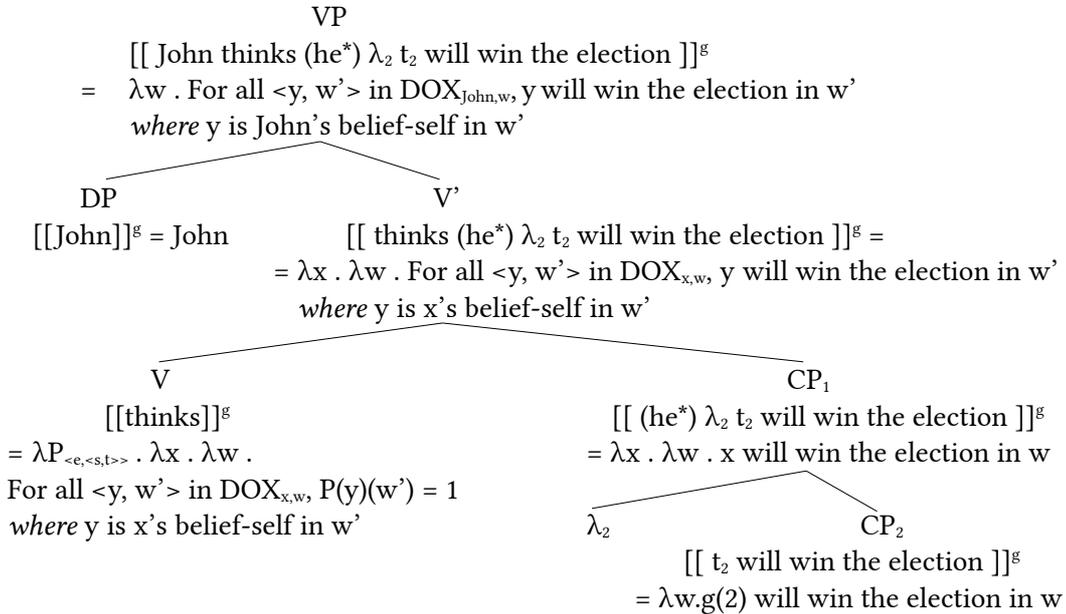
Percus & Sauerland (2003a, 2003b) argue that, in English, *de se* readings for examples like (42) above have an independent logical form in the semantics. Percus & Sauerland (2003a) discuss the example in (45) and argue that it can be used to describe both the *de se* belief in (45b) and the *de re* belief in (45c). In other words, (45a) can be used to describe two different situations: in the *de se* situation, (45b), *John* has a conscious belief about himself. Here, the embedded pronoun that co-refers with *John* is identical to his belief self (i.e. the individual identical to *John* in all of *john's* belief worlds). In the *de re* case, (45c), John also has a belief about himself but he does not know that the belief is about himself.

- (45) a. John thinks that he will win the election. (Percus & Sauerland 2003a)
- b. *de se belief*  
John thinks: 'I will win the election'
- c. *de re belief*  
John is drunk and sees someone giving a speech on TV; not recognising that it is he himself, John thinks 'this guy (on TV) will win the election'.

The core idea that I pursue is that when an epithet is contained in the complement proposition of *think*, and a *de se* interpretation is intended, the epithet cannot be interpreted in its surface position. In example (44a), this yields ungrammaticality. I return to this in section 3.4.

Let us first revisit Percus & Sauerland's (2003a, 2003b) analysis; in this analysis, a predicate such as *think* takes a clausal complement, which contains an empty individual variable slot that is bound by the subject's belief self  $y$ . To get the *de se* LF, Percus & Sauerland (2003a, 2003b) assume that a complement clause, such as *he will win the election*, is turned into a property. This is done by lambda abstracting over one of the embedded arguments, and that argument is the *de se* pronoun. By doing this, the embedded argument position that is superficially occupied by the *de se* pronoun is actually bound by the belief self that its matrix verb introduces. The relevant parts of the Percus & Sauerland analysis are given in (46).

(46) *de se LF*



A pronoun that has a *de se* construal is marked by an asterisk (\*). The resulting LF is given in (47); most importantly, (47) conveys that John has a belief about his belief-self; put differently, he has a conscious belief about himself.

(47) *de se* LF

[[ John thinks (he\*)  $\lambda_2$  [t<sub>2</sub> will win the election]. ]]  
 =  $\lambda w$  . For all  $\langle y, w' \rangle$  in  $\text{DOX}_{\text{John},w}$ , y will win the election in  $w'$   
 where y is John's belief-self in  $w'$

In words: 'In all worlds that are compatible with John's thoughts/believes, and which contain John as he views himself (= John's belief self), John's belief self will win the election.'

This is very different from a *de re* LF, which is given in (48). We can think of two possible *de re* LFs. The two *de re* LFs in (48a-b) differ from the *de se* LF in (47), because in both (48a) and (48b), the belief self doesn't bind the argument position associated with the embedded pronoun. As shown, *de re* LFs can involve binding of the embedded pronouns by the matrix subjects, (48a), or simply coreference, (48b). In either case, the embedded argument will not be identified with the matrix subject's belief self. In other words, John's beliefs are not about his belief self; they are about an individual in the actual world who happens to be John.

(48) a. *de re* LF with binding

John  $\lambda_2$  thinks [he<sub>2</sub> will win the election].

b. *de re* LF without binding

John thinks [he<sub>2</sub> will win the election].      where he<sub>2</sub> refers to John

c. [[(48a)]] = [[(48b)]] =

$\lambda w$  . For all  $\langle y, w' \rangle$  in  $\text{DOX}_{\text{John},w}$ , John will win the election in  $w'$   
 where y is John's belief-self in  $w'$

In words: 'In all worlds that are compatible with John's thoughts/believes, and which contain John as he views himself (= John's belief self), John will win the election.'

In brief, the difference between the two denotations ultimately comes down to the fact that in the *de se* case in (47), the subject of *will win the election* is identified with John's belief self. By contrast, in the *de re* case in (48), the subject of *will win the election* is identified with John in the actual world, not with John's belief self.

To derive the restrictions on epithets, I pursue the idea that *de se* LFs are obligatory whenever the context involves a *de se* belief (cf. Schlenker's 2005b *Prefer De Se!*). Furthermore, it is not possible for an epithet to contain a null pronoun that is construed *de se*. What this means in the Percus & Sauerland system is that the appositive contained in an epithet cannot modify an uninterpreted pronoun that's marked by the asterisk (*pro\**). The purpose of using such an uninterpreted pronoun is to identify the pronoun's argument position with the matrix subject's belief self.

Note that for object pronouns, Percus & Sauerland (2003a) assume a configuration analogous to (47), as given in (49). Here, the embedded object is identified with the belief self of the matrix subject.

- (49) a. John thinks Mary will vote for him.  
 b. *de se* LF: John thinks (him\*)  $\lambda_2$  [Mary will vote for  $t_2$ ].  
 (adapted from Percus & Sauerland 2003a:241)

My proposal thus amounts to the idea that predicates which do not allow a bound epithet in the embedded clause are the same predicates that allow for *de se* LFs. Specifically, epithets cannot combine with null anchors consisting of uninterpreted pronouns. This idea is based on Demirdache & Percus (2011a, 2011b). Turning to the core examples, repeated in (50), a pronoun in the complement of *think* that refers to the matrix subject must be identified with its matrix subject's belief self, rendering (50a) unacceptable. By contrast, the acceptability of (50b) can be attributed to the fact that a pronoun in the complement of *convince* cannot be identified with the matrix subject's belief self, i.e. it cannot receive the relevant *de se* construal. This is due to the fact that *think* introduces the matrix subject's belief self and *convince* has been argued to introduce the matrix object's belief self, cf. (51) vs (52).

- (50) a.\* John<sub>1</sub> thinks that the idiot<sub>1</sub> is smart.  
 b.<sup>OK</sup> John<sub>1</sub> convinced Peter that the idiot<sub>1</sub> is smart.

In the framework of Percus & Sauerland (2003a), *think* has a meaning as paraphrased in (51); as shown by Stephenson (2007:43,149), *convince* differs in that the belief state that results from a convincing event is a belief self on the part of the hearer. This is shown in (52).

(51) *The meaning of think*

- a.  $[[\text{think}]]g = \lambda P \langle e, \langle s, t \rangle \rangle . \lambda x . \lambda w . \text{For all } \langle y, w' \rangle \text{ in } \text{DOX}_{x,w}, P(y)(w') = 1$   
 ( $\text{DOX}_{x,w}$  stands for the set of pairs  $\langle y, w' \rangle$  such that  $w'$  is a world compatible with  $x$ 's beliefs in  $w$ , and  $y$  is the individual in  $w'$  who  $x$ , in  $w$  identifies as him self.)
- b. *think* takes a (clausal) complement, which contains an empty variable slot that is bound by the subject's belief-self  $y$ . Then *think* combines with the subject and asserts that in all of the subject's belief worlds  $w'$  with belief-self  $y$ , the clausal complement is true.

(52) *The meaning of convince*

- a.  $[[\text{convince}]]g = \lambda ze . \lambda P \langle e, \langle s, t \rangle \rangle . \lambda x . \lambda w . x \text{ communicates with } z \text{ in a way that causes it to be the case that for all } \langle y, w' \rangle \text{ in } \text{DOX}_{z,w}, P(y)(w') = 1$  ( $\text{DOX}_{z,w}$  stands for the set of pairs  $\langle y, w' \rangle$  such that  $w'$  is a world compatible with  $z$ 's beliefs in  $w$ , and  $y$  is the individual in  $w'$  who  $z$ , in  $w$  identifies as himself.)
- b. *convince* takes a (clausal) complement, which contains an empty variable slot that is bound by the object's belief-self  $y$ . Then *convince* combines with object and subject and asserts that the subject communicates with the object in a way such that in all of the object's belief worlds  $w'$  with belief-self  $y$ , the clausal complement is true.

The analyses for (50) are summarized in (53). In (50a), a *de se* LF is possible and, in fact, obligatory, giving rise to the unacceptable (53a). For (50b), a *de se* LF is impossible and we get the acceptable (53b), thus deriving the *think* vs *convince* difference. This motivates the following conclusion: *think* must combine with *de se* LFs whenever the reported context is one where the actual belief is best characterized as a *de se* belief. As *convince* is not interpreted with respect to the subject's beliefs, a *de se* reading cannot pick out the subject's belief-self, which derives the fact that (53b) is acceptable.

- (53) a. \* John thinks that pro\*, the idiot, is smart. (*de se* LF)  
 b. <sup>OK</sup> John<sub>1</sub> convinced Peter that pro<sub>1</sub>, the idiot, is smart. (only *de re* LF)

Note that the relative clause cases are also predicted to be grammatical under this analysis, since the relevant constructions with relative clauses that we discussed above do not contain a predicate that introduces a *belief-self* (such as *think*); as a consequence a *de se* construal of the null pronoun modified by the epithet does not arise.

### 3.4 Deriving the subject-object asymmetry

I now want to return to the subject-object asymmetry, as discussed in section 1.4. The data are repeated in (54). We find that epithets in the complement of *think* are only ungrammatical when co-referring to the matrix subject if they are in subject position, and not if they are in object position. The data in (54a) sharply contrast with those in (54b); while (54a) is unacceptable, (54b) seems to be perfectly acceptable.

- (54) a. \* Nero<sub>1</sub> thinks that [the damn traitor<sub>1</sub>] should invite [Sarkozy] to the peace talks  
 b. <sup>OK</sup> Nero<sub>1</sub> thinks that [Sarkozy] should invite [the damn traitor<sub>1</sub>] to the peace talks.

From the perspective of Percus & Sauerland, subject pronouns and object pronouns should not differ in terms of a *de se* construal, cf. (47) and (49). These contrasts are thus not predicted by the above analysis. The idea that I pursue is inspired by Demirdache & Percus (2011a, 2011b). The idea is that the asymmetry follows from an asymmetry on extraction.

I propose that constructions where epithets surface in the location of an uninterpreted null anchor can be saved by Demirdache & Percus's epithet float, given in (55). Demirdache & Percus argue that epithets cannot attach to a trace that results from a *de se* construal of a pronoun. This is equivalent to my own proposal for other languages. However, crucially, they argue that in such cases the expressive material can move covertly from its surface position to the position of its antecedent, known as *epithet float*.

(55) *Epithet float*

On the way to LF, an epithet's expressive term can float away from its host pronoun and combine with the pronoun's "antecedent".

(Demirdache & Percus 2011b:382)

The LFs in (56a) and (56b) would be the ungrammatical *de se* LFs of (54a) and (54b) if epithet float did not apply. Once epithet float is applied, we see that it can save (56b), but not (56a).

- (56)a. \* LF: Nero thinks pro\* λ<sub>2</sub> that [t<sub>2</sub> the damn traitor] should invite [Sarkozy] to the p.t.

- b. \* LF: Nero thinks  $\text{pro}^* \lambda_2$  that [Sarkozy] should invite [t<sub>2</sub> the damn traitor] to the p.t.

The important contrast is given in (57) versus (58). I propose that the grammatical (57a) actually has the LF in (57b), generated by covert movement as in (57c). Crucially, in (57c), the epithet can covertly move out of the object position, which is why it is grammatical. The question that remains is why (58) cannot involve such movement. (58a) should have the LF in (58b), generated from the surface syntactic structure by analogous covert movement, as in (58c). This should be grammatical if epithet float was unconstrained. I conjecture that the difference between (57) and (58) is related to the fact that subjects are islands for extractions, while objects are not (e.g. Huang 1982). The core idea is thus that epithet float in these cases has to move the epithet from the object position in (57), as opposed to the subject position in (58). The former is possible, the latter is not.

- (57) a. <sup>OK</sup> Nero<sub>1</sub> thinks that [Sarkozy] should invite [the damn traitor<sub>1</sub>] to the peace talks.

- b. <sup>OK</sup> LF: [Nero, the damn traitor,] thinks ( $\text{pro}^*$ )  $\lambda_1$  [Sarkozy] should invite t<sub>1</sub> to the p.t.

- c. *epithet float of 'the damn traitor' at LF:*

Nero the damn traitor thinks ( $\text{pro}^*$ )  $\lambda_1$  Sark should invite [t<sub>1</sub> ~~the damn traitor~~] ...



- (58) a. \* Nero<sub>1</sub> thinks that [the damn traitor<sub>1</sub>] should invite [Sarkozy] to the peace talks

- b. \* LF: [Nero, the damn traitor,] thinks ( $\text{pro}^*$ )  $\lambda_1$  t<sub>1</sub> should invite [Sarkozy] to the p.t.

- c. *epithet float of 'the damn traitor' at LF:* (ungrammatical due to island constraints)

\* Nero the damn traitor thinks ( $\text{pro}^*$ )  $\lambda_1$  [t<sub>1</sub> ~~the damn traitor~~] should invite Sark ...



#### 4. Conclusion

I have presented a new puzzle for anti-locality, repeated in (59), and I argued that epithets are null pronouns with an adjoined nominal appositive.

- (59) a. \* Nero<sub>1</sub> thinks that [the damn traitor<sub>1</sub>] will be invited to the reception.

- b. <sup>OK</sup> Nero<sub>1</sub> thinks that they will invite [the damn traitor<sub>1</sub>] to the reception.

- c. <sup>?OK</sup> John<sub>1</sub> convinced Peter that [the idiot<sub>1</sub>] is smart.

The difference between *think*, (59a), and *convince*, (59c), then follows from the assumptions that epithets cannot modify uninterpreted *de se* pronouns. The subject-object asymmetry in (59a) vs (59b) follows from general constraints on movement, such as the constraint that extraction is possible from the object position, but not from the subject position. One open question remains, namely: when is a *de se* interpretation possible / blocked to begin with? This is a more general issue that goes beyond the focus of this paper.

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