

On free relatives and related constructions in French¹

Jean-Yves Pollock

(Emeritus professor, Université Paris Est Marne La vallée)

1. On subordinators in French

In a variety of recent articles and presentations² Richie Kayne has pointed out that the Romance and Germanic languages contrast strikingly in their choice of finite clause complementisers. They are demonstratives in Germanic – cf. English *that*, Dutch *dat*, German *dass*. In Romance, on the other hand, they should rather be seen in the same light as interrogative pronouns. The French vs. English contrasts in (1) and (2) illustrate the point:

- (1) a. Pierre croit que Marie l’aime
b. Que crois-tu ?
c. *Pierre croit ce Marie l’aime
d. *Ce crois-tu?
- (2) a. *Peter thinks what Mary loves him
b. What do you think?
c. Peter thinks that Mary loves him
d. *That do you think?

Extending a tradition going back to Rosenbaum (1965) and Kiparsky and Kiparsky (1970),³ Kayne further argued that both *que* and *that* in (1a) and (2c) introduce relative clauses which he claims are paired with an unpronounced FAIT/FACT. If correct this means that ‘complementisers’ as analysed in most of the generative literature are not legitimate

¹ It’s a great pleasure for me to contribute this article to Cecilia’s Festschrift. Without her and the work we have conducted together over the last twenty years I would probably have left the field. In addition, some of our more recent joint work, notably Poletto & Pollock (2015) and (2021) were at the source of Pollock (2021) and (2022) which in turn triggered my renewed interest in the syntax of French free relatives and therefore led to this work. I am greatly indebted to Richie Kayne for pointed comments and critiques and to two anonymous reviewers for constructive remarks and comments.

² Cf. Kayne (2011), (2020), among other works.

³ These authors both argued that sentential complements were NP/DP but did not analyse them as relatives, unlike Kayne.

grammatical entities. Let's call *que* and *that* in (1a) and (2c) under Kayne's analysis 'subordinators', reviving a time-honoured terminology.

Concentrating on French now, it is well-known that the subordinator of some finite embedded clauses is more complex than *que* in (1a), as (3) to (10) show:⁴

- (3) Le colonel s'attachait à *(ce) que les soldats obéissent au doigt et à l'œil.
'The colonel saw to it that the soldiers should strictly obey orders'
- (4) Je ne m'attendais pas à *(ce) que Pierre parte.
'I wasn't expecting Pierre to leave'
- (5) Pierre était attentif à *(ce) que les étudiants suivent bien ses explications.
'Pierre made sure that his students did understand his explanations'
- (6) Ils ont appelé à *(ce) qu'on reste chez soi pendant la pandémie.
'They called upon people to stay home during the pandemic'
- (7) De *(ce) que ce cygne est blanc on ne peut conclure qu'il n'y a pas de cygnes noirs
'From the fact that this swan is white one can't conclude that black swans don't exist'
- (8) Les médecins se félicitent de *(ce) que l'épidémie est sous contrôle.
'Physicians are pleased that the epidemic is under control'
- (9) Le caporal se plaint de *(ce) que les soldats ne l'écoutent pas
'The corporal is complaining that the soldiers don't obey him'
- (10) Paul se moque de *(ce) que ses étudiants ne l'aiment pas.
'Paul doesn't care about the fact that his students don't like him'.

Let me now claim, taking Kayne's anti-homophony heuristic seriously, that *ce+que* in these embedded sentences is the same complex as in free relatives such as (11) and (12):

- (11) Ce que tu dis est intéressant.
'What you say is interesting'
- (12) Je ferai ce que tu veux.
'I'll do what you want'

More precisely I will defend the conjecture that the syntactic environment requiring *ce que* in the free relatives in (11)-(12) shares crucial properties with that requiring *ce que* in (3) to (10).

⁴ (3) to (6) are from Pollock (2021, appendix, footnote 49). For extensive discussion of such structures see Huot (1981) and Authier & Reed (2010), to which I return in 6 and 7 below.

One of the consequences of that conjecture would be that *ce* in (11) and (12) cannot be (part of) the (non lexical) relativised NP. This is because in (3) to (10) there is no source for *ce* in the embedded clauses. Consequently, *ce* in free relatives cannot be first merged as (part of) the relativised argument either: *ce* must be merged in tandem with *que* in all of (3) to (12). One further consequence would be that what moves in free relatives under Vergnaud's (1976) raising analysis is the bare non lexical NP, unaccompanied by the (relative) subordinator (*ce que*).⁵ A third consequence concerns the complex subordinator in (3) to (10): (almost)⁶ all well-formed sentences of this sort require the presence of *à* or *de*. This led Authier & Reed (2010) to suggest that together with *ce que* they made up complex complementisers: *à+ce+que*, *de+ce+que*. However in view of (11)-(12) one should conclude that *à* and *de* in (3) to (10) are external to *ce que* since *à* and *de* clearly need not occur in free relatives. If so, the question of their role in (3) to (10) will need to be answered anew.

This work will attempt to give some plausibility to these ideas by showing that they lead to innovative analyses of free relatives in sections 2 to 5 and of sentences such as (3) to (10) in sections 6 and 7. 8 will briefly conclude the paper.

2. Simplex vs. complex subordinators in French relative clauses

Consider the free relatives in (13)-(14) again and their headed counterparts in (15)-(16):

- (13) Ce que tu dis est intéressant
'What you say is interesting'
- (14) Je ferai ce que tu veux
'I'll do what you want'
- (15) La chose que tu dis est intéressante
'The thing you are saying is interesting'

⁵ Or, for the matter of that, by the definite article, as strongly suggested by (i)-(ii), first discussed in Vergnaud's thesis:

- (i) Pierre fait (*le) grand cas de tes remarques
Peter paid (*the) attention to your remarks
- (ii) *(Le) grand cas que Pierre fait de tes remarques
*(The) attention Peter paid to your remarks

⁶ The italicised sentence in (i) is fine :

- (i) Les résultats des dernières élections de mi mandat sont réconfortants *en ce que le parti au pouvoir n'a pas été balayé*
'The latest midterm election results are a comfort in this that (= to the extent that/because) the party in power hasn't been severely defeated

For more on *en ce que* see footnotes 34, 39.

- (16) Je ferai la chose que tu veux
'I'll do the thing that you want'

Under all the analyses I am aware of, including my own in Pollock (2021, 2022), the antecedent of (13)-(14) moves to the position it visibly moves to in (15)-(16). This is sketched in (17)-(20) (capitals denote unpronounced elements):⁷

- (17) [CHOSE_i [ce que [tu dis t_i]]] est intéressant
(18) Je ferai [CHOSE_i [ce que [tu veux t_i]]]
(19) [La chose_i [que [tu dis t_i]]] est intéressante
(20) Je ferai [la chose_i [que [tu veux t_i]]]

(17)-(20) raise the question of why *ce* couldn't be merged in (19)-(20), resulting in the severely deviant (21) and (22):

- (21) *La chose ce que tu dis est intéressante.
(22) *Je ferai la chose ce que tu veux.

Kayne (2011) suggested these facts should be seen in the same light as (23)-(24) vs. (25)-(26) in English:

- (23) *Something what you said is interesting.

⁷ Judging from the adjectival and participle agreement facts in (13) vs. (15) and (i) vs. (ii) CHOSE is not feminine unlike its lexical counterpart:

- (i) La chose qu'il a dit(e) est intéressant*(e).
(ii) Ce qu'il a dit(*e) est intéressant(*e)

French also has a masculine *chose*, as in (iii), which sounds vaguer than feminine *la chose* in (iv):

- (iii) Tu peux me passer le chose là? 'Can you hand me the stuff over there?'
(iv) Tu peux me passer la chose là? 'Can you hand me that thing over there?'

In that respect masculine *le chose* is close to *le truc/machin/bidule* in (v) but is less colloquial.

- (v) Tu peux me passer le truc/machin/bidule là? Can you hand me the stuff/thingumabob over there?'

One question remains: how come no one ever produces (ii) in view of the fact that (iii) is (very) rare in Modern French and that (vi) is pretty bad? On this see section 5.

- (vi) *Le chose que tu dis est intéressant 'The thing_{masculine} that you say is interesting'

- (24) *I'll do something what you want.
- (25) What you said is interesting.
- (26) I'll do what you want.

His proposal does not explicitly say why similar derivations involving a non lexical antecedent do not crash i.e. why *ce* is required in such cases. Pollock (2021, appendix) tied this to the fact that *that* in literary English is required in free relatives and excluded in the corresponding headed relatives:

- (27) *(That) which we feared has come to pass.
- (28) The catastrophe (*that) which we feared has come to pass.

These two comparative generalisations tie the lexical vs. non lexical dimension of the antecedent to the (non-) lexicalisation of *ce/that* in (13)-(14) and (28). Useful though it is, that rapprochement should ultimately be derived from some deeper principle(s).

3. More on free relatives

I'll provide one in section 5. Before I can do so I will need to formulate an analysis of free relatives exploiting views common in generative grammar according to which non lexical arguments, unlike lexical ones, must meet extra requirements in order to be 'licensed'.

Let me now say that the derivations in (17)-(18) are incorrect because non lexical CHOSE is not licensed in that landing site. The first step of my proposal rests on an analogy between headless relatives and interrogative *Quel homme*, –also *quelle femme*, *quels hommes*, *quelles femmes*– and *lequel* in (29)-(30)-(31) –similarly *lesquels*, *laquelle*, *lesquelles*—:

- (29) *Quel homme as-tu vu?*
'Which/What man have you seen?'
- (30) *Lequel as-tu vu?*
'The which have you seen?' = Which one have you seen?'
- (31) **Quel as-tu vu?*
'Which have you seen?'

Minimally modifying Kayne’s (2019, chapter 10, section 8)⁸ analysis, let us say that (30) should be derived as shown in (32):

- (32) a. [HOMME_i [quel t_i]]
 b. [Le [HOMME_i [quel t_i]]]

In (32b), in addition to the previous movement of non lexical HOMME crossing over *quel* in (32a), the definite article *le* is obligatorily merged because French does not accept null determiners of the Spanish or Italian sort in, say, *como pan* and *mangio pane* ‘I eat bread’.⁹

Along similar lines let me now claim that the proper derivation of the relatives above is as shown in (33)-(34):

- (33) a. [CHOSE_i [que [tu dis t_i]]] est intéressant
 b. [Ce [CHOSE_i [que [tu dis t_i]]]] est intéressant
 (34) a. Je ferai [CHOSE_i [que [tu veux t_i]]]
 b. Je ferai [ce [CHOSE_i [que [tu veux t_i]]]]

Let me also state that the demonstrative determiner *ce* is merged in (33-34b) to ‘license’ non lexical CHOSE. In the spirit of Wiltschko (1998) we thus claim *ce* plays an identifying role in French free relatives and is required by their non lexical antecedent (See 4.4 below for more on this).

4. Problems

4.1. Italian

This sketch raises comparative problems concerning the Italian counterpart of (33) in (35) and (36):

⁸ In this work he derives *le(s)quel(le)(s)* as in (i)-(ii):

- (i) Quel(le)s [le(s) NP] =>
 (ii) [[Le(s) NP]_i [quel(le)(s) t_i]]

This, as he observes in his note 22, raises the question of why French does not allow **Quel(le)s les linguistes as-tu invité(e)s?* **Quel le linguiste as-tu invité?* ‘Which the linguist(s) have you invited?’ He had a substantially different derivation in his (2008) article (cf. his (136) there).

⁹ French would have to have the so-called partitive article *du* in such cases: *Je mange du pain*. On this, see among many other works Delfitto & Schrotten (1991), Kayne (2004), Cardinaletti & Giusti (2016), (2018) and for the null determiner vs. partitive article alternation in Italian dialects Leboni & Giusti (2022) and Pinzin & Poletto (2022).

- (35) Quello che dici è interessante
 ‘What you say is interesting’
- (36) Quel che ti ho detto non è vero
 ‘What I have told you isn’t true’

An analysis of *quello che*, *quel che* maximising their proximity to French *ce que* would be (37),

- (37) [Quel (lo) COSA_i [que dici t_i]]

where *Quel(lo)* would play the role *ce* plays in (33). One problem with this is that the overt version of (38) is ill formed and would have to be replaced by (39):

- (38) *Quelcosa ‘something’
- (39) Qualcosa (same)
- (40) *Devo dirti qualcosa
 ‘I must tell you something’
- (41) Devo dirti qualcosa (same)

Quel coso in (42) only exists as a modifier of masculine *coso*, as in (43), where *coso* is the Italian counterpart of the (rare) French masculine *chose* in (44):

- (42) Quel coso
- (43) Prendi quel coso sul divano
 ‘Take that thing on the couch’
- (44) Prends ce chose sur le divan (same)

I’ll put aside this problem here and will continue to assume that (37) is indeed the Italian counterpart of the structure underlying French *ce que* free relatives.¹⁰

¹⁰ Derivation (37) was already suggested in Cinque (2020) –cf. section 2.5.3, example (113)— but the idea that *quel(lo)*, just as *ce* and *that* in French and (literary) English, plays a licensing role for the raised non lexical antecedent of free relatives wasn’t discussed there.

4.2 *Relative clause extraposition*

Internal to French another problem concerns the contrast between (47) and (48):

- (45) L'évènement qu'on craignait est arrivé
'The event which we feared has come to pass'
- (46) Ce qu'on craignait est arrivé
'Ce which (= what) we feared has come to pass'
- (47) ?? L'évènement est arrivé qu'on craignait
'The event has come to pass which we feared'
- (48) *C'est arrivé qu'on craignait
'Ce has come to pass which we feared'

For Kayne (2011) this contrast¹¹ follows from the fact that *ce+que* in (46) is a complex relative subordinator. Therefore, *ce* is not part of the *preceding* (non lexical) antecedent of the free relative, which accounts for (47) vs. (48). On the alternative suggested above, the non lexical antecedent moves to the *left* of *que* and stands to the *right* of the subsequently merged *ce* required for licensing the null NP. So aside from the *le* vs. *ce* contrast there is no structural difference between the parses of (45) and (46), shown in (49)-(50), which leaves us without an account for (47) vs. (48).

- (49) [Le [[évènement]_i [qu'on craignait t_i]]]
- (50) [Ce [[CHOSE]_i [qu'on craignait t_i]]]

As a first step to try to weaken this argument, let us consider (51) and the minimal pair in (52):

- (51) a. Ceux qu'on attendait sont arrivés
'Those that we expected have arrived'
- b. Les personnes qu'on attendait sont arrivées
'The people we expected have arrived'
- (52) a. *Ceux sont arrivés qu'on attendait
'Those have arrived that we expected'

¹¹ In my French (47) and (52b) below are very awkward, but (48) and (52a) are worse.

- b. ??Les personnes sont arrivées qu'on attendait '
 'The people have arrived that we expected'

In view of (52a) Kayne (2011) tentatively concluded that *ceux+que* could also be a complex complementiser of the *ce+que* variety.¹²

Let me try to formulate an alternative. In line with Postal's (1966) analysis of pronouns as determiners,¹³ let me suggest that a plausible parse for (51a) is (53),

(53) [Ce [eux NP]_i [qu'on attendait t_i]] sont arrivés

where 'NP', probably PERSONNE, is non lexical –see 4.4 for more on this—. Let me now state that PERSONNE is what blocks the extraposition in (52a). If this is the right way of looking at these facts¹⁴ one would expect similar deviance to arise in relative clause extraposition whenever the antecedent lacks an overt NP. The following pairs do seem to concur with this expectation:

- (54) A. As-tu reçu tes paquets ?
 'Have you received your parcels?'
- B. (a) Le petit (paquet) que j'attendais est enfin arrivé, pas le gros PAQUET.
 'The small (parcel) I was waiting for has at last arrived, not the big (one)'
 (b) ??Le petit paquet est enfin arrivé que j'attendais, pas le gros PAQUET.
 'The small parcel has at last arrived which I was waiting for, not the big one'
 (c) *Le petit PAQUET est enfin arrivé que j'attendais, pas le gros PAQUET.
 'The small has at last arrived which I was waiting for, not the big one'
- (55) A. Où en es-tu avec tes voitures ?
 'What's the situation with your cars?'

¹² See Kayne (2011, appendix). By the same token *celle(s)/celui+que* should also be:

- (i) Celle(s) qu'on attendait est/sont arrivée(s)
 (ii) *Celle(s) est/sont arrivée(s) qu'on attendait
 (iii) Celui qu'on attendait est arrivé
 (iv) *Celui est arrivé qu'on attendait

¹³ Cf. *Elle(s)linguiste(s) et lui/eux biologiste(s) vont signer une pétition commune* 'She/they_{feminine} linguist(s) and he/they_{masculine} biologist(s) will sign a joint petition'

¹⁴ For a different analysis see Kayne (2008) section 10.

- B. (a) La nouvelle (voiture) que j’attendais avec impatience m’a été livrée, la vieille VOITURE est chez le garagiste.
 ‘The new (car) that I was expecting impatiently has been delivered, the old one is being serviced’
- (b) ??La nouvelle voiture m’a été livrée que j’attendais avec impatience, la vieille VOITURE est chez le garagiste.
 ‘The new car has been delivered which I was expecting impatiently, the old one is being serviced’
- (c) *La nouvelle VOITURE m’a été livrée que j’attendais avec impatience, la vieille VOITURE est chez le garagiste.
 ‘The new has been delivered which I was expecting impatiently, the old is being serviced’

I conclude from such facts¹⁵ that pairs such as (47) vs. (48) and (52a) vs. (52b) are not enough to show that the null antecedent of headless relatives moves to the left of *ce+que*.

4.3. *Ce à quoi*

Kayne (2011) observes that a sentence such as (56) bans the relative extraposition of (57):

- (56) *Ce à quoi il n’a pas pensé est arrivé*
 ‘That to what he has not thought is arrived’ What he didn’t think of happened
- (57) **C’est arrivé à quoi il n’a pas pensé.*

¹⁵ One would like them to be sharper than my ‘??’ vs. ‘*’. The question of why non-lexical heads should have this effect on relative extraposition remains to be understood, just as the question of why all these cases of relative extraposition sound at best marginal to me and to the other native speakers I have questioned. To my ear only (i) and similar instances of relativised subjects yield acceptable extraposition cases like (ii):

- (i) L’homme qui portait un chapeau noir est entré ‘The man who was wearing a black hat walked in’
 (ii) L’homme est entré qui portait un chapeau noir ‘The man walked in who was wearing a black hat’

As an anonymous reviewer reminds me, Cinque’s (2015), (2020) double-headed analysis of relative clauses claims that relative clause extraposition is licit if and only if the ‘stranded’ NP is the *external* head of the relative clause. In such a framework, free relatives –and relatives like (54) and (55) presumably– only involve the raised *internal* head. Be that as it may Italian *quel(lo) che* free relatives briefly discussed in the preceding section, just like their *ce que* counterparts in French, ban extraposition, as illustrated by Cinque (2020, section 2.5.3, example (115)) repeated in (iii):

- (iii) a. E’ successa una cosa ieri in dipartimento [che mi ha lasciato senza parole]
 is happened a thing yesterday in the department that left me without words
 ‘Something happened yesterday in the department that left me without words.’
 b. *E’ successo quello ieri in dipartimento [che tutti temevamo]
 is happened that yesterday in the department that we all feared

‘That is arrived to what he has not thought’ What he didn’t think of happened

In keeping with his analysis of *ce que* and *ceux/celle(s)/celui que* Kayne concluded that *ce à quoi* could be analysed as a complex subordinator too, involving pied-piping of the preposition *à*, much as *qui* in (58) pied-piped *avec*:

- (58) La fille avec qui tu parlais
‘The girl with whom you spoke’

(58) allows relative extraposition passably in my French:

- (59) a. La fille avec qui tu parlais a été condamnée
b. ?? La fille a été condamnée avec qui tu parlais

Consider however headed relatives like (60) and (61) which involve pied-piping of preposition *à* by *lequel* –resulting in *auquel*– and *quoi*:

- (60) Le livre auquel il travaille ne sera pas publié
‘The book to+thewhich he is working
The book he is working on won’t be published
(61) Le livre à quoi il travaille ne sera pas publié
‘The book to what he is working will+be not published’
The book he is working on won’t be published

In my French, relative extraposition with these is perceptibly worse than (59):¹⁶

- (62) *Le livre ne sera pas publié auquel il travaille

¹⁶ In all these sentences the extraposed relative must be carefully distinguished from acceptable cases of right dislocation such as (i) and (ii):

- (i) Le livre ne sera pas publié, auquel il travaille pourtant beaucoup
(ii) Le livre ne sera pas publié, à quoi il travaille pourtant beaucoup

Richie Kayne (p.c.) observes that (iii) is sharply out, suggesting a link to (62)-(63)

- (iii) *The only book has just arrived that I was waiting for.

- ‘The book won’t be published to which he is working’
 The book won’t be published which he is working on
 (63) *Le livre ne sera pas publié à quoi il travaille
 ‘The book won’t be published to what he is working’
 The book won’t be published which he is working on

Therefore, facts such as (57) do not favour the complex subordinator idea over the alternative suggested above.¹⁷

4.4. *Ce* vs. *Le*¹⁸

Let me come back the licensing role I attributed to demonstrative *ce* in headless relatives. One should raise the question of why *le* can’t play that part:

- (64) *Ce que tu dis est intéressant*

¹⁷ Within the present framework sentence (56) –*Ce à quoi il n’a pas pensé est arrivé*– would be derived as shown in (i) to (iv):

- (i) Il n’a pas pensé [à [quoi CHOSE] ...
 (ii) Il n’a pas pensé [CHOSE_i [à quoi t_i]]
 (iii) [CHOSE_i [à quoi t_i]]_j il n’a pas pensé t_j
 (iv) [Ce [CHOSE_i [à quoi [t_i]]]_j il n’a pas pensé t_j

At stage (ii) *CHOSE* crosses over *à* just as its lexical counterpart does in (v):

- (v) *La chose à quoi il n’a pas pensé*

At stage (iv) *Ce* is obligatorily merged to license non lexical *CHOSE*. The question of why **Ce à laquelle/auquel il n’a pas pensé est arrivé*, parallel to *La chose/le problème à laquelle/auquel il n’a pas pensé* are unacceptable needs to be understood. To my ear, in sentences such as (vi) *ce* need not be merged:

- (vi) *J’ai pensé à quoi tu n’as pas pensé*
 I have thought of what you haven’t thought

A quoi tu n’as pas pensé? ‘What haven’t you thought of?’ is a fine question, where the null *NP* stands to the right of *à quoi*, as lexical *chose* does in *A quelle chose tu n’as pas pensé?* It is as if (vi) allowed an interrogative structure to be used as a relative, for reasons that need to be understood. This way of looking at (vi) is supported by the clear unacceptability of (vii), contrasting with (ix) and (x):

- (vii) **Je parlerai dont tu parleras* ‘I’ll speak of what you’ll speak’
 (viii) **Dont parleras-tu?* ‘Of what will you speak?’
 (ix) *Je parlerai de ce dont tu parleras* ‘I’ll speak of what you’ll speak’
 (x) *Je parlerai de la chose dont tu parleras* ‘I’ll speak of the thing you’ll speak’

Since *dont* (of what) is only a relative determiner –cf. (viii)– it is predicted not to occur in (vii), unlike *à quoi* in (vi), obligatorily triggering (ix), the free relative version of (x), along the lines suggested above for all French free relatives. On *dont* see also Poletto & Pollock (2021, 277-279).

¹⁸ On the facts in this section see also Kayne (2008, section 17) and his references –in particular Wiltschko (1998) which already suggested an analysis of pairs like (64) to (65) along the text lines– and Kayne (2021).

- ‘Ce what you say is interesting’
 What you say is interesting
 (65) *Le que tu dis est intéressant.
 ‘The that you say is interesting’

This is not specific to French:

- (66) That which we feared has happened
 (67) *The which we feared has happened

(66) vs. (67) should I believe be seen in the same light as (68) vs. (69) where the complement of *that/the* is the non lexical counterpart of *thing* or *stuff*:

- (68) I like that
 (69) *I like the

The same point can be made for French, as (72) vs. (73) show, despite the fact that (70) and (71) are illicit:¹⁹

- (70) *J’aime ce
 (71) *J’aime le
 (72) J’aime ceci, cela
 (73) *J’aime leci, lela

That can identify/license a null NP complement, *the* cannot. *Ce* can identify/license a null NP complement followed by *là* or *ci*, *le* cannot. Assuming *ceci* and *cela* in (72) are reduced headless relative clauses –*j’aime ce CHOSE (qui est) là, j’aime ce CHOSE(qui est i)ci*– (73) follows from our proposal: *ce* can license/identify the null antecedent of headless relative

¹⁹ Although both sentences are unacceptable in Modern French, *ce* and *le* do differ in their ability to take non lexical complements: *ce* can (still) be used in isolation in a few fixed phrases, unlike *le*:

- (i) Sur *ce*/**le*, Pierre est sorti ‘Whereupon, Pierre left’
 (ii) Pierre veut être célèbre. Pour *ce*/**le* faire, il veut passer à la télévision.
 ‘Pierre wants to be famous. To this end, he wants to be on a TV program’

For more on *ce* see Kayne & Pollock (2011) –section 8 of Kayne (2019) – and Kayne (2008). See also Pollock (2021, section 7).

clauses, *le* cannot. (66) vs. (67) in English should evidently be analysed in the same way, despite the fact that *that* has a wider distribution than Modern French *ce*.

Backtracking a little, consider *ceux*, *celle(s)*, *celui* again. Such forms contrast sharply with the unacceptable (74), (75) and (76):

(74) *Le(s)eux

(75) *Le(s)elle(s)

(76) *lelui

Why should that be so? A plausible answer will follow from the analysis suggested above relying on the idea that *eux*, *elles* and *lui* in *ceux*, *celle(s)* and *celui* are the pronominal determiners of a non lexical PERSONNE on the further assumption that PERSONNE must cross over its pronominal specifiers, as shown in (78).

(77) [lui PERSONNE]_i [qu'on attendait t_i] est arrivé

(78) [PERSONNE_j [lui t_j]_i [qu'on attendait t_i]] est arrivé

(79) [Ce [PERSONNE_j [lui t_j]_i][qu'on attendait t_i]] est arrivé

Just as in free relatives, this will then require the subsequent merging of *ce* in (79) for licensing purposes.²⁰

²⁰ The obligatory movement of PERSONNE from its post pronominal determiner position in (ib) is thus crucial to the text analysis:

- (i) (a) [lui/elle/eux [PERSONNE]].
- (b) [PERSONNE_i [lui/elle/eux t_i]]
- (c) [Ce [PERSONNE_i [lui/elle/eux t_i]]]

A plausible conjecture would have this follow from Kayne's (2006, (33)), repeated in (ii):

- (ii) (a) At a given phase level, only the head and material in the c-command domain of the head can (and must) be spelled out.
- (b) At a given phase level, no material within (or adjoined to) a lower phase can be spelled out.

According to (ii), movement of much/MUCH in, say, (iv) requires it to be silent because it has reached the specifier of a phase.

- (iii) John has enough money
- (iv) John has [MUCH_i [enough t_i [money]]]

Movement of PERSONNE in (ib) requires the further merger of *ce* shown in (ic). In the spirit of the present work it is tempting to say merging *ce* in (ic) turns the phrase it c-command into a (lower) phase. By the same reasoning the antecedent of headed relatives must be in the specifier of a non phase. Merger of *ce* in headless

4.5. More on *lequel*

It should be noted that what has so far been suggested forces us to suppose that the displaced non lexical NP in *lequel*, *lesquels* etc. under the analysis of section 3, repeated in (80),

(80) [Le [NP_i [quel t_i]]]

does not need to be or cannot be ‘licensed’ the way CHOSE and THING must be in free relatives. If it was *lequel*, *lesquels*, etc. should be replaced by the sharply ungrammatical (81):

(81) **Cequel*, **Cesquels*

I would like to argue that the partitive interpretation of *lequel*, *lesquels*, *laquelle*, *lesquelles* is responsible for this. Let me first claim that these items come in with more structure than discussed so far. I’ll take the structure of (82a) to be (82b), the non lexical counterpart of (82c), a clear partitive structure:

- (82) a. Le(s)NP quel(s) as-tu lu(s) ?
The NP which have you read?’
- b. [Le(s) [NP_i [quel(s) t_i [DE CES NP]]]] as-tu lu(s) ?
- c. [Le(s) [LIVRE(S) [quel(s) t_i [de ces livres]]]] as-tu lu(s) ?
Le(s)quel(s) de ces livres as-tu lu(s)?
‘The which of these books have you read?’
Which of these books have your read?

One may now view the definite article of (80) in the same light as (83) –also a partitive construction– and tie **cequel*, **cesquels* etc. to the ungrammaticality of (84):²¹

relatives must then turn the structure *ce* c-commands into a (lower) phase, thus forcing the antecedent to be non lexical. This will also exclude merger of *ce* in headed relatives.

This speculative line of thought, if in the right direction, translates into structural terms the informal idea that *ce* –also *that* in literary English and *quel(lo)* in Italian– ‘licenses’ the non lexical antecedent of free relatives, the null PERSONNE sandwiched between *ce* and *lui/eux/elle(s)* and the null THING/STUFF of, say, *I like that THING/STUFF*. For more on the lack of gender and number agreement between *ce* and *lui/eux/elle(s)* see (text to) footnote 23 below.

²¹ Richie Kayne (p.c.) raises the question of the analysis of *laquelle* in contexts like (ii)

- (i) J’ai une idée ‘I have an idea’
(ii) Laquelle? ‘Which one?’ = Tell me about it = what’s that?

(83) *Le(s) plus jeune(s) de tes étudiants a/ont l'âge de mes petits enfants*
 'The youngest/er of your students has/have my grand-children's age'
 Among your students the youngest/er one(s) is/are my grand-children's age'

(84) **Ce(s) plus jeune(s) de tes étudiants a/ont l'âge de mes petits enfants*
 'Those younger of your students has/have my grand-children's age'
 Among your students this/these youngest/er one(s) is/are my grand-children's age'

I conclude that the facts and arguments examined in this section do suggest with some plausibility that French *ce* and (literary) English *that* in (85) and (86) are demonstratives required for licensing the null antecedent of free relatives.²²

(85) [Ce [CHOSE_i [que nous craignons t_i]]] est arrivé

(86) [That [THING_i [which we feared t_i]]] has happened'

5. Some favourable consequences

Putting aside the licensing role attributed to *ce* in headless relatives, the analysis in (85) has three advantages over the alternative in (87).

(87) CHOSE *ce* que tu dis est intéressant

As pointed out in footnote 7 the non lexical antecedent of free relatives is not feminine, unlike its overt counterpart:

(88) *La chose* que tu dis est intéressant*(e)

which doesn't have the flavour of a partitive despite the literal translation provided. If the text analysis is correct (ii) and the like should nevertheless be analysed as in (iii), as suggested in Milner (1978):

(iii) [La [IDEE_i [quelle[t_i [DE IDÉE]]]]]

The text approach does not extend to *Le(s)* vs. **Ce(s) mien(s)/tien(s)/sien(s)/leur(s)* 'The(plural) vs. *that/those mine/yours/his/hers/theirs' = Mine/yours/his/hers/theirs'. Such pairs remain to be understood.

²² This conclusion should not be interpreted as denying that complex determiners exist, on these see Leu (2016). The preceding arguments only concern literary English *that* + *which* –on which Kayne didn't take a stand– and French *ce* + *que* free relatives and related forms like *celui*, *ceux* etc.

The question of how speakers develop that knowledge should be raised since the masculine *chose* of (89) is rare in Modern French and is unacceptable in (90):

(89) Passe-moi le chose là

(90) *Le chose que tu dis est intéressant

In addition to its role in headless relatives, *ce* is a demonstrative, the complements of which are masculine and singular –cf. *ce livre* vs. **ce revue* vs. *cette revue*, *ce cheval* vs. **ce chevaux* vs. *ces chevaux*— a fact easily accessed by language learners. Assuming they abide by Kayne’s anti homophony heuristic, they should be inclined to view the gender and number of the null NP *ce* licenses in (85) to be analogous to that of such ordinary DPs.²³

Secondly, the idea that *ce que* is a complex relative subordinator does not fit in easily with Kayne’s own generalisation that they are demonstratives in Germanic but interrogative pronouns in Romance (cf. (1) vs. (2)). The idea that *ce que* is a complex relative pronoun requires that the generalisation be restricted in Romance to what Kayne called “standalone” relative pronouns of the demonstrative sort. No such qualification would be needed for French free relatives if the analysis above is right.

Thirdly, and perhaps more importantly, our proposal leads to a principled account of (91) vs. (92):

- (91) a. *Le livre ce que tu as lu
b. *The book that which you’ve read
c. *Il libro quel(lo) che hai letto
- (92) a. Le livre que tu as lu
b. The book which you’ve read
c. Il libro che hai letto

²³ One should raise the further question of why *ceux* and *celle(s)* are not spelled out as in (i), (ii) and (iii):

- (i) **ces PERSONNES eux*,
(ii) **ces PERSONNES elles*,
(iii) **cette PERSONNE elle*

This will follow if *ce* in (i), (ii), (iii) is neuter, i.e. **non** agreeing in number and gender, as Kayne’s (2008, section 10) argued. His analysis of (i), (ii) and (iii) was not worded in Postal’s terms, but used such facts in support of his argument that demonstrative relative *that* in English and the antecedents in (iv) don’t agree in number/gender.

- (iv) the book(s)/girl(s) that you like

In (91) there are two arguments to be associated with the sole object position of *lire*, *read* and *lire*, the overt ones in (92) **and** the covert one in *ce NP que, that NP which* and *Quel(lo) NP che*. In short, the sentences in (91) are clear cases of a theta criterion violation.²⁴

6. On complex subordinators in simple finite subordinate clauses

6.1. First pass

As we stated in 1, on the strong anti-homophony guideline adopted in this work, our analysis of free relatives almost certainly requires (3) to (10), repeated in (93) to (100),

- (93) Le colonel s’attachait à *(ce) que les soldats obéissent au doigt et à l’œil
 ‘The colonel saw to it that the soldiers should strictly obey orders’
- (94) Je ne m’attendais pas à *(ce) que Pierre parte
 ‘I wasn’t expecting Pierre to leave’
- (95) Pierre était attentif à *(ce) que les étudiants suivent bien ses explications
 ‘Pierre made sure that his students did understand his explanations’
- (96) Ils ont appelé à *(ce) qu’on reste chez soi pendant la pandémie
 ‘They called upon people to stay home during the pandemic’
- (97) De *(ce) que ce cygne est blanc on ne peut conclure qu’il n’y a pas de cygnes noirs
 ‘From the fact that this swan is white one can’t conclude that black swans don’t exist’
- (98) Les médecins se félicitent de *(ce) que l’épidémie est sous contrôle.
 ‘Physicians are pleased that the epidemic is under control’
- (99) Le caporal se plaint de *(ce) que les soldats ne l’écourent pas
 ‘The corporal is complaining that the soldiers don’t obey him’
- (100) Paul se moque de *(ce) que ses étudiants ne l’aiment pas.
 ‘Paul doesn’t care about the fact that his students don’t like him’.

to share major properties with them. If so *ce* would ‘license’ a null NP preceding *que* here too, despite one major difference between the two constructions: The null NP in free relatives is internally merged from an argument position while in (93) to (100) that hypothetical null NP isn’t part of the argument structure of the subordinate clause. In line with Kayne’s general

²⁴ So is **The book what you read* in Standard English. In those dialects of English that accept such sentences I assume that *what* replaces *that* or *which* in headed relatives.

claim that *que* in French and its counterparts in Romance (finite) complement clauses are relative pronouns associated with a non lexical FAIT/FACT²⁵ let me claim that that hypothetical null NP is FAIT in (97) to (100), to be thus viewed as the non lexical counterparts of (101) to (104):

- (101) **Du fait que** ce cygne est blanc on ne peut conclure qu'il n'y a pas de cygnes noirs
 'From the fact that this swan is white one can't conclude that black swans don't exist'
- (102) Les médecins se félicitent **du fait que** l'épidémie est sous contrôle.
 'Physicians are pleased with the fact that the epidemic is under control'
- (103) Le caporal se plaint **du fait que** les soldats ne l'écoutent pas
 'The corporal is complaining about the fact that the soldiers don't obey him'
- (104) Paul se moque **du fait que** ses étudiants ne l'aiment pas.
 'Paul laughs at the fact that his students don't like him'.

Things are different in the case of (93) to (100), if only because some *à ce que* clauses can't have overt (*à+le = au*) *au fait* counterparts, as the pairs (105a, c) vs. (105b, d) show. More generally to my ear substituting *au fait que* to *à ce que* often yields (very) infelicitous results, as shown by (105e, g) vs. (105f, h):

- (105) a. Pierre a demandé/cherché à ce qu'on ferme la fenêtre
 Pierre has asked/attempted to that which one should close the window
 'Pierre asked that the window be closed'
- b. Pierre a demandé/cherché (*au fait) qu'on ferme la fenêtre
 'Pierre has asked/attempted to the fact that one should close the window'
- c. Pierre hésite à ce que cette lettre soit rendue publique
 'Pierre hesitates to this that this letter be made public'
 Pierre is unsure whether this letter should be made public
- d. Pierre hésite (*au fait) que cette lettre soit rendue publique
 'Pierre hesitates to the fact that this letter be made public'
- e. Le président a-t-il intérêt à ce que les problèmes se règlent vite ?

²⁵ In Kayne (2008, section 15) it is suggested that a sentence like (i) should be derived from (ii), where preposition IN is null,

- (i) The fact that they're here.
 (ii) They are here, IN fact

The president has-t-he interest to this that problems be solved quickly?

‘Is it in the president’s interest that problems be solved quickly?’

f. Le président a-t-il intérêt (?? au fait) que les choses se règlent vite ?

‘The president has-t-he interest to the fact that problems be solved quickly?’

g. Fais attention à ce qu’il reste de l’essence dans le réservoir

Pay attention to this that there remain petrol in the tank

‘Make sure there’s petrol left in the tank’

h. Fais attention (???) au fait qu’il reste de l’essence dans le réservoir

Pay attention to the fact that there remain petrol in the tank

‘Make sure there’s petrol left in the tank’

That is why I will advocate an analysis for *à ce que* clauses different from that of their *de ce que* counterparts. Let me make the preliminary guess that they are best seen in the light of the (finite) subordinate clause in (106a):

(106) a. The colonel saw *to it that* the soldiers should strictly obey orders.

b. Le colonel s’attachait à *ce que* les soldats obéissent au doigt et à l’œil

(106b) is in fact a good translation of (106a) so one might be tempted to make *à ce que* in (106b) the French counterpart of *to it that* in English. I come back to these in 7 below.

1.2. On the status of *à* and *de*

As stated in section 1, if Kayne’s non homophony heuristic is brought to bear on to the two constructions at hand then *à* and *de* must be external to *ce que*. In previous studies they have for the most part been seen as the ordinary prepositions of, say, (107) and (108):

(107) Pierre se moque *de* cela et Marie s’*en* moque aussi

‘Pierre doesn’t care about that and Marie doesn’t either’

(108) Le colonel s’attachait *à* ses soldats et le général s’y attachait aussi

‘The colonel grew fond of his soldiers and the general did too’

Some elementary facts support this: *De/a+NP* **and** *de/a+ce+que+S* can be pronominalised via *en* and *y*, as shown in (109)-(110):

(109) Le colonel s'attachait à ce que les soldats obéissent au doigt et à l'œil et le général s'y attachait aussi.

(110) Paul se moque de ce que ses étudiants ne l'aiment pas et Marie s'en moque aussi.
'Paul doesn't care about the fact that his students don't like him and Marie doesn't either'.

Similarly: *Je ne m'attendais pas à ce que Pierre parte et tu ne t'y attendais pas non plus, Pierre était attentif à ce que les étudiants suivent bien ses explications, et Jean y était attentif aussi, Les médecins ont appelé à ce qu'on reste chez soi pendant la pandémie et le gouvernement y a appelé aussi.* With predictable exceptions,²⁶ all *à/de+ce que* clauses behave this way, which I take to be a good indication that *à* and *de* in these sentences are identical to *à* and *de* in (107)-(108) and the like.²⁷

This conclusion doesn't imply that all *de*'s or all *a*'s in *à/de+NP* cases should necessarily yield acceptable *de+ce que* or *à+ce que* sentences, nor that all acceptable *de+ce que* or *à+ce que* sentences should have a corresponding *de/à+NP*. Relevant examples of such mismatches are given in (111) and (112),²⁸ but contrary to Authier & Reed (2010) I do not think that they bear on the nature of *à* and *de* though they do bear on the proper characterisation of the various syntactic frames a given verb can enter, a task far beyond the reach of this work.²⁹

²⁶ *Demander à, chercher à* do not permit (i) :

- (i) a. Pierre a demandé/cherché à partir et *j'y ai demandé/cherché aussi
b. *Pierre a demandé/cherché à ce qu'on parte et *Jean y a demandé /cherché aussi

This is to be seen in the same light as (ii),

- (ii) Pierre a essayé de chanter et *j'en ai essayé aussi

(i) and (ii) should follow from the ungrammaticality of (iii) –f or some more on this see note 39:

- (iii) a. Pierre a demandé/cherché (*à) un livre
b. Pierre a essayé (*d') une voiture

²⁷ This is unexpected on Authier & Reed's (2010) view that *à* and *de* in *à/de ce que* are not prepositions but form with *ce+que* a complex complementiser (of the same semantic type as *si*).

²⁸ (22) and (24) in Authier & Reed (2010).

²⁹ In a few cases the mismatches are open to a simple explanation. So for example Zaring (1986), quoted in Authier & Reed (2010), noted the following pair:

- (i) J'ai besoin de ton aide
'I am in need of your help'
(ii) *J'ai besoin de ce que tu m'aides
'I am in need of that which you help me'

In view of the marked oddity of (iii),

- (111) a. Gaston cherche (*à) un emploi
 Gaston seeks (to) a job
 ‘Gaston is looking for a job’
- b. Gaston cherche à ce que tout se fasse à l’amiable
 Gaston seeks to this that all be-settled to the-amiableness
 ‘Gaston tries to settle everything out of court.’
- c. Gaston a demandé (*à) une semaine de congé
 Gaston has asked (to) one week of vacation
 ‘Gaston has requested a one-week leave’
- d. Gaston a demandé à ce que l’affaire soit classée.
 Gaston has asked to this that the case be filed
 ‘Gaston asked that the case be closed’
- (112) a. Je me souviens (*de) votre tante
 I remember (*of) your aunt’
 ‘I remember your aunt.’
- b. Je me souviens *(de ce) que votre tante était venue
 I remember (of this) that your aunt was come
 ‘I remember that your aunt came’
- c. Julie croit *(à) l’existence des vampires.
 Julie believes (to) the-existence of-the vampires
 ‘Julie believes in the existence of vampires’
- d. Julie croit (*à ce) que les vampires existent.
 ‘Julie believes (to this) that the vampires exist
 Julie believes that vampires exist.’

1.3. *More on de ce que clauses*

Consider (113) – (30) in Authier & Reed (2010):

- (113) a. Martine est fière/jalouse/inquiète de ce que Marie ait été élue.

(iii) ??? J’ai besoin du fait que tu m’aides

the deviance of (ii) is not unexpected if *de ce que* sentences are to be seen in the same light as their lexical *du fait* counterparts.

Martine is proud/jealous/worried of this that Marie have-SUBJ been elected
'Martine is proud of/jealous of/troubled by the fact that Marie was elected'

- b. Sa fierté/jalousie/inquiétude de ce que Marie ait été élue était évidente.
Her pride/jealousy/anxiety of this that Marie had been elected was obvious
'Her pride/jealousy/anxiety over the fact that Marie was elected was obvious.'

Authier & Reed (2010) claim, in line with Huot (1981), that in these and similar cases using the *de ce que* subordinate clause provides the cause of the state of things denoted by the verb/adjective/noun that selects it. This certainly sounds right intuitively but unless some further refinement of notions like 'cause' and 'consequence' is supplied, it hardly distinguishes (113) from (114):

- (114) a. Martine est fière/jalouse/inquiète que Marie ait été élue.
Martine is proud/jealous/worried that Marie have-SUBJ been elected
'Martine is proud of/jealous of/troubled by the fact that Marie was elected'
- b. Sa fierté/jalousie/inquiétude que Marie ait été élue était évidente.
Her pride/jealousy/anxiety that Marie had been elected was obvious
'Her pride/jealousy/anxiety that Marie was elected was obvious'

They also claim that (115) – their (31) – is excluded because no such causal relation between the embedded and main clauses is conceivable in this case:

- (115) a. Vois-tu un moyen (*de ce) que cette affaire se règle vite ?
See you a way (of this) that this matter itself solves fast?
'Do you see a way of settling this matter quickly?'
- b. Les risques (*de ce) que cette maison s'écroule sont minimales
The risks (of this) that this house collapses are minimal
'The chance that this house will collapse is very small'

This may well be true but there's a simpler syntactic account if one assumes, as I did, that *de ce que* clauses are akin to overt *du fait* clauses: The sentences in (116) are hopelessly bad:

- (116) a. *Vois-tu un moyen du fait que cette affaire se règle vite ?
'See you a way of the fact that this matter itself solves fast?'

- b. *Les risques du fait que cette maison s'écroule sont minimales
 'The risks of the fact that this house collapses are minimal'

Similarly, they observe, like Shyldkrot (2008, 119), that the state of affairs denoted by the embedded clause in sentences such as (117a) is presupposed to be true by the speaker, while this need not be the case in (117b):

- (117) a. Marie se désolé que Pierre ait menti
 'Marie is sorry that Pierre should have lied'
 b. Marie se désolé de ce que Pierre ait menti
 'Marie is sorry of the fact that Pierre should have lied'

This fact is duplicated in (118), as expected under our proposal:

- (118) Marie se désolé du fait que Pierre ait menti
 'Marie is sorry about the fact that Pierre should have lied'

1.4. On the distribution of *de ce que* clauses.

What was said above hasn't taken into account the fact that overt (*le*) *fait* (*que*) has a far wider distribution than its covert opposite number:

- (119) Pierre craint le fait que le climat se réchauffe
 'Pierre fears the fact that the climate is warming up'
 (120) Pierre nie le fait que le climat se réchauffe
 'Pierre denies the fact that the climate is warming up'
 (121) Pierre va organiser une manifestation contre le fait que le climat se réchauffe
 'Pierre is going to organise a demonstration against the fact that the climate is warming up'
 (122) Pierre a des opinions concernant le fait que le climat se réchauffe
 Pierre has opinions about the fact that the climate is warming up'
 (123) Pierre a des idées sur le fait que le climat se réchauffe
 Pierre has ideas on the fact that the climate is warming up
 (124) *Pierre craint ce que le climat se réchauffe
 (125) *Pierre nie ce que le climat se réchauffe

- (126) *Pierre va organiser une manifestation contre ce que le climat se réchauffe
 (127) *Pierre a des opinions concernant ce que le climat se réchauffe
 (128) *Pierre a des idées sur ce que le climat se réchauffe

Transposing Kayne's suggestions concerning *the fact that* clauses in English³⁰ to French let me claim that (119)-(123) are derived as sketched in (129):

- (129) a. ... [que [le climat se réchauffe EN fait]]
 b. ... [fait_i [que [le climat se réchauffe t_i]]]
 c. ... [Le [fait_i [que le climat se réchauffe t_i]]]

If the null FAIT we've made use of above replaced its overt opposite number in (12), all of the deviant sentences in (124) to (128) would be derived:

- (130) a. ... [que [le climat se réchauffe EN FAIT]]
 b. ... [FAIT_i [que [le climat se réchauffe t_i]]]
 c. ... [Ce [FAIT_i [que le climat se réchauffe t_i]]]

When null NPs are 'licensed' by demonstrative *ce* in genuine free relatives the resulting derivations converge. Further conditions must be met in *de ce que* clauses. The statement in (131) is a descriptive characterisation of these conditions and accounts for why (124) to (128) are excluded and why (132) to (135) (= (97) to (100) above) are fine:

(131) Derivations such as (128) converge iff the resulting DP is selected by *de*.³¹

(132) De ce que ce cygne est blanc on ne peut conclure qu'il n'y a pas de cygnes noirs
 'From this that this swan is white one can't conclude that black swans don't exist'

(133) Les médecins se félicitent de ce que l'épidémie est sous contrôle.
 'Physicians are pleased with this that the epidemic is under control'

³⁰ See footnote 25.

³¹ Needless to say much further work will be needed to explain the role played by *de* –also *par* and *en*, see footnotes 6 and 34– and *à* –also probably *to* in English– in the constructions studied here. According to (129) the derivations of (113) and their overt counterparts in (114) converge, but conditions of a different nature – pragmatic and/or semantic– are not met, whence the noted unacceptability. The same is true of example (ii) in note 29, on which see also note 39 below.

- (134) Le caporal se plaint de ce que les soldats ne l'écourent pas
 'The corporal is complaining *about* this that the soldiers don't obey him'
- (135) Paul se moque de ce que ses étudiants ne l'aiment pas.
 'Paul laughs *at* this that his students don't like him'.

As shown by the English translations of (132)-(135), (131) applies to uses of *de* which are distinguished in other languages (cf. *from*, *with*, *about*, *at*). It also applies to *de* translated as *of* in (113) or (136):³²

- (136) Claire a peur de ce que Laure puisse la battre aux élections
 'Claire is afraid of this that Laure might defeat her at the next election'
- (137) Claire a peur du fait que Laure puisse la battre aux élections
 Claire is afraid *of* the fact that Laure might defeat her at the next election

7. On A *ce que* + S

7.1. First pass

Let us now come back to (93)-(96) repeated once more in (138)-(141)

- (138) Le colonel s'attachait à *(ce) que les soldats obéissent au doigt et à l'œil.
 'The colonel saw to it that the soldiers should strictly obey orders'
- (139) Je ne m'attendais pas à *(ce) que Pierre parte.
 'I wasn't expecting Pierre to leave'
- (140) Pierre était attentif à *(ce) que les étudiants suivent bien ses explications.
 'Pierre made sure that his students did understand his explanations'
- (141) Ils ont appelé à *(ce) qu'on reste chez soi pendant la pandémie.
 'They called upon people to stay home during the pandemic'

³² (136) is similar to example (i) from footnote 10 of Authier & Reed (2010):

- (i) Claire a peur de ce que Laure la batte aux élections.
 Claire is afraid of this that Laure her beat_{subjunctive} in-the elections
 'Claire is afraid that Laure defeat her in the election.'
- (ii) Claire a peur de ce que Laure puisse la batte aux élections.
 Claire is afraid of this that Laure could_{subjunctive} her defeat in-the elections
 'Claire is afraid that Laure could defeat her in the election.'

They find (i) unacceptable. I and the other native speakers I have questioned do not. We find it at worst awkward ('?'). Adding *puisse* yields (ii), which is fine to my ear.

One property of these constructions, stressed in Huot (1981, 194 ft. 22) and Shyldkrot (2008:115), quoted in Authier & Reed (2010), is that *à ce que* clauses must be in the subjunctive mood and must denote an unrealised or prospective event at the speech time. This accounts for the oddity of (143):³³

- (142) Pierre tient à ce que sa fille finisse son déjeuner
 Pierre insists to this that his daughter finishes her lunch
 ‘Pierre is keen on his daughter eating her lunch’
- (143) *Pierre tient à ce que sa fille ait fini son déjeuner.
 ‘Pierre insists to this that his daughter finished her lunch’

Huot (1981) attributes this to the fact that *à* is linked to some notion of “non-limitation”. Shyldkrot (2008:115), quoted in Authier & Reed (2010), states that *à* in these constructions is “prospective” from a cognitive viewpoint. Assuming so, these ideas shouldn’t be limited to *à* or even to French:

- (144) Pierre sees to it that his daughter is elegant tonight
- (145) Pierre tient à ce que sa fille soit élégante ce soir
- (146) *Pierre sees to it that his daughter was elegant tonight
- (147) *Pierre tient à ce que sa fille ait été élégante ce soir

If (146) results from a violation of the necessary “prospective” –irrealis– quality assigned to the denotation of the *ce que* clause by *tenir+à* then *see+to* in (147) should profitably be analysed in the same way. This is hardly compatible with Authier & Reed’s (2010) proposal that the prospective property of the *ce que* clause results from the semantics of *à+ce+que*, assumed to be one lexical item of category C.³⁴ Their suggestion could only carry over to (147) if one were willing to analyse *to+it+that* as a C too, a rather implausible move.

³³ (i) is acceptable,

(i) Pierre tient à ce que sa fille ait fini son petit déjeuner avant de partir à l’école
 Pierre sees to it that his daughter has had her breakfast before leaving for school

because *avant de partir à l’école* introduces a new reference point on the time axis different from the speech time. At the speech time the subordinate clause as a whole denotes a set of consecutive prospective events.

³⁴ In their note 7 they observe that treating *a/de+ce+que* as a single lexical item of category C is no stranger than treating the conjunction *parce que* (because) as a single word. They state “no one has, to our knowledge, suggested treating it as three separate lexical items *par + ce + que*.”

They rested their proposal concerning French on contrasts like (145) vs. (146),³⁵

(148) Pierre tient au fait que sa fille ait été élégante ce soir

and on their assumption that *tenir à* in (147) and *tenir à le (=au) fait* in fine examples such as (148) share the same semantics. They then argue that on Huot's or Shyldkrot's type of analysis (148) should be as unacceptable as (147), contrary to facts, since both would violate the 'irrealis' 'prospective' nature of the subordinate clause if it is triggered by *tenir à*.

Their first assumption is questionable: *tenir à ce que* can indeed be translated as *see to it that* but *tenir au fait que* in (148) should rather translate as 'maintain that' or 'insist upon'. As for the subjunctive in (148), it should be equated to the subjunctive in (149), which is clearly not a mark of irrealis mood:

(149) a. Le fait que Pierre soit mort hier me consterne
The fact that Pierre wa_{subjunctive} dead yesterday me appals
'The fact that Pierre died yesterday appals me'

That may be so but I am inclined to believe than one should, in view of sentences like (i) where *du fait/par le fait* have an interpretation similar to *because*.

(i) Pierre est ennuyé du fait/par le fait que son train est en retard
Pierre is worried of the fact/by the fact that his train is late

I find the *de ce que* version of *du fait que* in (iia) acceptable, though a little awkward, but (iib) is of course perfect:

(ii) a. ?Pierre est ennuyé de ce que son train est en retard
Pierre is worried of this that his train is late
b. Pierre est ennuyé parce que son train est en retard
Pierre is worried because his train is late

If one assumes that (iib) should be analysed as in (iiib) just as (iia) is under my proposal,

(iii) a. [Pierre est ennuyé [de [ce [FAIT_i que [son train est en retard EN t_i]]]]
b. [Pierre est ennuyé [par [ce [FAIT_i que [son train est en retard EN t_i]]]]

one has –choice of preposition apart– a common analysis of *du fait que/par le fait que*, *de ce que* in (i) and (iia) and *parce que* in (iib) and elsewhere, a desirable result.

Richie Kayne observes (p.c.) that in English, *because* and *by the fact that* don't give exactly the same interpretation and notes the following contrast: *Eleven is interesting because/*by the fact that it's a prime number*. The same is true of French *parce que* vs. *de ce que*: *Onze est intéressant parce que* vs. **de ce que c'est un nombre premier*. In this context *par le fait que/du fait que* and also *en ce que* (see note 6) are fine: *Onze est intéressant par le fait que/du fait que/en ce que c'est un nombre premier*. Contrary to *parce que* and *de/à ce que*, *en ce que* can surface felicitously as *en ceci que*: *Onze est intéressant en ceci que c'est un nombre premier*. On this see below note 39. All such examples might be rendered as *in view of the fact in English*: *Eleven is interesting in view of the fact that it's a prime number*. Obviously, this note is only scratching the surface of a very complex area of future research.

³⁵ See their (25b) vs. (26).

- b. Que Pierre soit mort hier me consterne
 That Pierre was_{subjunctive} dead yesterday me appals
 ‘The fact that Pierre died yesterday appals me’
- c. Que sa fille ait été élégante ce soir, Pierre le maintient
 That his daughter was elegant to night, Pierre it maintains
 ‘Pierre really maintains that his daughter was elegant to night’

In sum, I believe Authier & Reed (2010) have failed to establish conclusively that the role played by *chercher+à*, *veiller+à* and *see+to* in the irrealis, prospective semantics of their clausal complement should be attributed to their complex complementiser *à/de+ce+que*.

7.2. A tentative proposal

Consider (150), a plausible advertisement for a private school:

- (150) Dans notre établissement, on veille à une chose: que les enfants soient heureux
 ‘In our institution we insist on one thing: That children be happy’

That advertisement could also have been worded as in (149):

- (151) Dans notre établissement on veille à ce que les enfants soient heureux
 ‘In our institution we see to it that children are happy’

On this basis it seems plausible to suggest that (151) is (close to) the null CHOSE version of (150) sketched in (152):

- (152) veille [à [ce [CHOSE]]] que les enfants soient heureux

In both (150) and (151) the relevant sentences are ‘prospective’:³⁶

- (153) *Dans notre établissement, on veille à une chose: que les enfants aient été heureux
 ‘In our institution we insist on one thing, that children were happy’

- (154) *Dans notre établissement on veille à ce que les enfants aient été heureux

³⁶ As above, (151) and (152) would become acceptable if something like “*quand ils la quitteront*” (when they leave) is added. See note 33.

‘In our institution we see to it that children were happy’

There is one interpretive difference between (150) and (151): (150) sounds as if the main goal of the institution was for children to be happy. In (151) there is no such exclusive emphasis on their happiness. This should be tied to ‘*une*’ in (150), perhaps to be analysed as covert *une UNIQUE*.

There is also one obvious syntactic difference. In (150) lexical (*une*) *chose* is a substitute of –a ‘cataphor’ of– an independent clause syntactically and prosodically, while (*ce*) *CHOSE* in (154) and *que les enfants soient heureux* must belong in the same intonation group.

(155) *Dans notre établissement on veille à ce *CHOSE*, que les enfants soient heureux

For the same reason (156) is fine, (157) hopelessly bad:³⁷

(156) Dans notre établissement on veille à une chose principalement, que les enfants soient heureux

(157) *Dans notre établissement on veille à ce principalement que les enfants soient heureux

(158), though it sounds clumsier than (150), is passable in my French. But the same string in (159) strikes me as unacceptable if there is no intonation break between *cela/ceci* and the following sentence:

(158) ?Dans notre établissement on veille à cela/ceci, que les enfants soient heureux

(159) *Dans notre établissement on veille à cela/ceci que les enfants soient heureux

The latter fact should, I believe, be correlated to the fully-fledged analysis of *cela/ceci* suggested above:

(160) Ce *CHOSE QUI EST là/(i)ci*

³⁷ Richie Kayne (p.c.) observes in the same vein that while *I’ll see to it right away/tomorrow that the papers are signed* is acceptable in English **Je veillerai à ce tout de suite/demain que les papiers soient signés* is severely deviant in French. Such facts put a limit on the similarity between *see to* and *veiller à*, to be tied to the respective roles of *CHOSE* in French and *it* in English.

Note that if (161) was ill-formed,

(161) On veille à Ce CHOSE QUI EST là/(i)ci que les enfants soient heureux

(159) would be explained. This would be true if (161) was comparable to (162), to be contrasted with (163):

(162) *L'homme que j'ai convoqué que tu aimes est là

The man I summoned whom you love is here

(163) L'homme que j'ai convoqué, que tu aimes, est là

The man I summoned, whom you love, is here

A single antecedent cannot belong to two different relatives, unless one is 'emarginated' as in (163).³⁸ I would like to tentatively claim that the (158) vs. (159) pair should be seen in this light.³⁹

Accepting this conjecture, we are now led to assume that the correct structure of (151) is (164), and that the reason (157) and the like are hopelessly bad is that no adverb can intervene between the relative subordinator and its antecedent.

(164) ... veille [à [ce [CHOSE][que [les enfants soient heureux]]]]

³⁸ As Richie Kayne observes (p.c.) this raises serious questions about relative clause 'stacking' in French as well as relative clause extraposition which I will not try to address here.

³⁹ The text proposal is at variance with the acceptability of (i), mentioned in footnote 34,

(i) Onze est intéressant en **ceci que** c'est un nombre premier.

in which there need not be an intonation break between *ceci* and *que*. To my ear there can be:

(ii) Onze est intéressant en **ceci : que** c'est un nombre premier.

Correspondingly I also accept (iii):

(iii) Onze est intéressant en ceci, évidemment, que c'est un nombre premier

In this *en ceci que* differs from *en ce que* :

(iv) Onze est intéressant en ce que c'est un nombre premier

(v) *Onze est intéressant en ce : que c'est un nombre premier

(vi) *Onze est intéressant en ce, évidemment, que c'est un nombre premier

I will leave the description of such contrasts to future research.

(164) is admittedly a very strange beast: CHOSE is not extracted from the subordinate clause, which nonetheless behaves like a relative with respect to (158) vs. (159). Seen from the perspective of (150), (164) seems to result from ‘grafting’ a main clause to the right of CHOSE, thereby turning it into a relative structurally, though not, of course, from the point of view of its argument structure. From that point of view CHOSE still belongs to the main clause and is an object of *veille à*, just like its lexical counterpart in (150).

I will adopt this very tentative analysis for all *V+à ce que* sentences, noting that (138) to (141) can be felicitously rendered as in (165) to (170):⁴⁰

(165) Le colonel s’attachait à une chose, que les soldats obéissent au doigt et à l’œil.

‘The colonel saw to one thing, that soldiers should strictly obey orders’

(166) Je ne m’attendais pas à une chose, que Pierre parte.

‘I wasn’t expecting one thing: that Pierre leave’

(167) Pierre était attentif à une chose, que les étudiants suivent bien ses explications.

‘Pierre made sure of one thing: that his students understood his explanations’

(168) Ils ont appelé à une chose, qu’on reste chez soi pendant la pandémie.

‘They appealed to one thing: that people stay home during the pandemic’

8. Concluding remarks

Taking Kayne’s anti-homophony heuristic seriously and applying it to the various occurrences of *ce que* in the French constructions examined in this work, we have been led to suggest a unified analysis of demonstrative *ce*. In all of these it ‘licenses’ a non lexical NP.

In free relatives we have claimed *ce* licenses whatever covert argument is raised from the relative clause. Various syntactic consequences, problems and advantages of this line of thought have been investigated, sometimes leading to new analyses of entities not previously

⁴⁰ This is not true of (i), the expected variant of which in (ii) is unacceptable:

(i) Pierre a demandé/cherché à ce qu’on ferme la fenêtre

‘Pierre has asked/attempted to this that one close the window’

(ii) Pierre a demandé/cherché (*à) une chose, qu’on ferme la fenêtre

‘Pierre has asked/looked for/hesitated to one thing, that one close the window’

À in (i) does not yield an acceptable *y* variant (see note 27 above). It is therefore likely to be the same *à* as in (iii), which also bans it, as shown in (iv). That *à* has been argued almost universally to be a complementiser in the literature.

(iii) Pierre a demandé/cherché à partir

(iv) Pierre a demandé/cherché à partir et *j’y ai demandé/cherché aussi

seen in this light, among them, *ceux, celui, celles, ce à quoi, ce dont, la/le(s) quelle(s)* in section 4 and even *parce que* and *en ce que* (because) in section 6 (cf. note 34).

In *de+ce que* clauses *ce* has been claimed to license the entity FACT Kayne suggested was the covert antecedent of complement clauses. In *à+ce que* clauses like (169),

(169) Je tiens à ce que tu partes,

‘I am keen on this that you leave’ I insist that you leave

I have tentatively suggested *ce* licenses CHOSE, the non lexical counterpart of *chose* in constructions such as (169):

(170) Je tiens à une chose: que tu partes

I am keen on one thing: that you leave

Ce should be an object of wonder for syntacticians working on French, so bafflingly varied is its distribution. Some of its uses are unlikely to fall in line with the claims in this article. For example, in yes/no questions such as *Est-ce qu’il fait beau?* (‘Is *ce* that the weather is nice’ = is the weather nice?) *ce* has been shown to be the predicate of an inverse copular sentence (cf. Pollock (2022)). But one will need to find out whether the analysis of *ce que* suggested here, if correct, could advantageously modify –hopefully minimally– those in Pollock (2021) concerning exclamatives such as *Ce qu’il est grand! Qu’est-ce qu’il est grand!* (how tall he is!) and questions such as *Qu’est-ce que tu fais?* (what are you doing ?) *Quel livre est-ce que tu as lu ?* (what book have you read ?).

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