

I received a request yesterday from my partner for “Herr Doktor Professor Language Person” to parse a sentence that one of her colleagues had encountered in a historical novel by my old colleague Rosina Lippi-Green.

Original sentence to parse:

When she looked at the available men in Rosenau, Wainwright's Katharina could see no promise in any of them but of children and farm work, things that interested her not in the least. (*The Homestead*, Rosina Lippi-Green, p. 87-88)

There are three clauses, and deletions from two rules:

- Conjunction Reduction deletes repeated material (**a promise**) between *but* and *of* in the second,
- *Whiz*-deletion removes the relative **which** and auxiliary verb **were** in the last clause.

The first clause is just an ordinary adverb clause, introduced by *when*

1. When she_j looked at the available men_i in Rosenau, (Adverb clause)
2. Wainwright's Katharina_j could see no promise in any of them_i, (Main clause;
but [*i.e.*, *other than*] **a promise** of children_k and farm work_k, *Nobbut*-cleft)
3. **which**_k **were** things_k that_k interested her_j not in the least. (Stacked relative clause)

the last clause is a *Whiz*-Deleted, nonrestrictive, stacked relative clause that modifies *children and farm work* (I've put back in boldface the **which were** that *Whiz*-Deletion removed).

The weird part is in clause two, which is a “nobbut” cleft,* which implies *only X* by saying *nought but X* (and also *nothing, no one, nowhere, no ... but X*).

But has to be interpreted in its sense of *other than, except for* in this construction).

I've marked coreferential NPs with subscript indices, stained the negatives (no, not), NPIs (any, in the least), the modal could, and the fulcrum (**but**) of the *nobbut*-cleft (no...but), and put back in boldface the **a promise** that was deleted by Conjunction Reduction. It's not a diagrammed sentence, nor yet a tree structure. But it may make things clearer.

The implication of the *nobbut*-cleft is that she_j was not interested in any of the men_i in Rosenau.

* Examples on next page....

* Some examples of *nobbut*-clefts from the OED,
 (from the [handout](#) to my paper “Leftovers”, which is about the *remain(s) to* construction):

- (1588.10) *Remaineth nought but* to _interre our Brethren, And with low’d Larums _welcome them to Rome. Shaks. *Titus Andronicus*. i. i. 147
- (1610.1) Adumbration, or Transparency, is a cleere exemption of the substance of the Charge, or thing borne, in such sort as that **there remaineth nothing**_i; thereof to **i_be** discerned, **but** the naked and bare proportion of the outward lineaments thereof. Guillim *Heraldrie* ii. iii. 42
- (1719.1) **Many** a weary Stroke it [*sc.* the boat] had cost, you may be sure; and **there remained nothing but** to _get it into the Water. De Foe *Crusoe* i. (Globe) 129
- (1733.1) **There remains nothing but** to _recruit the Solids weakened in the Struggle. Cheyne *Eng. Malady* ii. viii. §7 (1734) 202
- (1828.7) Imagining that **nothing remained for them**_i; **but** to **i_dight** their nebs and **i_flee** up. Moir *Mansie Wauch* ii. 25
- (1836.13) **Nothing now remained but** to _brace **every** nerve for the battle. Thirlwall *Greece* II. xv. 306
- (1843.12) Apparently **nothing but** warmth_i **remained** to **i_indicate** (**that** life had not already become extinct). R. J. Graves *Syst. Clin. Med.* v. 71
- (1849.11) **Now nothing**_i **remains** to **i_be** discovered **but** the sandy deserts of Central Africa, and the inaccessible ice-rocks of the North Pole. H. Coleridge *Ess.* (1851) I. 70
- (1860.20) **Nought**_i **remains** to **i_mark** the huge moraine, **but** a strip of dirt. Tyndall *Glac.* ii. viii. 267
- (1880.24) **Nothing remains but for the once enemies**_i to **i_say** farewell. Miss Broughton *Sec. Th.* ii. x. (1885) 237
- (Mod.4) **There remains no more but** to _thank you for your courteous attention. (Modern)

Key to ‘slide stains’ in examples:

for Proust _i	to i_summate	=	Infinitive Subject
ruins _j	to _unbury _j	=	Infinitive Object
to _be seen	=	Indefinite	Infinitive Subject

any	=	Negative Polarity Item	(links are live)
but	=	Fulcrum of Cleavage	
some	=	Quantifier	now = Deictic element
will	=	Modal	nought = Negative element