The Noteworthiness of Some Copular Construction in English
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Introduction: Sentences like (1-2) are commonly heard in colloquial English.

(1)   That's a beautiful dress you're wearing.   (*The Sight of the Starts*, 2004, novel)

(2)   That's a fine young man you have here.   (*Ella Enchanted*, 2004, movie)

These sentences have the surface form that can be schematically represented as in (3), where XP represents some sort of nominal and YP represents some sort of gapped relative clause (RC). And they resemble what are called *identificational* copular sentences with an RC modifier and *cleft* sentences with a demonstrative (DEM) subject, as one can see from comparing (1-2) with (4-5).

(3)   [DEM BE XP YP]

(4)   English identificational copular sentences (Higgins 1973: 221, (56d, b)):
    a.   That is a tiger.
    b.   This is the house I mentioned.

(5)   English cleft sentences with a DEM subject (Hedberg 2000: (3c) & (18)):
    a.   That was John that I saw.
    b.   That was the platoon sergeant that said that.

Ever since Higgins' (1973) seminal work, English copular sentences have received much attention in the literature (see, e.g., Hedberg 2000, Mikkelsen 2011, Moltmann 2013, Reeve 2011, and the references there), but sentences like (1-2) have not been part of that discussion. In this paper, I show how sentences like (1-2) are both similar and dissimilar to identificational copular sentences (identificationals) and cleft sentences (clefts) and suggest a formal analysis under which their characteristic properties can be captured. Since sentences like (1-2) have not been dealt with in the extant literature, in particular in comparison to typical identificationals or clefts, for ease of reference, I will henceforth call them *that*-presentational sentences (*that*-PSs) on the basis of the fact that they are typically uttered out of the blue in a manner analogous to presentational *there*-BE sentences (e.g., *There are children playing outside*).

Characteristic properties of *that*-PSs: One of the most notable properties of *that*-PSs is that they cannot be uttered in answer to a question, unlike the case with identificational sentences or clefts:

(6)   A: What's this?
      B: That's a tiger./That's the house I mentioned the other day.   (identificational)

(7)   A: Who did you see?
      B: That was John that I saw.   (cleft)

(8)   A: What's this?
      B: #That's a beautiful dress that you're wearing.   (*that*-PS)

Another characteristic property of *that*-PSs is that only DEM pronouns can occur as their matrix subject whereas, in identificational or cleft sentences, other possibilities are also permitted:

(9)   a.   That's a tiger.   (identificational)
      b.   **That animal** is a tiger.   (identificational)

(10) That/**it** was John that I saw.   (cleft)

(11) a.   That's/***it**'s a beautiful dress that you're wearing.   (*that*-PS)
      b.   ***That outfit/dress** is a beautiful dress that you're wearing.

Next, the XP of *that*-PSs can only be a nominal, as shown in (12), and any type of *focused* nominal may, in principle, occur in their XP position, as shown in (13), where capitalization indicates focal stress.

(12) *That's **beautiful** that you're wearing.

(13) a.   That's **the EIGHTH wonder of the world** you have over there!
      b.   Those are **BEAUTIFUL ties** you two are wearing!

Finally, even though, there is some semantic connection between the gap inside the YP and what occurs as the XP of a *that*-PS, 'XP + YP' strings cannot occur in argument positions, and in this regard, *that*-PSs pattern with clefts but not with identificationals:

(14) a.   That's a beautiful dress that you're wearing.   (***that*-PS**)
     b.   *I bought [a beautiful dress that you're wearing].   (object position)
     c.   *[A beautiful dress that you're wearing] was expensive.   (subject position)
(15) a.   That's a book written by Chomsky.   (**identificational**)
     b.   I bought [a book written by Chomsky].   (object position)
     c.   [A book written by Chomsky] was found in my office.   (subject position)
(16) a.   It was a snake that the mongoose caught.   (**cleft**)
     b.   *John killed [a snake that the mongoose caught].   (object position)
     c.   *[A snake that the mongoose caught] was venomous.   (subject position)

Notably, however, while the YP of a cleft has to be *presupposed*, that of a *that*-PS need not be, and in this regard, *that*-PSs are more like identificationals. By way of illustration, while one cannot felicitously utter (16a) without presupposing '∃x[the mongoose caught x]', one can felicitously utter (14a) and (15a) without presupposing '∃x[you are wearing x]' and '∃x[Chomsky wrote x]', respectively.

Analysis: I suggest that *that*-PSs are a subtype of *equative* sentences whose matrix subject denotes the *object of a direct perception*, whose YP component *characterizes* the situation being perceived, and whose XP indicates what is *noteworthy* about the situation. To put this in more formal terms, I submit that the matrix subject of a *that*-PS is a *defective* deictic D of type $<<e,t>,e>$ (similar to *the* in terms of semantic type but different in meaning), and it selects for a clausal constituent of type $<e,t>$. Since the DEM does not select for an NP, its clausal complement instantiates a *gapped* but *headless* RC. But as is the case with other more "ordinary" gapped RCs in English, this RC is comprised of a CP whose Spec position is occupied by an operator (Op) that is co-indexed with the gap position inside of it, and as a result, it denotes something of type $<e,t>$, making the entire DP denote something of type e.

As for the more global syntax, I propose that *that*-PSs have the predication structure headed by the equative BE (BE$_{EQ}$) in the sense of Geist (2007). That is, it denotes a function of type $<e,<e,t>>$, with the lexical entry of $\lambda y \lambda x[x = y]$, as in sentences like *Cicero is Tully* or *John is my brother* (cf. Partee 1986). But what is "unusual" about the BE$_{EQ}$ heading the Predicate Phrase (PredP) of *that*-PSs is that its inner argument (DP$_1$) carries a focus feature which I notate as [+noteworthy] for convenience, and its outer argument (DP$_2$) is a deictic definite description which selects for a gapped but headless RC.

Once this predication structure is formed, due to its focus feature, DP$_1$ raises to the Spec of Focus Phrase (FocP), which is projected right above the PredP, and this is followed by the DEM raising to [Spec, TP] for EPP reasons and the BE$_{EQ}$ raising to T to pronounce the tense/agreement features, as given in (17).

(17) Derivation of (1) under the present analysis:

[$_{TP}$ [*That*]$_k$ [$_{T'}$ [$_T$ [*is*]$_j$] [$_{FocP}$ [$_{DP1[+NOTEWORTHY]}$ *a BEAUTIFUL dress*]$_m$ [$_{Foc'}$ [$_{Foc\ [+NOTEWORTHY]}$]

[$_{PredP}$ [$_{DP2}$ [$_D$ t$_k$] [$_{CP}$ Op$_i$ [$_{C'}$ [$_{TP}$ *you're wearing* e$_i$]]] [$_{Pred'}$ [$_{Pred}$ t$_j$] [t$_m$]]]]]]]]

Consequences: According to the present analysis, English clefts, identificationals like (4b), and what I call *that*-PSs all stem from a PredP that is headed by BE$_{EQ}$ whose XP component carries some sort of focus, and this lets us capture the semantic link between the pronominal subject and the YP element of English clefts without resorting to rightward movement, thereby improving on both 'extraposition' (e.g., Jespersen 1927, Akmajian 1970, Gundel 1977, Percus 1997, Hedberg 2000, Reeve 2011) and 'expletive' analyses of English clefts (e.g., Jespersen 1937, Chomsky 1977, Delahunty 1981, Rochemont 1986, Heggie 1988, É. Kiss 1998, 1999) while incorporating their core insights. One other notable implication of the present analysis is that, in English, defective Ds may undergo Head-to-Spec raising to satisfy EPP, and if correct, this idea will provide us with another way to capture crosslinguistic variation on copular sentences.

Select references: Hedberg, Nancy. 2000. On the referential status of clefts. *Language* 76:891-920; Higgins, Francis Roger. 1973. The pseudo-cleft construction in English. Doctoral dissertation, MIT; É. Kiss, Katalin. 1998. Identificational focus versus information focus. *Language* 74:245-273.