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## Towards a taxonomy of Latin cleft sentences

**Abstract:** Cleft sentences are a well-known structure in most of the languages of Europe: in many grammatical accounts they appear as a Focus-marking device, but in some cases they may also show additional functions. However, the issue of a Latin counterpart, if not a Latin ancestor, has seldom been addressed after Bengt Löfstedt's path-breaking article. Building on recent studies on information structure, a corpus study has been carried out, that demonstrates not only that Latin could mark an argument-focus using a cleft, but also that this sentence evolved by developing different informational values through grammaticalization.

**Keywords:** cleft sentence, information structure, presupposition, Topic, Focus

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### 1 Some theoretical notions

In this section, an overview is given of the theoretical framework adopted in the analysis of Latin cleft sentences. In particular, as the aim of this study is to provide an account of the different informative values of these sentences, particular attention will be given to the categories of information structure which are relevant for this analysis.

Drawing on Lambrecht (1994), information structure is “[t]hat component of sentence grammar in which propositions as conceptual representations of states of affairs are paired with lexico-grammatical structures in accordance with the mental state of interlocutors who use and interpret these structures as units of information in given discourse contexts” (1994: 5). In other words, it can be regarded as a device which pairs “pragmatic information” (see Dik 1989: 10 ff.), which is conceptual in nature, with a specific linguistic encoding. There are three functional dimensions which are relevant to the analysis of information structure, namely, (a) presupposition and assertion, (b) the notion of activation and (c) the pragmatic relations Topic and Focus.

Presupposition and assertion are categories pertaining to propositions. Without going too deep into a taxonomy of the different subtypes of presupposition such as those addressed in Lambrecht (1994: Ch. 2) or Lombardi Vallauri (2009:

Ch. 2)<sup>1</sup>, it is enough to state that when a proposition is presupposed, its content is already taken for granted by the participants in a speech act, and it works as background information. The assertion is the new and unpredictable information which is inserted against this background. An assertion can also be defined as the part of a sentence in which the communicative goal of a speech act is realized<sup>2</sup>.

Activation is a property of referents occurring in a proposition. The conceptual representation of a referent can be recovered with smaller or greater cognitive effort of the speakers, according to different factors<sup>3</sup>: what was once regarded as a binary distinction between given and new information, was first developed in Prince (1981) in a detailed taxonomy accounting for the different ways and different degrees to which a referent can be given or new, with obvious influences on its grammatical encoding. On this basis Lambrecht (1994) developed the idea of a gradient where “brand-new unanchored” referents have the lowest degree of identifiability, and are thus most likely to be part of the Focus (see below), while “active” referents are the most identifiable, and are thus most likely to occur as topical expressions (see below).

Topic and Focus, which are the most important categories for this analysis, are pragmatic relations expressing the relationship between a referent and the proposition in which it occurs; alternatively, Dik (1989: Ch. 13) uses the term “pragmatic functions” in an almost synonymous way, meaning that a given constituent, through specific linguistic encoding, has the function of expressing the pragmatic-informational value of its *denotatum*. A Topic, thus, is defined as an entity maintaining a relation of “aboutness” (Lambrecht 1994: 117ff.) with the proposition, or more simply, marking a referent as Topic characterizes it as “the things we talk about” (Dik 1989: 310). On the other hand, the Focus of a sentence is “the semantic component of a pragmatically structured proposition whereby the assertion differs from the presupposition” (Lambrecht 1994: 213): that is to

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1 At least two types must be cited: the presupposition of existence (see Strawson 1950), and the type of presupposition arising from so-called “factive verbs” (Kiparski and Kiparski 1970), which can be classified as an interface phenomenon between syntax and pragmatics.

2 The notion of presupposition has also to be kept separated from that of logic entailment: while a presupposition has to do with a speaker’s assessment on what is known to the hearer, entailment is a relationship between two propositions A and B, such that if A is true, B is automatically true: for example, *Peter divorced last month* logically entails *Peter was married*.

3 Lambrecht (1994) makes a distinction between unidentifiable referents, which he calls “brand-new”, and “accessible” referents, which may be recovered but are not active at a certain point of the discourse. In this account, referents can be accessible (a) because they have been introduced at some point in the discourse (“textually accessible”), (b) because they are present in the extra-linguistic situation at the moment of the interaction (“situationally accessible”), (c) because their knowledge can be inferred through a cognitive frame (“inferentially accessible”).

say that it corresponds to the new, and then unpredictable, information inserted in a proposition, or “the most important or salient parts of what we say about the topical things” (Dik 1997: 310).

While a Topic, being a referential expression, has a more fixed scope, the Focus, defined as the point on which the assertion differs from the presupposition, may have different extensions, ranging from a single constituent to the whole sentence. Lambrecht therefore defines three Focus categories, namely (1) predicate-focus, (2) argument-focus, and (3) sentence-focus. See examples.

- (1) [Frank]<sub>TOP</sub> [bought a new car]<sub>FOC</sub>
- (2) Frank bought [a new car too]<sub>FOC</sub>
- (3) (what happened?) [Frank bought a new car]<sub>FOC</sub>

Type (1) may be regarded as the case of pragmatically unmarked sentences; it occurs with unmarked word orders and sentence stresses, and does not require overt marking. In this construction there is a topical entity, and the predication attached to it corresponds to the asserted part. In (2), a new referent is added to a pragmatically presupposed proposition, so that the assertion corresponds only to the identification of that referent in the proposition. Finally, in (3), of which a detailed account is given in Lambrecht (2000), the entire sentence is asserted, and there is no presupposition, as the communicative purpose of this Focus category is to introduce a new state of affairs into the discourse as a whole<sup>4</sup>.

Topic-Focus articulation is for Lambrecht what most strongly determines the form of a sentence. Focus categories have to be overtly marked by some linguistic encoding. Given that predicate-focus is the default information structuring, the other two categories are expressed through different structures which have the function of signalling a non-default reading; they may include “prosodic prominence, special positions (i.e. word order), special particles and special construction types” (Dik 1997: 291). Cleft sentences, which are the object of this study, are part of the latter type, and they occur in many languages as a Focus marking device.<sup>5</sup> Their use, according to Lambrecht (2001), is motivated by formal and functional requirements such as the need to avoid unwanted predicate-focus readings and the presence of grammatical restrictions on the use of other, less complex,

<sup>4</sup> Many analogies may be found between this type of sentence and the so-calledthetic sentences. See for example Sasse (1987).

<sup>5</sup> The question of the areal diffusion of cleft sentences is discussed in Filppula (2009); it is argued that this feature has arisen in many languages as an effect on intense areal contact. See also Givón (2001) for a general account on Focus marking.

devices. The following section will address a description of the formal and informational properties of cleft sentences.

## 2 Cleft sentences and cleft constructions

So far, three general categories of information structure have been introduced. This section will show how these categories work together in a focus-marking construction: the cleft sentence. This construction has been studied under very different perspectives, and mostly with reference to the grammar of a single language: after Jespersen's (1949) English grammar, an account of cleft sentences is found in Huddleston (1984), Collins (1991) for English, Frison (1988) for Italian, Ahlqvist (2002) for Irish etc. The present account, however, maintains a functional perspective whose aim is precisely to avoid definitions based on single languages. What will be addressed are the pragmatic-informational features that are common to clefts in every language, while morphosyntactic features will be accounted for as generally as possible in terms of function words.

This perspective builds mostly on Lambrecht (2001), and is based on a "light" constructional approach, as opposed to the "hard" perspective presented for example in Patten (2012). In this view, cleft sentences are constructions in the specific sense given by Fillmore et al. (1988), Goldberg (1995, 2006), and Croft (2001) *inter alios*. They are therefore treated as synchronically non-derived structures, unlike in some formal approaches (see for example Akmajian 1970). The main tenet of this approach is that an overall category of *cleft constructions* is posited, within which different constructions with different informative values may be found.

(4) [it was]<sub>COPULA</sub> [the shopkeeper]<sub>FOC</sub> [who]<sub>SUB</sub> called the police

As for the general features of cleft constructions, they are bi-clausal structures which express a single propositional content: (4), for example, has the same content as a monoclausal sentence *the shopkeeper called the police*, the difference being merely informational. There are two elements signalling the clefting: the *copula* and the *subordinator*: these are nothing but partially empty function words; they do not work like prototypical copulae or prototypical relatives, nor do they add any lexical meaning to the construction. Such an approach is particularly useful in the present analysis of Latin clefts because it avoids any definition relying on language-specific features: the elements working as copulae or subordinators in one language are not necessarily of the same nature as their equivalent in another language. For instance, there may be some lan-

guages which only admit a relative element as subordinator, while others allow an empty complementiser, or even both strategies (for a general perspective on this aspect, see at least Lehmann 1984, 1986). The morphosyntactic encoding of the cleft sentence, even if obeying mostly general functional principles, depends on language-internal grammatical categories, and it is not *a priori* predictable what strategy will be chosen. Holding this view has allowed highlighting not only different types of information structure expressed by the cleft, but also several syntactic realisations.

## 2.1 A sub-categorisation of cleft constructions

It is apparent that the definition of cleft construction given above is intentionally loose, as there are many different structures that fall into the description given above. A few examples, far from exhaustive, are given below:

- (5) There's somebody who wants to speak with you (presentative cleft)
- (6) It is Mary who went to dinner with me last night (cleft sentence)
- (7) All I need is somebody who trusts me (all-cleft)
- (8) (who did you meet last month?) There's Mary who went to dinner with me last month (non-exhaustive cleft)

As the main goal of this article is not to discuss a general taxonomy of cleft constructions, only a basic distinction will be addressed: the one between presentational cleft constructions and cleft constructions proper.<sup>6</sup>

- (9) *C'è Maria che è arrabbiata con te*  
'there is Mary who is angry at you'
- (10) *È Maria che è arrabbiata con te*  
'it is Mary who is angry at you'

The first thing that can be observed about the Italian sentences (9) – (10) is that, in spite of the different syntactic encoding, they are a representation of the same

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<sup>6</sup> As this account is mostly based on Lambrecht's (2001) categorisation of cleft constructions, we refer to the original article for a fully detailed account of their internal taxonomy. Patten (2012) as well provides a good taxonomy of the cleft constructions, exploiting the notion of inheritance provided by Construction Grammar.

proposition *Mary is angry at you*; the difference between the two is informational: (9) is an example of a *presentative cleft construction*, which is a sentence-focus structure whose purpose is to add a new referent to a new proposition; no presupposition can be retrieved in it. On the other hand, (10) is a *cleft sentence*: it is therefore an argument-focus construction where the content of the embedded clause is presupposed; more precisely, the presupposed part corresponds to what is called an open proposition, i.e. a proposition where a referent is missing; in this case, the presupposition would have the form of *somebody is angry at you*, or *X is angry at you*. In addition to this, it has to be stressed that in the preceding Italian example, the two constructions are formally distinguished by the use of two different copulae: *c'è* in the presentative and *è* in the cleft sentence proper; however in other languages this is not the case. In Latin, both the copula and the presentative are expressed through the verb *esse*, and thus no formal distinction can be made between the two types (see Section 3.2 for further discussion of the Latin data).<sup>7</sup>

From this point onwards, the term “cleft construction” will be used with reference to the whole family of constructions, while “cleft sentence” will have a more restricted meaning, indicating only a particular instance of the cleft constructions, defined by specific informational properties which are not shared by other members of the family.

### 2.1.1 Features of cleft sentences

As the main concern of the present study is to give an account of Latin cleft sentences, it will be useful to introduce in more detail their defining features. In addition to properties shared by all cleft constructions, cleft sentences proper, which are more specific, are also characterised by four more properties, of which a detailed account is given in Patten (2012: Ch. 4): “[F]ocus, presupposition, exhaustiveness and contrast”

(11) it is John’s wife that we met yesterday

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<sup>7</sup> In addition to this aspect, also grammaticalisation and conventionalisation of syntactic structures have to be taken into account. For example, the Italian sentence *è un coperchio che è caduto* (‘it is a lid that has fallen’), quoted in Berretta (2002), has two interpretations: in the first one this structure is a cleft sentence proper, and *un coperchio* is the constituent in Focus; in the other one, this sentence occurs as an answer to a general question such as *what happened?*, it hasthetic meaning and therefore has to be considered a presentative construction, even if less prototypical with respect to the ones introduced by *c'è*.

In (11) all these features are easily noticeable. First, this sentence always expresses an argument-focus configuration where the clefted constituent is in Focus; clefting is thus functionally motivated by the need for signalling this particular information structure. Then, as an effect of the presence of argument-focus, the subordinate clause of a cleft sentence is always under presupposition: as a simple test, it can be observed that when the sentence is negated (*it is not John's wife that we met yesterday*), the same proposition is still presupposed. For what concerns the property of exhaustiveness, after Horn (1981) it is normally treated as a conversational implicature: in cleft sentences the Focus constituent denotes the only referent, or set of referents, that fits into the presupposed open proposition. In the case of (11), this means that *John's wife* is the only person who has been encountered. Finally, the Focus of a cleft sentence is contrastive, in that it expresses, often not overtly, a form of contrast between the referent under Focus and some other relevant entity in the discourse: for example (11) could be paraphrased with something like *we met John's wife, not John himself*.<sup>8</sup>

To sum up, a wide family of cleft constructions has been defined, which is characterised by a number of informational features shared by all its members. Then, two specific construction types have been taken into account: presentative cleft constructions and cleft sentences proper. For what concerns the latter, their basic informational properties have been discussed. However, it has to be stressed that these properties are not always relevant: the cleft sentence is a conventionalised structure that can undergo diachronic change and synchronic extensions in its use, therefore in many languages it has developed new meanings and new informative values, as observed in Prince (1978). Looking more closely at the defining features introduced above, it would be more correct to affirm that they define a prototypical cleft sentence – where prototypical in the end means nothing more than “functionally motivated” – while many other examples can be found of cleft sentences which do not share these features. The cleft sentence can thus be regarded as a highly multifunctional construction that, given a core-meaning, is likely to develop a number of different informational values. The analysis of Latin data presented in Section 3 will confirm this view.

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<sup>8</sup> For this aspect, Dik (1989: Ch.13) provides a fully detailed taxonomy of contrastive focus, treating it as the range of functions that can be held by an argument-focus; he identifies five sub-types, namely ‘rejecting’, ‘replacing’, ‘expanding’, ‘restricting’ and ‘selecting’. It can be argued that each of these, in the appropriate context, may be expressed by a cleft sentence.

### 3 Cleft sentences in Latin

The features of cleft sentences introduced so far have allowed to give an account of the informational value of these syntactically marked structures, as well as providing analysis primitives which are not dependent on grammatical aspects of a particular language. In this section, these theoretical principles will be employed in the analysis of the Latin data which were first collected and discussed in a previous unpublished work (Gorla 2012). A corpus study has been carried out on the *PHI* corpus, in order to find occurrences of cleft sentences in Latin literary texts dating from the early period to the imperial age.

The question whether or not Latin had cleft sentences has seldom been addressed, as lamented for example in D'Achille et al. (2003). Probably the only exception is represented by Löfstedt (1966): this early article provides many examples of Latin constructions resembling French *c'est lui qui l'a fait*, which were used as a device for what Löfstedt called the *Hervorhebung*, i.e. 'highlighting', of different constituents. After a short discussion of the issues arising from this study, a new taxonomy will be presented, based on the principles introduced in Sections 1 and 2. First, two different syntactic strategies will be shown, dependent on the type of focused constituent; secondly, it will be shown that cleft sentences in Latin were a highly multifunctional construction, with instances of grammaticalisation and extension in use.

#### 3.1 Latin clefts in Löfstedt's account

Bengt Löfstedt worked out a basic taxonomy of the sentences he had found, using as a main criterion the type of clefted constituent. He isolates four different cases: namely the highlighting of nouns, pronouns, demonstratives and interrogatives (respectively ex. 12–14)

- (12) *nequitia est quae te non sinit esse senem* (Ov. *fast.* 1.414)  
'it is wickedness that does not allow you to be old'
- (13) *non ego sum qui te dudum condux*i (Plaut. *merc.* 758)  
'it is not me who just hired you'
- (14) *hic est [. . .] apud quem cubitum ponitis* (Petron. 274)  
'it is at this man's table that you are dining'
- (15) *Epidicum quis est qui reuocat?* (Plaut. *Epid.* 201)  
'who is that who's calling Epidicus?'



Such a taxonomy is of great use in that it gives a large number of examples which testify that cleft sentences existed already in Latin. However, this account is not without problems: Löfstedt's account is mostly based on the categories of traditional grammar, and in no way could he exploit more accurate tools of analysis such as the categories of information structure, which were introduced long after the years in which his article was written.

First of all it has to be observed that only the case of focusing of nuclear constituents is taken into account: all the instances presented are of nouns, or of parts of speech with a nominal-like behaviour. On the contrary, in section 3.3 it will be shown that the focusing of adjuncts was highly frequent. Secondly, a distinction between anaphoric and deictic pronouns is missing: (14) for example, contains a deictic expression, as is apparent from the immediate context, and nevertheless it is subsumed under the same heading of

- (16) *id est quod suspicabar* (Plaut. *men.* 774)  
 'that is what I suspected'

where *id* is clearly an anaphoric pronoun. More importantly, in many cases very scarce attention is paid to the informative value of the sentences, with the result that sometimes highly idiosyncratic constructions are treated as though they were "common" argument-focus clefts, while in other cases they could hardly be included in this set.

- (17) *neque tu eras tam excors tamque demens, ut nescires Clodium esse qui contra leges faceret, alios qui leges scribere solerent* (Cic. *dom.* 48)  
 'And you were not foolish and mad enough, to ignore that Clodius was the one who broke the law, but it was others who used to write them'.

- (18) *eademque ratione ne temperantiam quidem propter se expetendam esse dicemus, sed quia pacem animis afferat et eos quasi concordia quadam placet ac leniat. Temperantia est enim, quae in rebus aut expetendis aut fugiendis ut rationem sequamur monet* (Cic. *fin.* 1.47.1)  
 'For the same reason, not even moderation, we will say, has to be desired for its own sake, but because it brings peace to the hearts and appeases them with some kind of harmony. Moderation is what advises us to rationally choose when to desire something and when to avoid it'.

To give two examples, both (17) and (18) are problematic: (17) can be considered a parallel structure made of two cleft sentences, where the two clefted constituents are opposed to each other, but at the same time also the two verb phrases

*leges scribere* and *contra leges facere* are put in contrast. This sentence is highly idiosyncratic, in that it does not express the same type of Focus as prototypical cleft sentences. It resembles instead what Roggia (2009: 113) calls *frasi scisse con doppio contrasto* [‘double contrast clefts’]: for this reason, a separate account should be given of these sentences, which will not be addressed here. On the other hand, (18) clearly does not have the requirements to be treated as a cleft sentence: an argument-focus reading is impossible here because the subordinate clause is clearly not presupposed as would be expected. Even if the corpus study has shown evidence of cleft sentences with an assertive subordinate clause, this seems hardly to be the case. It is easier, rather, to consider *temperantia* a topical expression resuming a referent introduced in the preceding sentence, while the predicate is a common nominal predication, whose second argument is the understood antecedent *ea*, followed by a proper relative clause introduced by *quae*.<sup>9</sup>

Löfstedt’s study is quite valuable, as it is the first and only work that provides a large amount of examples, allowing an overall look on the *status quaestionis*. However, in the light of more recent studies on information structure, some questions are still unanswered: are there any formal constraints on cleft sentences? What constituents can be clefted? Is there only one information structure conveyed by the clefts? In order to answer these questions, a new taxonomy will be addressed in Section 3.3 building on the theoretical framework discussed in Sections 1 and 2. First, a distinction will be made between presentative cleft constructions and cleft sentences proper; then, the latter will be the object of a more detailed analysis: Sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 show how in Latin different types of constituents can occur in the Focus of a cleft, far beyond the possibilities considered by Löfstedt. In Section 3.4 the informational aspect is taken into account, and evidence is provided of how the same structure developed several informative values.

## 3.2 Presentational cleft constructions

In Latin, presentational cleft constructions frequently occur with the function of bringing a new referent into the discourse: according to Lambrecht’s (1994) principle of separation of reference and role, it is not possible to introduce a new

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<sup>9</sup> Such relative clauses are frequent in Cicero’s prose, and will not be considered cleft sentences. See for example: “*Tertia est urbs quae [...] Tycha nominata est [...]. Quarta autem est quae [...] Neapolis nominatur*” (Cic. Ver. 2.4.119), where the presence of the noun *urbs* as the argument of the copula clearly excludes a cleft reading both of the first sentence and of the second, where *urbs* is simply omitted.

Topic, and make an assertion about it in the same clause. This is what motivates the use of a syntactically marked construction such as the presentational cleft. Latin is no exception to this constraint: examples (19)–(21) are all cases in which a new referent is brought into the scene as the argument of the copula, while new content about it is introduced in the embedded clause. A convincing piece of evidence that these sentences really introduce a new referent is the fact that the argument of *est* is, with striking frequency, either an indefinite neuter pronominal expression like *nihil*, *aliud*, *(ali)quid*, or nominal expressions preceded by *quidam* (for several aspects of quantification and indefinites in Latin see Bertocchi et al. 2010).

(19) *ciuilis quaedam ratio est, quae multis et magnis ex rebus constat. Eius quaedam magna et ampla pars est artificiosa eloquentia, quam rhetoricam uocant* (Cic. *inv.* 1.6.1)

‘there is a political discipline that is made of many great sectors. A large part of it is artificial eloquence, which is called rhetoric’.

(20) *adulescens quidam est, qui in hisce habitat aedibus; is rem paternam me adiutrice perdidit* (Plaut. *trin.* 12–13)

‘There is a young man who dwells this house; he wasted his father’s riches with my complicity’.

(21) *nihil est qui illi homini diminuam caput* (Plaut. *men.* 304)

‘There is nothing with which I could smash that man’s head’.

It is easily noticeable that, unlike many other European languages, no syntactic difference can be observed between presentational cleft sentences and cleft sentences proper in Latin, as *esse* works both as presentative and as a copula. However, in spite of the morphosyntactic similarity between the two, this type of construction has to be set apart from cleft sentences, which are the object of the present study, as they would require an autonomous treatment which goes beyond the scope of this article.

### 3.3 Cleft sentences

As stated above, cleft sentences are a more specific instance of cleft constructions, i.e. they are characterised by more specific defining features. Looking at Latin, first the syntactic form will be described, showing the way in which the strategy of complementation is dependent on whether the clefted constituent is an argument or an adjunct. Secondly, examples will be shown of the clefts’ multi-

functionality, which in most cases corresponds to a violation of the prototypical features discussed above (Section 2.1).

### 3.3.1 Argument clefting

When an argument, i.e. a part of the nuclear clause, is in Focus, it is generally a noun, or a part of speech with nominal behaviour, such as personal pronouns, anaphorics, and demonstratives. These sentences are always characterized by the presence of a relative element in the function of subordinator, either an inflected relative pronoun, or a relative adverb.

(22) *ita quare consilio eius accedam? Nempe ego sum qui traducor; taceat et gaudeat* (Stat. *silv.* 4.34–36)

‘So why should I accept his suggestion? It’s me who’s being exhibited; let him shut up and enjoy’.

(23) *Sed mutatio, si ea est quam Rutilius ἀλλοίωσιν uocat, dissimilitudinem ostendit hominum rerum factorum* (Quint. *inst.* 9.3.92)

‘But mutation, if that is what Rutilius calls *alloiōsis*, shows the difference between men, things and deeds’.

(24) *Scythia est quo mittimur – inquam – Roma relinquenda est* (Ov. *tr.* 1.3.61–62)

‘It is to Scythia that we are sent – I’ll say – Rome has to be left’.

(25) *Quid tibi nunc prodest iurandi formula iuris linguaque paesentem testificata deam? Quae iurat mens est* (Ov. *ep.* 21.133–135)

‘What is the advantage for you from the oath formula, and from swearing it in front of the goddess? What swears is the mind’.

From a syntactic point of view, cleft sentences with a nominal-like constituent always display an almost fixed agreement pattern where the argument in Focus occurs in the nominative case, and agrees in person and number not only with the copula, but also with the predicate of the embedded clause. The most apparent case is the focusing of 1st and 2nd person pronouns, as in (22). This pattern is still recognisable in ancient Italian<sup>10</sup>, as shown in (26); see also Salvi (2010).

<sup>10</sup> Many thanks are due to Prof. Davide Ricca who drew my attention to this aspect.

(26) *Ma fui io solo là dove sofferto fu per ciascun di torre via Fiorenza colui che la difesi a viso aperto* (Inf. X, 91–93)

‘But when everybody was resigned to accept the destruction of Florence, I was the only one who openly stood up for the city’.

On the contrary, no evidence has been found of the possibility given by Bauer (2009: 283) of an agreement pattern between the relative pronoun and the predicate of the embedded clause as in her example:

(27) = (13) *#non ego sum qui te dudum conduxit*

which could rather be representative of contemporary Italian.

As for informational value, it is easily noticeable that sentences (22)–(25) are quite heterogeneous with respect to information structure, and some do not show all the defining features of the cleft sentence discussed before. These differences correspond to the different pragmatic-informational values developed by the cleft, of which a detailed account is given in Section 3.4.

### 3.3.2 Adjunct-clefting

The clefting of elements external to the nuclear clause, mostly with the function of (1) Time, (2) Mood and (3) Cause adverbials, is widespread in Latin almost as argument-clefting is, but it has seldom been addressed as an autonomous phenomenon.

(28) *agite pugni iam diu est quom uentri uictum non datis* (Plaut. *Amph.* 302)  
[Time]

‘come on my fists, it is a long time now that you don’t seize food for my stomach’.

(29) *non temere est quod tu tristi cum corde gubernas* (Enn. *ann.* 508) [Mood]

‘It is not rashly that you conduct the ship with sad heart’.

(30) *atque exporrecto trutinantur uerba labello, aegroti veteris meditantes somnia, gigni de nihilo nihil, in nihilum nil posse reuerti. Hoc est quod palles?* (Pers. 3.82–85) [Cause]

‘and with their lips stretched, they keep on balancing words, reflecting on the fantasies of a crazy old man, ‘from nothing nothing arises, in nothing, nothing can turn back’. Is it for this that you look pale?’

The main difference between this type and the preceding one is the use of a different complementation strategy: instead of an inflected relative, these sentences display a general subordinator, i.e. a complementiser which is either semantically empty, or desemantised. In sentences (28)–(30), *quod* and *quom* appear precisely with the function of introducing the embedded clause, without any semantic connotation. This holds true in particular of *quod*:<sup>11</sup> in fact, there is evidence of the use of *quod* as a general subordinator in cleft sentences focusing on any kind of adverbial:

- (31) *'mi Luci – ait – sat pol diu est quod interuisimus te'* (Apul. *met.* 1.24.17)  
[Time]  
'my dear Lucius – he said – it is a long time that we do not see you'.
- (32) *non temere est quod coruos cantat mihi ab laeua manu* (Plaut. *aul.* 624)  
[Mood]  
'It is not for nothing that the raven is croaking on my left'.
- (33) *mouet mentes et atrox pictura et iustissimorum suppliciorum tristis aspectus; inde est quod adridemus ridentibus et contristat nos turba maerentium* (Sen. *Dial.* 4.2.5) [Cause]  
'the atrocious picture and the sad sight of punishments move us, legitimate as they may be; that is the reason why we laugh with the ones who are laughing, and the crowd of those who suffer makes us sad'.
- (34) *itaque hic est quod me detinet negotium* (Plaut. *pers.* 505) [Place]  
'therefore it is here that business keeps me'.

Furthermore, Rosén (1989) has drawn attention to a particular type of adjunct-clefting exemplified in a sentence like

- (35) *amice facis quom me laudas* (Pl. *Most.* 719)  
'it is for friendship that you are praising me'.

What can be noted in (35) is that not only *quom* appears in the absence of a time expression, as is the case for example in (28), acting thus as a general subordinator, but, more strikingly, there is an equally desemantized copula *facis*, co-indexing the subject of the embedded clause, instead of the more commonly used forms of *sum*. In addition, it has to be remarked that it retains the same information structure of a cleft sentence of the previous types, in that it en-

<sup>11</sup> Similar uses of *quod* are signalled already in Leumann-Hofmann-Szantyr (1963: 579 ff.).

codes an argument-focus structure, where the embedded clause is pragmatically presupposed.

### 3.4 Types of Focus

In Section 2, the main informational properties of cleft sentences have been outlined; however, in many of the sentences found in the corpus, counterexamples can be detected, and they are so problematic in that they still appear to be proper cleft sentences. The following section will give a separate account of the different informative functions that can be ascribed to Latin clefts: starting from the prototypical case, instances will be displayed of cleft sentences containing different types of Focus, sentences which have lost their original functional motivation and which have developed new discursive values.

#### 3.4.1 Argument-focus clefts

As seen in Section 2, argument-focus is the usual information structure of a cleft sentence, which means that this is the case in which the morphosyntactic form is more functionally motivated: the operation of cleaving serves here the function of singling out the Focus, and at the same time it triggers a presupposition in the embedded clause, thus avoiding a predicate-focus reading.

(36) *si enim quid liceat quaeritis, potestis tollere e ciuitate quem uoltis; tabella est quae dat potestatem* (Cic. *Rab. Post.* 11.10)

‘If you demand what is legitimate, you can banish whoever you want from this city; it’s the table that gives this power’.

(37) *corcillum est quod homines facit, cetera quisquilia omnia* (Petron. 75.8)

‘It is cunning that makes real men, other things are worthless’.

(38) = (13) *non ego sum qui te dudum condux*i (Plaut. *Merc.* 758)

‘it is not me who just hired you’.

(39) *nostrum genus est cui debetur regnum caelorum, non illi generi* (Aug. *serm.* 14.3)

‘It is to our race that heavenly kingdom is due, not to that race’.

(40) *‘stellarum’ inquit ‘duarum lumen miscetur et praebet unius speciem nempe sic quemadmodum rubicunda fit nubes solis incursu, quemadmodum vespertina aut matutina flavescunt, quemadmodum arcus alterve sol visitur’.*

*Haec omnia primum magna vi efficiuntur; sol est enim qui ista succendit; stellarum non est ista potentia* (Sen. nat. 7.12.7)

‘He said: “The light of two stars is mixed, and makes them look like one, just like when a cloud turns red because of the sun, when the sky glows with a golden color in the morning, or in the evening, when the rainbow is looked at like another sun”. Now, all these things happen because of a great force; it is the sun that lights up such things; stars do not have the same power’.

Sentences (36)–(40)<sup>12</sup> display a pattern where the noun in Focus position, i.e. the argument of the copula, has contrastive value, and the subordinate clause is presupposed. Sometimes, the contrastiveness of the referent in Focus is made explicit by overtly signalling the element with which it is contrasted, like *cetera* in (37) or *illi generi* in (39). What can be observed in addition is that this type of cleft sentence in Latin is in competition with other focusing devices such as Focus particles, or the intrinsically focal pronouns *ego* and *tu*; this could be the reason why not so many instances of cleft sentences with an argument-focus information structure are found.

### 3.4.2 Time-clefts

The time cleft is defined on a different basis with respect to the other types addressed in Section 2: in fact it is mostly a semantic property which characterises it, namely that of having a Time expression in its focal part. These constructions were first studied in Benincà (1978), who focuses mostly on their syntactic behaviour. More recently, this particular type has been taken into account in Hasselgård (2004) as one of the most frequent cases of adverbial-clefting (what is called here adjunct-clefting) in English. This type of sentence has also been a matter of interest for many studies on contemporary Italian, among which Berretta (1994, 2002), Scarano (2003), Roggia (2009) and Valentini (2012), who focuses on Bergamo’s Gallo-Italian dialect. What has to be stressed in this context is that, as Roggia (2009: 125–128) points out, time-clefts seemingly do not dis-

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<sup>12</sup> For what concerns (40), there can be two different interpretations. If this sentence is regarded as an argument-focus cleft, *sol* has to be considered recoverable from the preceding context, and with contrastive value as opposed to *stellae* in the following sentence; in such a view the subordinate *ista succendit* is presupposed because of several expressions indicating that something is lit up (*lumen, flavescunt, alter sol*). However a predicate-focus reading is also possible: *sol* would thus be a topical expression, while the subordinate would have an assertive value. Further along, examples of cleft sentences admitting a Topic-Focus reading are given.



play any particular difference to other focusing clefts, but, however, the focal value of the clefted constituent is not always so clear: for this reason Roggia uses the expression “focalizzazione debole” [‘weak focalisation’]. In the end, these studies prove that the time cleft is a rather unitary and grammaticalized structure which comes into play in certain contexts, simply as a means of inserting a time expression.

- (41) *tertius dies est quod audivi recitantem Sentium Augurinum cum summa mea voluptate, immo etiam admiratione* (Plin. *epist.* 4.27.1.1)  
 ‘It is two days now that I heard Sentius Augurinus recite his poems, with great delight and admiration as well’.
- (42) *hanc domum / iam multos annos est cum possideo et colo* (Plaut. *aul.* 3–4)  
 ‘This house, it is many years that I own it and live in it’.
- (43) *nec dissimulavit adulescens tertium iam diem esse quod omni labore materiae ad scribendum destinatae non inueniret exordium* (Quint. *inst.* 10.3.4)  
 ‘and the young boy did not dissimulate that it was two days that, with great diligence, he could not find a beginning for the subject he had to write about’.
- (44) *indutiarum autem autem vocabulum qua sit ratione factum, iam diu est, cum quaerimus* (Gel. 1.25.12)  
 ‘as for the word ‘indutiae’, it is a long time that we are investigating its origin’

For what concerns the Latin data, it can be observed that none of the occurrences displays prototypical features of a cleft, i.e. a contrastive Focus and a presupposed subordinate clause. Rather, it seems that in some cases time clefts favour the insertion of a predicate-focus structure, since (42) displays even a left-dislocated Topic that precedes the cleft. In the end, an interpretation in terms of weak focalization seems suitable also for Latin: time-clefts appear to be a syntactic device which gives particular salience to the time-adverbial, but without affecting the unmarked predicate-focus reading.

### 3.4.3 Contrastive Topic clefts

Contrastive Topics belong to the Focus subtype called “parallel Focus” in Dik (1997: 310), and their most salient feature is that in sentences with a predicate-focus structure, two topical expressions are contrasted and one of them is foregrounded, as in:

- (45) John and Bill came to see me. John was nice but BILL was rather BORING  
(Dik 1989: 326)

The foregrounded element acquires a certain degree of pragmatic saliency which in Latin may be expressed by a cleft.

- (46) *Charilaus et Nymphius principes ciuitatis [...] partes ad rem agendam diuisere ut alter ad imperatorem Romanorum transfugeret, alter subsisteret [...]. Charilaus fuit qui ad Publium Philonem uenit.* (Liv. 8.25.9)  
‘Charilaus and Nymphius, first citizens, split the management of the situation, so that one had to travel to the Roman general, the other had to remain [...]. It was Charilaus who went to Publius Philo’.
- (47) *erat idem temporibus Sex. Pompeius frater, qui cum praesidio Corbudam tenebat [...] ipse autem Cn. Pompeius adulescens Uliam oppidum oppugnabat* (Bell. Hisp. 3.1.1)  
‘At those times it was his brother Sextus Pompeius who held Cordoba with a garrison. The young Gn. Pompeius on the other hand was leading the siege of the city of Ulia’.
- (48) *illud suo loco imputabo, quod hic domi semper et custos tantae pecuniae fuit, ego sum ille qui longas terras et ignotas regiones peragraui, ego ille qui tam longe abieram ut in patriam redire non possem* (Quint. decl. 320.6)  
‘I am going to charge him for this, for he always stayed at home, and only as a keeper of the wealth, I am the one who went through faraway and unknown lands, me who got so far that I could not even return home’.

As may be seen, the information structure of these sentences is quite different from the argument-focus clefts. Its most relevant feature is that while the focality of the clefted constituent is unchanged with respect to the argument-focus type, as well as its contrastiveness, the embedded clause no longer triggers presupposition; on the contrary, the subordinate clauses are clearly asserted.

### 3.4.4 Clefts with pragmatic accommodation

The phenomenon of pragmatic accommodation is well known in literature; David Lewis was one of the first linguists who expressed the principle for which “if at time *t* something is said that requires presupposition *P* to be acceptable, and if *P* is not presupposed just before *t*, then – *ceteris paribus* and within certain limits – presupposition *P* comes into existence at *t*” (Lewis, 1979: 340 *apud* Abbott

2000). Now, cleft sentences are structures that normally contain a presupposition, as usual in argument-focus constructions, but in addition to this, they can also trigger the presupposition of a new state of affairs precisely through pragmatic accommodation. This particular behaviour has been first observed in Prince (1978), who introduced the term “informative presupposition clefts” for sentences like (49), where the subordinate clause contains discourse-new information that is immediately integrated into the presupposition.

(49) the leaders of the homophile movement in America generally have been young people. It was they who fought back during a violent police raid on a Greenwich bar in 1969 [ . . . ] (Prince 1978: 898)

In Latin, some analogous cases can be spotted. In (50) and (51), the content of the subordinate clauses is in no way predictable from the context, but in spite of its newness it is part of the presupposition. This is the case also in (52), whose informative goal is first to explain a juridical principle (i.e. that the act of stealing is a lifelong crime), and then to identify it as the motivation for the use of an already known formula. The fact that this formula is in use, expressed by the predicate *dicitur*, is not inferrable from the immediately preceding context, so it is a new content. At the same time, however, the formula *noxæ caput sequitur* is known to the reader, as in the *Digesta* it occurs four times before this passage, in other books. For this reason, it is impossible to treat this sentence as an argument-focus cleft, because there is no such information structure, and at the same time, it is not a text-cohesion cleft (see Section 3.4.5) because it does not contain a totally new assertion.

(50) *et scilicet tua libertas disserendi amissa est, aut tu is es qui in disputando non tuum iudicium sequaris, sed auctoritati aliorum pareas* (Cic. *leg.* 1.36)

‘And undoubtedly your freedom of speech has been lost, or it is you who deliberately do not follow your mind in the discussion, but obey someone’s authority’.

(51) *nemo dubitabit quin id hac lege non liceat, si ego pater sum. Atqui ne de eo quidem dubitari poterit quin pater sim. An hoc negas me esse qui genuerim, qui educauerim, et [ . . . ] me esse qui dederim in adoptionem?* (Quint. *decl.* 346.3)

‘nobody will doubt that this is not legitimate, if I am the father. And so that nobody has any more doubts that I am the father. Do you deny that it was me who gave you birth, me who provided you with education, and [ . . . ] me who gave you in adoption?’

(52) *quamdiu vivit is qui furtum fecit, non perit furti actio: aut enim sui iuris est is qui furtum fecit, et cum ipso actio est, aut alieni iuris esse coepit, et actio furti cum eo est cui cuius potestati subiectus est: et hoc est quod dicitur 'noxam caput sequitur'* (Iust. Dig. 47.2.41.2)

'The action for theft is not extinguished as long as the thief lives, whether he who perpetrates the offence is his own master when an action is brought against him, or whether he is under the control of another, and the action for theft is brought against the person to whose authority he is subjected; and this is the reason that it is said that the crime follows the person' (Scott 1932).<sup>13</sup>

It must be stressed however that pragmatic accommodation is not always easy to recognise, because this requires a careful evaluation of the informative value of the propositions being analysed: it is not enough to notice that a cleft may contain a non-presupposed subordinate clause, one must also be able to demonstrate that the author is really treating that content as presupposed. Furthermore, there seems to be evidence that in Latin this particular informational value is quite unstable, and in the end it can be considered a pragmatically marked way of exploiting the structure of a cleft-construction. In Section 3.4.5 further cases are taken into account, where the subordinate is equally new, but instead of being accommodated into the presupposition, it is totally new and asserted.

### 3.4.5 Text cohesion clefts

Many studies by Monica Berretta (in particular Berretta 1995 and 2002), as well as more recently Roggia (2009), have shown that in Italian, cleft sentences can often "flip" their information structure including a Topic, most often an anaphoric expression, as the argument of the copula, while new content is inserted in the subordinate clause. In these cases the cleft sentence works as a "*strategia di articolazione del testo*" ('text articulation strategy') (Berretta 1995: 160), with the function of separating what is old and what is new in the discourse. As for Latin texts, especially in the imperial age, they display exactly the same behaviour: there is good evidence that cleft sentences already in Latin had developed this secondary function of overtly introducing a new assertion.

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<sup>13</sup> Scott's translation was chosen because of the high specificity of the vocabulary of the *Digesta*, for which a special juridical competence is required. It must be observed, however, that the Latin cleft sentence is not translated here by an English cleft.

- (53) *quotus enim quisque, cuius tu non ante commilito quam imperator? Inde est, quod prope omnes nomine adpellas, quod singulorum fortia facta commemoras* (Plin. *paneg.* 5.1.1)  
 ‘How much are those of whom you were not a fellow soldier before being their general and emperor? From hence it is that you address almost everybody by their name, that you remember each one’s brave deeds’.
- (54) *Quidquid uides currit cum tempore; nihil ex iis quae uidemus manet; ego ipse, dum loquor mutari ista, mutatus sum. Hoc est quod ait Heraclitus: ‘in idem flumen bis descendimus et non descendimus’* (Sen. *epist.* 58.23)  
 ‘Whatever you see runs along with time; nothing of what we see stays; while I am speaking of these things changing, even I am changed. That is why Heraclitus says “we do and we don’t dive twice in the same river” ‘.
- (55) *Quemadmodum Puteolanus pulvis si aquam attigit saxum est, sic e contrario haec aqua si solidum tetigit haeret et affigitur. Inde est quod res abiectae in eundem lacum lapideae subinde extrahuntur* (Sen. *nat.* 3.20)  
 ‘In the same way as Puteoli’s dust, when it touches water, becomes stone, this water, if it touches a solid body, sticks to it. It is for this reason that objects thrown in the same lake immediately come out in a stone-like fashion’.

Sentences like (53)–(55) have clearly lost the informative value of prototypical, i.e. functionally motivated, clefts: the argument of the copula is in most cases an anaphoric expression co-indexing with an active element, while the subordinate clause is an entirely new proposition, with its own information structure, which is of the predicate-focus type. Now, following the Italian-based literature quoted above, the definition of *text-cohesion clefts* is proposed here, a definition which puts stress on the textual function acquired by these structures after losing their original informational value. As proof, it is remarkable that almost all occurrences of text-cohesion clefts are sentences like *hoc est quod* or *inde est quod*.

Most of these occurrences are found starting from the period of Quintilian and may be regarded as evidence that, at this stage, synchronic variability of such constructions was highly limited, with respect to all the cases described in the preceding paragraphs, or even that there was no variability. The original structure of a cleft is here reduced to a minimum, as it has become a fixed expression which serves a totally different function: that of creating text cohesion by separating the anaphoric element from the new predication.

## 4 Conventionalisation and grammaticalisation

In the preceding paragraphs, five types of cleft sentence have been found: argument-focus clefts, time-clefts, contrastive topic-clefts, clefts with pragmatic accommodation and text-cohesion clefts. The first result of the analysis carried out has therefore been to demonstrate the multifunctionality of these constructions. In addition to this, it can be argued that these different functions have not arisen randomly, but instead they seem to be accountable for in terms of synchronic extension and, in some cases, grammaticalisation.

The interplay between information structure and grammaticalisation has been discussed in Lehmann (2008)<sup>14</sup>: he argues that, just like any other grammatical category, information structure is encoded by linguistic forms that can undergo grammaticalisation: syntactic structures, such as the cleft, with a given – and motivated – informational value tend to become more entrenched in the grammar, and, as a consequence, “pragmatic relations loose their specificity”, and “differences between pragmatic components are levelled out” (Lehmann 2008: 6). Pragmatic accommodation in cleft sentences may be regarded as a significant instance of this behaviour, in that, as shown in 3.4.4, the construction loses its primary function of marking an argument-focus and comes to be used for a different informative purpose, namely that of triggering presupposition on a new propositional content.

On a wider perspective, all the different values of cleft sentences that have been discussed can be accounted for as instances of conventionalisation of a functionally motivated structure. All the subtypes described in Section 3.3 represent therefore cases of cleft sentences that have undergone an extension in use, alongside with the loss of their focal value. Pragmatic accommodation seems to be the first step in this process, in that it can be regarded as a pragmatically marked way of exploiting the structure of a cleft. At a second stage, the possibility of conveying different informational values has led to the formation of different pragmatically unmarked fixed types, which are time-clefts, contrastive-topic clefts and text-cohesion clefts.

As far as the latter type is concerned, traces of grammaticalisation can be detected, in that there is clearly a transition from an open and productive construction to what could be called poly-lexemic connectives such as *hoc est quod* and *inde est quod*. In support of this view, it must be stressed that not only they do not share the information structure of a cleft, but they are also no longer productive,

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<sup>14</sup> I am grateful to Prof. Christian Lehmann for drawing my attention to this article, as well as for his useful remarks on the occasion of the XVII Colloquium on Latin Linguistics.

in that they do not admit any other lexical element in Focus position. Furthermore, the two grammaticalised connectives appear to be particularly widespread beginning with authors from the end of the first century: they could therefore also represent a later diachronic stage in the development of cleft sentences.

Finally, the most puzzling issue arising from such a picture is that the same informational shift that has been observed in Latin is a feature of several contemporary Romance languages, Italian in particular, alongside with more prototypical instances of cleft sentences. In other words, it has been proved that what is usually considered a case of grammaticalisation dating to the later stages of Italian was already possible in Latin with almost the same outcomes. As a conclusion it could then be hypothesized that, if the patterns of semantic extension, and perhaps grammaticalisation, are so similar in one language and the other, it must be the informative features of cleft sentences that facilitate such processes.

## 5 Conclusions

As the previous work on Latin cleft sentences has been mostly limited to Löfstedt (1966), the first goal of the present study was to show that these constructions were far more widespread in Latin than was argued initially. Then, from a syntactic point of view, two different strategies have been described: argument-clefting always requires a relative subordinator, while adjunct-clefting admits also general subordinators. Finally, from the informative perspective, a prototypical type has been outlined, which serves the function of marking an argument-focus structure. This type has then undergone processes of conventionalisation and grammaticalisation, which have led to the formation of more fixed types with different informational values, such as time-clefts, text-cohesion clefts and contrastive-topic clefts. An issue which seems to deserve further attention is the chronology of these different types: for example, although it has been observed that Quintilian's prose displays more grammaticalised forms, it is also true that Plautus' Early Latin uses many time-clefts, which are another instance of a more conventionalised structure. In general, further attention to cleft sentences in single authors would be able to give more information on their development, especially if stylistic facts are taken into account like the difference between prose and poetry, or literary genres.

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