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### *Right Node Raising as ellipsis: evidence from (what the) British do*

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Despite their name and a large body of literature suggesting that they are derived by rightward Across-the-Board movement of the type schematized in (1) (e.g. Bresnan 1974; Hudson 1976; Postal 1998), there has long been a suspicion that the gap in the first conjunct of Right Node Raising constructions is due not to extraction, but to ellipsis (cf. (2)).

- (1) [[Wallace loves ti ] and [Gromit hates ti]] [Wensleydale cheese]i
- (2) Wallace loves ~~<Wensleydale cheese>~~ and Gromit hates Wensleydale cheese.

The first part of this conclusion finds support in the observation that, conceived as a movement operation, Right Node Raising has a number of curious properties: not only does it fall foul of Kayne's (1994) Linear Correspondence Axiom, but it is also anomalous both in its failure to give rise to weak crossover violations and in its apparent ability to be both bounded and unbounded. Meanwhile, the assertion that the gap is really an ellipsis site has been strengthened by observations concerning the extent to which the behaviour of Right Node Raising parallels that of VP-ellipsis: it has been noted, for example, that both are island-insensitive (Wexler and Culicover 1980; Levine 1985), and, in the case of the Right Node Raising of a VP, that both pattern similarly with respect to the kinds of inflectional features they can ignore (Bošković 2004). In this note, I point out a further such parallel which has not previously been considered, but which nevertheless indicates the superiority of ellipsis-based accounts.

In certain varieties of British English, the site of VP-ellipsis, whether licensed by a modal ((3a)), periphrastic *do* ((3b-c)), perfective *have* ((3d)), progressive *be* ((3e)), sentential *not* ((3f)), or infinitival *to* ((3g)), is replaceable by a non-finite form of *do* (Trudgill 1984):

- (3) a. I don't know whether to go. I might do.  
b. John said he would resign today. We'll have to see if he does do.  
c. First, John talked to Mary. Then Bill did do too.  
d. Mary left early, but she shouldn't have done.  
e. None of his family would help him even though his friends are doing.  
f. You can go to the meeting, but I'd recommend that you not do.  
g. I haven't seen her yet, but I am planning to do.

Crucially, this *do* appears *only* in the context of VP ellipsis:

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- (4) a. \*They might do leave tomorrow.  
b. \*He could have done finished by now.  
c. \*It was doing blowing a gale.  
d. \*Bill said he would talk to Mary, and talk to Mary he did do.

It is of some significance, then, that in the relevant dialects, the gap in the first conjunct of constructions involving the Right Node Raising of a VP is vulnerable to *do*-replacement:

- (5) a. Tom said he would do, and Bill actually did, audition for the choir.  
b. Mary should have done, and Michael probably already has, lit the fire.  
c. John thinks he is doing, but I know he won't be, going to the party.

The conclusion here is simple: only if Right Node Raising involves ellipsis in the first conjunct can the availability of *do* in this context be explained.

### References

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