

## (Pseudo)cleft constructions in old Romanian

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### Abstract

The article examines the syntactic and semantic features of cleft sentences in Old Romanian (OR) as compared to Modern Romanian (MR). The clefting strategy in MR can only produce pseudo-cleft constructions (identifying structures with free relative clauses headed by *ce*, or relative clauses with an antecedent; the focalized constituent follows the relative clause and the copula; the reversed pattern is also possible: the focalized constituent is placed before the copula and the relative clause). The analysis of an OR corpus showed that cleft constructions were quite frequent, but the patterns were more diverse than in MR: besides cleft and pseudo-cleft constructions, OR also employed hybrid constructions, that amalgamate the features of the prototypical clefts.

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## 1. Introduction

Since Jespersen (1937/1984), an extensive literature deals with the description of cleft sentences. Most of the studies are dedicated to the syntax of clefts (Akmajian, 1970; Gundel, 1977; Higgins, 1979; Bošković, 1997; Iatridou & Varlokosta, 1998; Reeve, 2011, 2012; Hartmann & Tonjes, 2013; Hedberg, 2013), but also to their semantic and pragmatic properties (see Prince, 1981; Declerck, 1984, 1988; Halliday, 1985; Lambrecht, 2001).

This paper focuses on the distinction in the current syntactic theory between clefts and pseudo-clefts.

The general organization of a prototypic cleft construction (1) is [*expletive + copula + FOCALIZED XP + restrictive relative clause*] (Reeve, 2012, p. 1), where the *focalized XP* may be a subject (1a) or an object (1b).

- (1) a. It was JOHN who left.  
b. It was A RED BAG that I bought.

The general schema of a pseudo-cleft (2) is [*relative clause + copula + FOCALIZED XP*], and it can be organized as in (2a), or in the reversed pattern (2b): [*FOCALIZED XP + copula + relative clause*] (see Huddleston *et al.*, 2002, p. 1414). In a narrow perspective, *pseudo-clefts* are considered to be free relative clauses that belong to identification patterns in which they occupy a thematic position, as in (2a,b) (see Prince, 1978, p. 883); in a wider view, the class of pseudo-clefts may include relative clauses with a neutral antecedent as (*fact/manner/place/reason*, etc.) (2c), or relative clauses with a universal quantifier antecedent (2d) (Collins, 1991, p. 27), with the following general organization: [*FOCALIZED XP + copula + antecedent + relative clause*].

- (2) a. What I bought was a red bag.  
b. A red bag was what I bought.  
c. The place where John saw Mary was in front of the bank.  
d. All he wanted was a hamburger.

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The paper aims to present an inventory of cleft sentences patterns in Old Romanian (OR), and to confront it with the cleft patterns that are employed in Modern Romanian (MR).

Most descriptions of Romanian clefts (Şerbănescu, 1996; Pană Dindelegan, 2013, p. 488) show that the clefting strategy in MR can only produce *pseudo-clefts*; they are either identification structures ([*relative clause + copula + FOCALIZED XP*]) with free relative clauses headed by *ce* (3a), or relative structures with an antecedent that has the properties mentioned by Collins (1991; see *supra*): a noun with generalizing value (3b,c) or the universal quantifier *tot* (3d); this structure matches the pattern: [*antecedent + relative clause + copula + FOCALIZED XP*].

Reversed pseudo-clefts are also possible in Romanian. The focalized constituent is extracted from subject position (4a) or direct object / prepositional object / adjunct position (4b); the pattern of such constructions is: [*FOCALIZED XP + copula + antecedent + relative clause*]<sup>1</sup>.

- (3) a. [Ce mă supără cel mai tare] este CĂ NU AI RĂBDARE.  
 what CL.ACC.1SG upsets most hard is that not have patience  
 ‘What upsets me most is that you have no patience’
- b. Ceea [ce mă supără cel mai tare] este CĂ NU AI  
 that what CL.ACC.1SG upsets most hard is that not have  
 RĂBDARE.  
 patience  
 ‘What upsets me most is that you have no patience’
- c. Chestia [care mă supără cel mai tare] este CĂ NU  
 thing.DEF which CL.ACC.1SG upsets most hard is that not  
 AI RĂBDARE.  
 have patience  
 ‘The fact that upsets me most is that you have no patience’
- d. Tot [ce mă supără] este CĂ NU AI RĂBDARE.  
 all what CL.ACC.1SG upsets is that not have patience  
 ‘All that upsets me is that you have no patience’
- (4) a. CĂ NU AI RĂBDARE este ceea [ce mă supără  
 that not have patience is that what CL.ACC.1SG upsets  
 cel mai tare].  
 most hard  
 ‘That you have no patience upsets me most’
- b. EL este cel [pe care l-ai întâlnit  
 he is the.one DOM which CL.ACC.3SG=AUX.have.2SG meet.PPLE  
 ieri] / [despre care am vorbit] / [la care  
 yesterday about which AUX.have.1PL speak.PPLE to which  
 ne ducem].  
 CL.REFL.ACC.1PL go  
 ‘He is the one that you met yesterday / we were talking about / we are going at’

<sup>1</sup>Though not yet supported by quantitative analysis, an observation should be made: the pattern [*FOCALIZED XP + copula + relative clause*] is almost absent in MR (or, more precisely, it is limited to the situations in which the focalized constituent is an object, and the relative clause is headed by *ce*, with a marked preference for the antecedent construction [*FOCALIZED XP + copula + antecedent + relative clause*]). Compared to the patterns under (3b–d), the pattern [*relative clause + copula + FOCALIZED XP*], in which the relative clause has a general nominal antecedent, also seems to have a limited distribution. The pattern favours *ce* as the head of the relative clause, and the focalized constituent is usually an object. Both cleft constructions are in free variation with the variant in which the relative clause has the pronominal antecedent *ceea*. This remark may lead to the conclusion that, in fact, the headless relative clause is a variant of the construction with *ceea*. For further detail regarding the distribution of (*ceea*) *ce* in MR relative clauses, see Gheorghe (2004, p. 140–148).

## 2. Cleft patterns in Old Romanian

The investigation of a corpus of Romanian 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century texts revealed the existence of many structures in which the focalization of a constituent is the result of a clefting mechanism. The cleft constructions identified in these texts are different from the clefts in MR, in terms of their general organization and in terms of morpho-syntactic features (that will be discussed below); the analysis of the corpus also showed that the pseudo-cleft pattern illustrated in (3a–d), and the reversed pattern in (4a) are both absent in OR.

### 2.1. Cleft sentences

The corpus revealed the existence of cleft patterns that are similar to the prototypical ones (which are known to be impossible in MR), and they are organized under the pattern [*copula* + *FOCALIZED XP* + *relative clause*]. The structures in (5) are similar to the ones in (1), with the only difference that they lack the expletive pronoun. The corpus displays a great variety of constructions, both in terms of the syntactic position of the focalized constituent [subject in (5a,d,e), adjunct in (5b<sub>1</sub>) and prepositional object in (5b<sub>2,c</sub>)], and in terms of the choice of the relative connector. Moreover, the focalized XP may have a simple structure [proper name or demonstrative (5a,b)], or a complex structure (5c,d,e). The complex focalized constituent has a pronominal antecedent and a restrictive relative clause (bearing the focal information). The relative clause may also have a pronominal antecedent (5f).

- (5) a. *Și iaste ȚARINA LUI EFRON [carea era în  
and is field.DEF LUI.GEN Ephron which was in  
peștira cea îndoită] (BB.1688, 15)  
cave.DEF CEL.F.ACC.SG bent  
'It is Ephron's field that the cave was in'*
- b. *Au nu iaste ACESTA [den carele bea domnu-nostru] și  
INT not is this from which drinks Lord=our and  
[cu carele vrăjaște]? (PO.1582, 155)  
with which spells  
'Isn't it the one that our Lord drinks from and he spells with?'*
- c. *și-i tremease cătră Domnul Isus Hristos,  
and=CL.ACC.3PL send.PS.3SG towards Lord Jesus Christ  
să întreabe pre el de iaste ACESTA  
SĂ<sub>SUBJ</sub> ask.SUBJ.3SG DOM he whether is this  
[CE-AU VENIT] [de carele zice scriptura și  
that=AUX.PERF.3SG come.PPLE of which tells Bible.DEF and  
glasurile prorocești]... (CC<sup>2</sup>.1581, 586)  
voices.DEF prophetic  
'And they sent them to Lord Jesus Christ, to ask Him whether it is the one who came that the Bible tells about'*
- d. *De nu ACESTA, au iaste CELA [CE RĂSIPIIA ÎNTRU  
if not this or is that who wonder.IMP.3SG in  
IERUSALIM] [cine meniia numele acesta ...]? (CB.1559–60, 98)  
Jerusalem who fate.IMP.3SG name.DEF this  
'If it is not this one, is it the one that wondered in Jerusalem who was destined to bear this name?'*
- e. *era OARECINE [DE-L CHEMA SAMPSON] [ce era mai  
was someone which=CL.ACC.3SG call.IMP.3SG Samson who was more  
cu vîrte de toț cîți era pe lume] (FD.1592–604, 568<sup>r</sup>)  
with virtue than all how.much were on Earth*

- ‘It was someone called Samson who was most virtuous on Earth’  
 f. și atunce iaste CUVÎNTUL acela [ce zice] (AD.1722–5, 92, 83<sup>r</sup>)  
 and then is word.DEF that which says  
 ‘And it is that word that says’

## 2.2. Prototypical pseudo-clefts

The prototypical pseudo-cleft pattern [*FOCALIZED XP + copula + relative clause*], with the relative pronoun *ce* and with a focalized constituent in object position (see discussion in footnote 1), which is almost absent in MR, or at least reduced to a single pattern, is very well represented in the OR corpus.

The examples under (6) show that in OR the patterns are more diversified than in MR. On the one hand, the focalized XP may occur in subject position, on the other hand, the relative clause may have other connectors besides *ce* [see (6a,c,d)]:

- (6) a. Că TU ești [cinre me-au trasu  
 that you are who CL.ACC.1SG=AUX.have.2SG pull.PPLE  
 de zgău] (...) (PH.1500–1510, 103, 17<sup>r</sup>)  
 of belly  
 ‘It is you who pulled me through’  
 b. Știa-l el că ACESTA era [ce drept  
 know.IMP.3SG=CL.ACC.3SG he that this was what as  
 milostenia ședeă pre lângă înfrunșetele uși ale  
 mercy.DEF sit.IMP.3SG around embellished doors of  
 besearecilor] (CP.1570, 29)  
 churches  
 ‘He knew that it was this one who would sit around the embellished doors of the churches’  
 c. Că (...) ACELA iaste [de-l măreaște Domnul] (CC<sup>2</sup>.1581, 556)  
 that that is who=CL.ACC.3SG praises Lord.DEF  
 ‘That that is the one who is praised by God’  
 d. Că ACESTA amu iaste [care de el e scris] (CC<sup>2</sup>.1581, 590)  
 that this now is which by him is written  
 ‘That this is the one which was written about’

The examples under (7a,b) have focalized proper names, numerals (7c), and complex DP (7d) extracted from subject position. Such constructions can be found in MR only with an antecedent relative clause.

- (7) a. MIHEA PROROC iaste [de-au prorocit de  
 Mihea prophet is who=AUX.have.2SG predict.PPLE of  
 aceasta] (CC<sup>2</sup>.1581, 562)  
 this.F.ACC  
 ‘It is Mihea the prophet who predicted this’  
 b. PAVEL iaste [carile mărturisește adevărata a Domnului  
 Pavel is who confesses true AL.GEN Lord  
 făgadă] (...) (CD.1698, 164)  
 promise  
 ‘It is Paul who confesses the true promise of the Lord’  
 c. DOAO era [de ținea ruda omenească]: dulceața și  
 two were that keep.IMP.3SG kind human pleasure.DEF and  
 scîrba. (CC<sup>2</sup>.1581, 520)  
 disgust.DEF  
 ‘There were two things that drove humankind: pleasure and disgust’

- d. că NUMAI SINGURĂ DREPTATEA iaste [de-i face  
that only alone justice is which=CL.ACC.3PL makes  
cinstiț la norod]. (AD.1722–5, 86, 78<sup>f</sup>)  
praised for people  
'It is only justice that makes them praised by the people'

The corpus also revealed examples in which the focalized constituent is extracted from direct object (8a,b) or prepositional object (8c,d) positions; in these examples, too, the relative connector can be other than *ce*:

- (8) a. Și acum, ACEASTA iaste [care te rog, Doamne  
and now this is which CL.ACC.2SG ask Lord.VOC  
împărate], și [care cer de la tine]! (BB.1688, 644)  
emperor.VOC and which ask from you  
'And now, it is this that I ask you, Lord, and that I ask from you'
- b. ACEASTA iaste [ce dzice Pavel apostol să să  
this is what says Paul disciple SĂ<sub>SUBJ</sub> CL.REFL.3SG  
socotească omul singur pre sine] (CazV.1643, 43<sup>f</sup>)  
think man.DEF by.himself on him  
'It is this that Paul the disciple says that people should reflect upon'
- c. ACEASTA iaste [care au zis Domnul] (BB.1688, 76)  
this is what AUX.have.2SG say.PPLE Lord.DEF  
'It is this what the Lord said'
- d. Deaci ACEA iaste [de ce grăim de stepena întâia a  
so that is of what speak of master first AL.GEN  
tatălui...] (Prav.1581, 167, 220<sup>v</sup>)  
father.GEN.DEF  
'So it is this what we say about the first master of our father'

### 2.3. Reversed pseudo-clefts

In the OR corpus, the most frequent are the examples in which the focalization of a constituent employs the reversed clefting strategy, as in (4b): [*FOCALIZED XP + copula + antecedent + relative clause*]. As far as the XP under focus is concerned, the corpus analysis revealed the frequency of personal pronouns (9a–c), demonstratives (9d–f) and pro-phrase demonstratives (9g), indefinites (9h), and proper nouns (10), all of them well represented in all stages of the OR.

- (9) a. Etă, EU sîntu cela [ce căutați]! (CB.1559–60, 109)  
look I am the.one that look.PRES.2PL  
'Look, it is me the one that you are looking for'
- b. Împărate Alexandre, EU sîmt astăzi cela [ce  
emperor.VOC Alexander.VOC I am today the.one that  
fugi de leul] (A.1620, 187)  
run.IMP.3SG of lion.DEF  
'Emperor Alexander, it is me who ran away from the lion'
- c. EL iaste cela [ce ispitește inimile și  
he is the.one that tempts hearts.DEF and  
rărunchii] (AD.1722–5, 92, 82<sup>v</sup>)  
kidneys.DEF  
'It is him who tempts your guts'

- d. ACESTA e **cela** [ce împărăția răsărita și  
this is the.one that rule.IMP.3SG East.DEF and  
apusul]. (FD.1592–604, 483<sup>r</sup>)  
West.DEF  
'This is the one who ruled the world'
- e. Au nu iaste ACESTA **cela** [ce ședea de  
IMP not is this the.one that sit.IMP.3SG and  
cerea]? (CazV.1643, 168<sup>r</sup>)  
beg.IMP.3SG  
'Isn't he the one who sit there and begged?'
- f. Cela ce are poruncile mele și le păzește  
the.one who has rules.DEF my and CL.ACC.3PL keeps  
pre iale, ACELA iaste **cela** [ce mă  
DOM them.F.ACC that is the.one who CL.ACC.1SG  
iubește] (AD.1722–5, 79, 71<sup>v</sup>)  
loves  
'It is the one who keeps my rules that loves me'
- g. Și ACEASTA iaste **accia** [ce zice prorocul  
and this is that what says prophet.DEF  
Ioil] (AD.1722–5, 219, 200<sup>v</sup>)  
Ioil  
'And it is this what says Ioil the prophet'
- h. că ALTUL iaste **cela** [ce samănă], și ALTUL √  
that another.one is that that seeds and another  
**cela** [ce seaceră] (CazV.1643, 160<sup>r</sup>)  
that that harvests  
'It is one who seeds and it is another one who harvests'
- (10) a. SAVL era **acesta** [ce vreauciderea lui] (CB.1559–60, 81)  
Savl.NOM was this that want.IMP.3SG killing.DEF his  
'It was Savl the one who wanted him killed'
- b. SAVEL era **cela** [ce vreauciderii lui] (CP.1570, 81)  
Savel.NOM was that that want.IMP.3SG killing.DAT his  
'It was Savel the one who wanted him killed'
- c. Că DUMNEZĂU iaste **Cel** [ce zdrobește războaiele] (BB.1688, 632)  
for Lord is the.one that crushes wars.DEF  
'It is God who breaks the wars'
- d. Duse-se omul și vestia jidovilor  
go.PS.3SG=CL.REFL.3SG man.DEF and announce.IMP.3SG Jews.DAT  
că IISUS iaste **Cela** [ce l-au  
that Jesus is the.one that CL.ACC.3SG=AUX.have.3SG  
făcut pre el sănătos] (BB.1688, 816)  
make.PPLE DOM he healthy  
'The man went to announce the jews that it was Jesus the one who made him well'
- e. IISUS iaste **cela** [ce m-au făcut  
Jesus is the.one that CL.ACC.1SG=AUX.have.3SG make.PPLE  
sănătos] (CazV.1643, 151<sup>v</sup>)  
healthy  
'It was Jesus the one who made me well'

- f. Cunoașteți      dară      că      DOMNUL      iaste      Cel  
 know.PRES.2PL    therefore    that    Lord.DEF    is    the.one  
 [ce    au                    turburat]      (BB.1688, 371)  
 that    AUX.have.3SG    trouble.PPLE  
 ‘You know that it is the Lord the one who has been disturbed’
- g. ALEXANDRU    VODĂ      au                    fost      acel      [ce  
 Alexander      the.ruler    AUX.have.3SG    be.PPLE    the.one    that  
 s-au                                    bătut      cu      Pătru    vodă  
 CL.REFL.3SG=AUX.have.3SG    fight.PPLE    with    Pătru    the.ruler  
 Aron]      (AU.1700, 53)  
 Aron  
 ‘It was Alexander the ruler who fought Petru Aron the ruler.’

#### 2.4. Hybrid pseudo-clefts

A hybrid variant of cleft construction can be found in the examples under (11). The pattern amalgamates two structures: the prototypical cleft (with overt subject instead of an expletive) and the reversed pseudo-cleft. The focalized constituent is included in a predication of identification, which makes difficult the reconstruction of its relationship to the extraction position. As an argument for the amalgamated structure, see the hesitation regarding the person agreement in (11a) vs. (11b). The schema proposed for these constructions is [*overt subject + copula + FOCALIZED XP + antecedent + relative clause*]). Though the prototypical patterns are altered, these examples should also be considered clefts, due to the emphatic value of the construction.

- (11) a. Eu    sîntu    ISUS,    cela      [ce-l                    tu    gonești]      (CB.1559–60, 93)  
 I    am    Jesus    the.one    that=CL.ACC.3SG    you    banish  
 ‘I am Jesus, the one that you banish’
- b. Eu    sînt    ISUS    NAZARINEANUL,    cela      [ce    tu  
 I    am    Jesus    from.Nazareth    the.one    that    you  
 mă                    gonești]      (CP.1570, 93)  
 CL.ACC.1SG    banish  
 ‘I am Jesus from Nazareth, the one that you banish’
- c. Acela    iaste    MOISI    cela      [ce    zise                    fiilor      lu  
 that    is    Moses    the.one    that    say.PS.3SG    sons.DAT    LUI.GEN  
 Israil]      (CB.1559–60, 75)  
 Israel  
 ‘It is Moses the one who told Israels sons’
- d. Acesta    iaste    HRISTOS,    ISUS    cela      [ce-l  
 this    is    Christ    Jesus    the.one    that=CL.ACC.3SG  
 spui                    eu    voao]      (CB.1559–60, 181)  
 tell.PRES.1SG    I    you.DAT.2PL  
 ‘It is Jesus Christ the one that I am telling you about’
- e. Acela    iaste    ISUS    HRISTOS    [ce    elu-l                    eu  
 that    is    Jesus    Christ    that    he.ACC=CL.ACC.3SG    I  
 spui                    voao]      (CP.1570, 181)  
 tell.PRES.1SG    you.DAT.2PL  
 ‘It is Jesus Christ the one that I am telling you about’
- f. acela    iaste    ILIE    [cela      [ce    va                    să  
 that    is    Elias    the.one    that    AUX.want.3SG    SĂ<sub>SUBJ</sub>

- vie]] (cc<sup>2</sup>.1581, 585)  
 come.subj.3sg  
 ‘It is Elias the one who will come’
- g. aceasta iaste PÎNEA [carea au dat  
 this.NOM.F is bread.DEF which AUX.have.3SG give.PPLE  
 voao a vă hrăni] (PO.1582, 232)  
 you.DAT.2PL A<sub>INF</sub> CL.ACC.2PL feed.INF  
 ‘It is this the bread which they gave you to feed with’
- h. Acesta iaste OMUL [cel [ce spre oameni și despre  
 this is man.DEF the.one that to people.ACC and about  
 Leage și spre locul acesta toți, tutuindenea  
 law and towards place.DEF this all everywhere  
 învăță]] (...) (CB.1559–60, 230)  
 teach.PS.3SG  
 ‘It is this the man who used to preach to everybody and everywhere’
- i. Că acesta iaste OMUL ACELA [ce spre oameni și  
 that this is man.DEF that that to people.ACC and  
 spre Leage și spre locul acesta toți, tutindirea  
 about law and towards place.DEF this all everywhere  
 învață]] (...) (CP.1570, 230)  
 teaches  
 ‘It is this that man who teaches the law to everybody and everywhere’

Example (12) is interesting due to the different organization of the constituents in the structure (the copula is in front of the focalized XP), due to the negation and to the semantic nature of the focalized XP (it is an indefinite quantifier embedded in a phrase with empty head). In the same time, the example is peculiar because the empty head of the DP makes it difficult to be framed either into the prototypical pseudo-cleft pattern (12a) or into the reversed pseudo-cleft pattern (with an antecedent relative clause) (12a’):

- (12) a. Den aceastea toate, nu-s MULTE √ [care  
 form these all not=are many which  
 n-au ieșit în limba rumînească den  
 not=AUX.have.3SG arise.PPLE in language Romanian  
 ceale cărți sîrbești și grecești]. (PO.1582, Prefață, 3<sup>r</sup>)  
 those books Serbian and Greek  
 ‘Out of all these, there are not many those that came up in Romanian from Serbian and Greek’
- a’. Den aceastea toate, nu-s MULTE [CĂRȚI] [cele]  
 from these all not=are many books those  
 [care n-au ieșit în limba rumînească  
 which not=AUX.have.3SG arise.PPLE in language Romanian  
 den ceale cărți sîrbești și grecești]. (PO.1582, Prefață, 3<sup>r</sup>)  
 from those books Serbian and Greek  
 ‘Out of all these, there are not many books those that came up in Romanian from Serbian and Greek’

Other constructions may be also included into the category of hybrid clefts: interrogative clauses as in example (13), negative constructions like (14a,b), where the focalized element is a covert negative quantifier,





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- CD.1698 = Dimitrie Cantemir, *Divanul*, in D. Cantemir, *Opere complete*, I, *Divanul*, ed. V. Cîndea, Editura Academiei RSR, București, 1974, p. 103–405.
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