

# SOME ASYMMETRIES IN THE FUNCTIONING OF RELATIVE PRONOUNS IN SPANISH

José M. Brucart

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

The goal of this paper is to outline an explanatory theory of the syntactic behaviour of relative pronouns in Spanish. The requirement that such a theory must fulfill is one of globality: i.e., it must include both types of relative clauses: restrictives and appositives. This differentiates our proposal from some others (such as Rivero (1982) and Schrotten (1984), for instance), which focus primarily on restrictives<sup>1</sup>. For purely operational (not theoretical) reasons, we will exclude the relative adjective *cuyo* from our study, not because of its decreasing presence in speech, but rather because its syntactic behaviour is perfectly regular and does not show the asymmetries that characterize the other relative pronouns in Spanish. Our expository strategy will be as follows: in section 1 we will study the data and the proposals previously made and in section 2 we will present our analysis.

## 1. The data and their account

Grammars of Spanish usually describe the asymmetries that affect the syntactic functioning of the relative pronouns *que* (with its variants *el que* and *Prep + (el) que*), *quien* and *el cual*. Bello (1847, § 303-332 and 1073-1085), Fernández Ramírez (1951, ch. X), Alcina & Blecua (1975, ch. 8), RAE (1973, § 3.20) and Martínez (1989, ch. IV) refer to the different behaviour of these units. First of all, we will examine the main characteristics of each of them:

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<sup>1</sup> The classic works on this topic are Kayne (1976) on French, and Cinque (1978; 1982) on Italian. Brito (1991) and Ojea (1992) are two recent studies dealing with both classes of relative clauses in Portuguese and Spanish, respectively.

### 1.1. Relative que

*Que* is the unmarked relative form, since it is the only one that can occur in both restrictive and appositive clauses and develop any syntactic function (when necessary, preceded by the corresponding preposition and by the definite article).<sup>2</sup> The examples in (1-2) show the complex syntactic paradigm of *que* in restrictives and appositives, respectively:

- (1) a. El ministro (\*el) que pronunció el discurso...  
The-masc.,sg. minister (\*the-masc.,sg.) that gave-3sg the speech  
'The minister that gave the speech...'
- b. El discurso (\*el) que el ministro no pudo terminar...  
The-masc.,sg. speech (\*the-masc.,sg.) that the minister not could-3sg finish  
'The speech that the minister could not finish...'
- c. La actriz (\*la) que vimos anoche...  
The-fem.,sg. actress (\*the-fem.,sg.) that saw-1pl last night  
'The actress that we saw last night...'
- d. La actriz a \*(la) que vimos anoche...  
The-fem.,sg. actress to-acc. \*(the-fem.,sg.) that saw-1pl last night  
'The actress that we saw last night...'
- e. La actriz a \*(la) que entregaron el premio anoche...  
The-fem.,sg. actress to-dat. \*(the-fem.,sg.) that gave-3pl the prize last night  
'The actress to whom they gave the prize last night...'
- f. El bolígrafo con (el) que escribo todas mis cartas...  
The-masc.,sg. pen with (the-masc.,sg.) that write-1sg. all my letters  
'The pen with which I write all my letters...'

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<sup>2</sup> As will be argued later, we do not consider *que* and *el que* as two different relative forms, as do Ojeda (1992) and other linguists.

- (1) g. Un diario para \*(el) que trabajo a tiempo completo...  
 A-masc.,sg. newspaper for \*(the-masc.,sg.) that work-1sg. full time  
 'A newspaper for which I work full time...'
- h. El magistrado ante \*(el) que depuso el acusado...  
 The-masc.,sg. judge before \*(the-masc.,sg.) that testified-3sg the accused  
 'The judge before whom the accused testified...'
- (2) a. El ministro, (el) que pronunció el discurso,...  
 El discurso, (el) que el ministro no pudo terminar,...
- c. La actriz, \*(la) que vimos anoche, ...
- d. La actriz, a \*(la) que vimos anoche, ...
- e. La actriz, a \*(la) que entregaron el premio anoche, ...
- f. El bolígrafo, con \*(el) que escribo todas mis cartas, ...
- g. Un diario, para \*(el) que trabajo desde hace tiempo, ...
- h. El magistrado, ante \*(el) que depuso el acusado,...

The frequent presence of asterisks in the examples above is a good indication of the difficulties that a global account of relative *que* faces. The most striking asymmetry is the one that differentiates the functioning of this unit in restrictives and appositives (cf. 1 a,b,c vs. 2 a,b,c). Another problem is raised by the obligatory occurrence of the definite article before *que* when it is preceded by some prepositions (the vast majority of them), as is shown in (1-2 e,g,h).

There seems to be a paradox in (1-2): in some cases *que* rejects the definite article, but in other contexts it needs its occurrence. In order to account for this apparent contradiction, Bello (1847, § 323-327) assigns two different analyses to the combination art + *que*: sometimes the definite article is a pronoun and functions as the antecedent of the relative unit *que*, whereas in other cases the article and the relative form a complex unit. The choice between both possibilities depends on the existence of an explicit antecedent different from the definite article. Thus, when functioning as a complement of a preposition, the relative forms a unit with the

article, as in (1-2 d-h). On the contrary, in non-prepositional uses, the sequence art + *que* tends to behave as non-unitary, with the article functioning as the antecedent of the relative.

Rivero (1980, 1982) slightly modifies Bello's analysis. She proposes distinguishing between two variants of *que*, depending on whether or not it is preceded by a preposition. In the first case, *que* is a true relative pronoun. In the second case, on the contrary, *que* is the unmarked form of the complementizer in Spanish, the same unit that occurs in complement clauses, functioning here merely as an introductory nexus expressing subordination. In these cases, the relative nature of the clause is due to the presence of an empty relative operator to the left of *que*. Such an analysis had been first proposed for French by Kayne (1976) and for Italian by Cinque (1978, 1982). Moreover, in English the form *that* occurring in relative clauses is often considered as a complementizer. However, there is an important difference between Spanish and the languages cited above: *que* can be the object of a preposition. In these cases, Rivero assumes that *que* is not a complementizer, but a relative pronoun.

Although the two preceding proposals imply a non-unitary treatment of relative *que*, the distinctions that they make allow us to clarify the apparently chaotic paradigm in (1-2). Now, the ungrammaticality of the variants with article in (1 a,b,c) can be attributed to the fact that in each case there is an NP that counts as the antecedent of the relative operator. Therefore, the article cannot develop the same function. In order to account for the wellformedness of the corresponding appositives including the article (as in a (2 a,b,c)), we must posit an analysis for them in which the article counts as the antecedent and *que* is a complementizer. This is feasible, given that the sequence between commas is an appositional NP that contains the relative clause as a complement. In this account, what we have in the versions of (2 a,b,c) including the definite article is a restrictive relative clause whose antecedent is either the article itself or an empty head following it. Therefore, the structure corresponding to the pairs in (2 a,b) would be like those in (3-4):

- (3) a. [DP El ministro, [CP que pronunció el discurso ]]  
 b. [DP El ministro, [DP el *pro* [CP que pronunció el discurso ]]]
- (4) a. [DP El discurso, [CP que el ministro no pudo terminar ]]  
 b. [DP El discurso, [DP el *pro* [CP que el ministro no pudo terminar ]]]

Some authors (such as d'Introno (1979, ch. 15) and Martínez (1989, § 4.8.2)) have proposed considering the type exemplified in (3-4 b) as a third class of relatives ("restrictive appositives", following d'Introno's terminology). In our account there is no need to distinguish this set from the one of restrictives, given that the apposition in these cases is not exhaustively represented by the relative clause, but by a DP, whether we follow Bello or Rivero. There are some empirical proofs that *el que* does not constitute a unitary constituent here. One is provided by the fact that some units such as *mismo* or *único* can intervene between the article and the complementizer in examples like (3-4 b). The possibility of commuting the definite article by a demonstrative such as *aquel* or by an indefinite such as *uno* suggests the same. Note that all these changes are not possible when the article is inside the relative clause, with the relative operator functioning as its complement, as in (1-2 d-h).

Ojea (1992, § 4.5) studies these constructions carefully and, after concluding that they do not form a class different from restrictive relatives, assumes that they are connected with free relatives (i.e., relatives without an explicit antecedent). Following her view, the structure of (4b) would be like (5), where *pro* is the empty antecedent of the free relative clause:

- (5) El discurso, [DP *pro* el que el ministro no pudo terminar],...

As can be seen, unlike the analysis in (4b), in (5) it is assumed that *el que* functions as a relative pronoun whose grammatical features can identify the empty category preceding it. The prediction that this account seems to make is that all relative pronouns introducing a free relative clause can also occur in a "restrictive appositive". However, we think that this assumption does not work with *quien*. According to Ojea (1992, p. 122), (6) is ambiguous between a pure

appositive reading (*quienes* = those present) and a restrictive appositive one (*quienes* = some of those present), as (7 a,b) exemplify, respectively:

- (6) Los asistentes, quienes querían participar en el coloquio, esperaron hasta el final.  
'The people present, who wanted to take part in the colloquium, waited until the end'
- (7) a. Los asistentes, que querían participar en el coloquio, esperaron hasta el final.  
'The people present, who wanted to take part in the colloquium, waited until the end'
- b. Los asistentes, los que querían participar en el coloquio, esperaron hasta el final.  
'Of the people present, those who wanted to take part in the colloquium, waited until the end'

In our idiolect, however, (6) has only the interpretation of (7a), not the one corresponding to (7b). If our judgement of grammaticality is correct, *quienes* cannot occur in a "restrictive appositive" clause and, therefore, the parallelism between these constructions and free relatives is not so close as Ojea (1992) assumes. Therefore, we think that the appropriate structure of clauses including *el que* is that of (3-4 b), not that of (5).

### 1.2. *Que preceded by preposition*

As for the obligatory intervention of the definite article intervening between *que* and the majority of prepositions in (1-2 d,e,g,h) as opposed to its optionality in (1 f), there is no satisfactory explanation in the literature at the moment. It is probable that a combination of factors are involved in this case, as has been often suggested. First, the syllabic nature of the preposition: bisyllabic prepositions, as well as prepositional expressions (*locuciones preposicionales*) reject the absence of the article before *que*, whereas the monosyllabic ones tend to accept it, although its presence is always more frequent. Allusions have also been made to the homonymic effects that can result from the lack of the article. Thus, sequences of preposition + *que* such as *para que*, *a que*, *hasta que*, *por que* could be confused with the corresponding subordinating conjunctions.

It is probable that there are also syntactic factors conditioning these cases. In fact, Spanish does not always accept the lack of the determiner in an NP complement of a preposition:

- (8) a. Escribe con (el) bolígrafo./El bolígrafo con (el) que escribe...  
Writes with (the) pen./The pen with (the) that writes  
'(S)he writes with (the) pen./'The pen with which (s)he writes...'
- b. Trabaja con \*(su) amigo./El amigo con \*(el) que trabaja...  
Works with \*(her/his) friend./The friend with \*(the) that works  
'(S)he works with \*(her/his) friend./'The friend with whom (s)he works...'
- (9) a. Dispongo de(l) dinero./El dinero de(l) que dispongo...  
Have-1sg of (the) money./The money of (the) that dispose-1sg  
'I have of some/the money/'The money of which I have...'
- b. Te quejas de \*(la) contaminación./La contaminación de \*(la) que te quejas...  
You-dat complain about \*(the) pollution./The pollution about \*(the) that you-dat  
complain  
'You complain about the pollution/'The pollution about which you complain...'

At first sight, some parallelism seems to exist between both types of construction, although a very careful scrutiny of these facts is still necessary to reach reliable conclusions.

It must also be noted that the sequence preposition + *que* in relatives can only be used when the antecedent is definite, as shown in (10a,b):

- (10) a. El dinero de(l) que disponía...  
b. Un dinero del/\*de que disponía...

Moreover, when the article does not occur before the relative operator, minimality effects are manifested, as is shown by the presence of a negation intervening between the relative operator and its trace:

- (11) a. El dinero del que no disponía...  
b. \*El dinero de que no disponía...

The impossibility of extracting the PP that contains the relative operator in (11b) suggests that it counts as a non-referential argument, as opposed to the relative operator including the definite article, which does not exhibit minimality effects (cf. Rizzi (1991) and Cinque (1990)). This fact seems to reinforce the relationship between the two patterns exemplified in (9). In fact, it is possible to characterize the difference between *Dispongo del dinero* y *Dispongo de dinero* as consisting in the referential vs. non-referential character of the verbal complement.

The above argumentation is rather inconclusive, but it is presented to suggest that factors not specifically related to relative clauses may be involved in these cases. For this reason we will not go further into this matter. However, we can draw up an operational hypothesis in order to explain the preference for the definite article in relative clauses: when the relative operator is inside a PP in a relative clause headed by *que*, the preposition interferes in the identification of the grammatical features of the antecedent by the relative operator. If there is no preposition, this identification is obtained by coindexing between the head of the CP and the head of the antecedent. In these cases, the occurrence of the definite article is never necessary (on the contrary, it is never possible). But when a preposition intervenes between the antecedent and the relative operator, the occurrence of the definite article in the PP makes identification possible, given that this unit reproduces the grammatical features of the antecedent.

In the analysis we will propose below, we will defend a unitary treatment of *que* as a complementizer. Nevertheless, we will maintain Bello's distinction, but in a somewhat different manner.

### 1.3. *Relative quien*

The syntactic behaviour of the relative pronoun *quien* is strongly conditioned by its lexical feature [+ Human], which explains why it must always be preceded by the preposition *a* when

functioning as a direct object. Another important characteristic is that it can head free relatives (i.e., constructions lacking a lexically full antecedent). This referential autonomy separates *quien* from the other relative forms. The syntactic paradigm of this pronoun is shown in (12):

- (12) a. \*El autor quien escribió la obra enfermo...  
 'The author who wrote the play while ill...'
- b. El autor \*(a) quien vimos en el teatro...  
 The author \*(to-ACC) who saw-1pl in the theatre...  
 The author whom we saw in the theatre...'
- c. El autor a quien entregamos el primer premio...  
 The author to whom we gave the first prize...'
- d. El autor de quien me hablaste hace poco...  
 The author about whom you talked to me recently...'
- e. El autor contra quien se ha querellado el alcalde...  
 The author against whom the mayor made a complaint...'
- f. Quien escribió la obra...  
 'Who wrote the play...'
- g. Vi a quien buscabas.  
 'I saw who you were looking for'
- h. No encuentro quien me ayude.  
 'I cannot find anyone to help me'
- (13) a. El autor, quien escribió la obra enfermo,...  
 The author, who wrote the play while ill,...'
- b. El autor, \*(a) quien vimos en el teatro, ...  
 The author, whom we saw in the theatre,...'
- c. El autor, a quien entregamos el primer premio,...  
 The author, to whom we gave the first prize,...'
- d. El autor, de quien me hablaste hace poco,...  
 The author, about whom you talked to me recently,...'

(13) e. El autor, contra quien se ha querellado el alcalde,...

'The author, against whom the mayor made a complaint,...'

As can be seen in (12-13), the only syntactic asymmetries that affect *quien* are the contrast of grammaticality between (12a) and (13a), and the logical lack of an appositive counterpart for (12 f-h). In our analysis, both phenomena have the same origin.

The structure of free relatives poses interesting problems. The most important one is determining to which category they belong. Plann (1980) and Suñer (1984) claim that in these cases the relative pronoun has an empty antecedent *pro*, which permits proposing a structure for these constructions parallel to the other restrictive relative clauses. Notwithstanding, in a work about Catalan, Bartra (1990) argues that in examples like (12 h) the relative pronoun, which has a non-referential reading and acts as a logical variable with existential import, does not have an empty antecedent and that consequently the maximal projection of the overall sequence is CP. Note that in these examples it is not possible to commute *quien* to *el que*. This effect can be derived from the different category in which they are projected, following Bartra's analysis: CP and DP, respectively. Thus, the indefinite semantic value of the variable occurring in constructions like (12 h) would be incompatible with the intrinsic definite nature of *el que*:

(14) a. No encontré quien/\*el que me atendiera.

'I could not find anyone to attend me'

b. Hay quien/\*el que te desea mal.

'There is someone that wishes you harm'

(examples from Plann (1980), p. 113)

#### 1.4. The relative *el cual*

Finally, the paradigm of the relative pronoun *el cual* is characterized by having less referential autonomy than *quien*. Therefore, it must always have an explicit antecedent, which implies that

this form cannot occur in free relatives. Ojea (1992, p. 99) associates this weakness to the special structure of this form, which contains an empty nominal head.<sup>3</sup>

(15) [DP el [NP [AP cual] pro ]]

According her, the definite article, having to identify *pro* in (15), cannot at the same time identify the other *pro* that functions as antecedent in a free relative.

*El cual* reproduces the same asymmetries between restrictive and appositive clauses that *quien* displayed:

- (16) a. \*El bolígrafo el cual no escribe bien...  
'The pen which does not write well...'  
b. \*El bolígrafo el cual te compré para tu cumpleaños...  
'The pen which I bought you for your birthday...'  
c. El bolígrafo con el cual escribo...  
'The pen with which I write...'  
d. \*El autor el cual escribió la obra enfermo...  
'The author who wrote the play while ill...'  
e. El autor al cual entregamos el primer premio...  
'The author to whom we gave the first prize...'
- (17) a. ?El bolígrafo, el cual no escribe bien,  
'The pen, which does not write well,'  
b. ?El bolígrafo, el cual te compré para tu cumpleaños  
'The pen, which I bought you for your birthday,'

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<sup>3</sup> In favour of this structure, Ojea (1992) adduces the cases in which this relative pronoun includes a lexical noun. They are examples such as the one that Cuervo (1893, s.v. *cual*) extracts from *El Quijote*: "A grandes voces llamó a Sancho que viniese a darle la celada; el cual Sancho, oyéndose llamar, dejó a los pastores".

- (17) c. El bolígrafo, con el cual escribo veinte cartas al día,  
 'The pen, with which I write twenty letters a day'
- d. ¿El autor, el cual escribió la obra enfermo,  
 'The author, who write the play ill'
- e. El autor, al cual entregamos el primer premio,  
 'The author, to whom we gave the first prize.'

The low degree of acceptability in (17 a,b,d) derives from some additional conditions affecting the use of *el cual*. Bello (1847, § 1077) states that *el cual* can substitute *que* in appositive clauses when they are quite long and there is a perceptible pause at the beginning of the clause.

## 2. The analysis

It seems natural to think that at least some of the asymmetries between restrictive and appositive clauses are derived from structural differences between the two. However, the same structure, that represented in (18), is usually assigned to both types, :

- (18) NP -> NP CP

Other proposals for distinguishing between both structures are not so influential at the present. In general, the linguists that defend this option (such as Smits (1989), Brito (1991) and Ojea (1992)) posit the structure of (19) for restrictive relatives, and tend to keep (18) for appositive relatives:

- (19) N' -> N' CP

The main argument for positing an identical structure for both types of relative clauses relies on the fact that in (19) the antecedent of the relative operator is N', not NP. The coindexing between the relative pronoun and the antecedent does not seem possible in this structure, given

that N' is not an argument and consequently it does not receive a referential index. Moreover, any coindexation between CP and the NP that contains it would lead to a violation of the i-within-i filter. The relationship of sisterhood between CP and NP in (18) avoids the problem. Obviously, the strength of the above argument crucially depends on the assumption that the relationship between the relative pronoun and its antecedent requires identity of reference, not merely of sense. On the other hand, if we assume that nominal categories project to DP, as was first proposed in Abney (1987), the problem is reproduced on similar terms, unless we suppose that the restrictive relative clause is adjoined to DP, a quite controversial issue. In our account, we will adopt the structure in (18) for both classes of relatives, although it is doubtful that this is the best option.

### 2.1. *The features of relative clauses*

The interpretation of a relative clause is obtained through the association of the relative pronoun and its antecedent. It is the latter unit which fixes the range of the variable bound by the relative operator. In the principles and parameters theory, the mechanism that associates different arguments is coindexing. Thus, in order for a relative clause to be well formed it is necessary for the relative and the antecedent to have the same index in some level of representation.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Actually, there are three elements that must be coindexed: the antecedent, the relative operator moved to CP, and the variable left in the base position. The coindexing between the relative operator in CP and its variable is automatic and is derived from the application of the movement rule. Regarding the relationship between the relative operator and its antecedent, there are two ways of interpreting the relative clause: as a particular case of anaphoric binding (Cinque (1982); Schroten (1984)) or as a type of predication (Chomsky (1982, 1986a)). In the first case, the relationship would be established between the antecedent and the relative operator, which is considered as an anaphor. In the second, it would be established between the antecedent and the whole clause, which acts as an open sentence. There is also a third possibility: the one presented in Safir (1986). According to this view, the relationship between the antecedent and the relative operator forms a special kind of binding: r(eltive)-binding. In our account, we will adopt the predication analysis, although we will use some ideas from Safir (1986). For a detailed study of the different views on this issue, cf. Brito (1991, § 1.5).

It seems natural to assume that the index that relates the relative clause with its antecedent is fixed in C<sup>0</sup> (the head of the whole construction, from which it can percolate to CP). This index is licensed by the presence of a relative operator in Spec of CP, through the general mechanism of agreement specifier-head.

Another important aspect in the analysis of relative clauses is that of determining which grammatical features characterize the head of CP in these constructions. Traditionally, relatives, as interrogatives and exclamatives, have been considered as a type of *wh*- construction (that is to say, clauses that contain an operator that is projected to the specifier of CP in order to bind a variable). However, this single feature cannot univocally characterize relative clauses, given that it is shared by the constructions above mentioned. Rizzi (1990, § 2.7) proposes a system of two binary features ( $[\pm wh]$  and  $[\pm pred(ictative)]$ ) in order to classify the different CP projections. This system permits four combinations, as is shown in (20) (examples are from Rizzi (1990)):

- (20) a.  $[+wh, -pred]$  I wonder  $[CP \text{ what}_i \emptyset \text{ you saw } t_i]$   
 b.  $[+wh, +pred]$  The thing  $[CP \text{ which}_i \emptyset \text{ you saw } t_i]$   
 c.  $[-wh, +pred]$  The thing  $[CP \text{ OP}_i \text{ that you saw } t_i]$   
 d.  $[-wh, -pred]$  I know  $[CP \text{ that you saw } it]$

Our analysis agrees with the necessity of assigning selection features to the head of CP in order to adequately constrain the formation of the different types of clauses. However, we will depart from Rizzi's system in some respects. The first feature we will use is  $[\pm QU]$ . The value associated with it is that of expressing a CP without propositional independence. In (21-22) we have different types of CPs:

- (21) a. Luis no quiere  $[PRO \text{ hablar inglés}]$ .  
 'Luis does not want to speak English'

- (21) b. Luis no sabe [que María se ha ido].  
 'Luis does not know that Mary left'
- c. Luis no sabe [quién lo hizo].  
 'Luis does not know who made it'
- d. Luis no sabe [qué hacer].  
 'Luis does not know what to do'
- (22) a. Luis preparó la cena.  
 'Luis cooked the dinner'
- b. ¿Qué preparó Luis?  
 'What did Luis cook?'
- c. ¡Qué frío hace!  
 What cold makes  
 'How cold it is!'
- d. Que tengas suerte.  
 That have-2sg-subjunctive luck  
 'I wish you luck'

In (21) we have four examples containing a complement clause. The first one is the only one in which the subordinate is not introduced by a [+QU] unit. Note that in this case the explicit mark of subordination is not placed in CP, but in IP (it is expressed by means of a defective verbal temporality). On the contrary, in (21 b,c), the existence of an independent temporality in the subordinate clause is counteracted by the presence of a [+QU] unit that functions as a subordination marker in CP. From this point of view, we can characterize (21 d) as containing a complement clause with two marks of dependency: the [+QU] unit relates these constructions to (21 b,c). Furthermore, the lack of an independent temporality permits the association of these clauses with the special modal (epistemic) value that the literature often refers to.

On the other hand, the sentences in (22) are syntactically independent. But only the first forms an independent proposition.<sup>5</sup> Sentences in (22 b,c) each contain an operator binding a variable. They both behave as "open sentences", with a marked modality (interrogative and exclamative, respectively). The presence of a modal operator [+QU] in (22 d) implies that the corresponding sentence does not have propositional independence. Therefore, we can relate the [+QU] feature to an extended concept of "subordination" including marked modalities.

Relative clauses are always introduced by a [+QU] element expressing the subordinate nature of these constructions. It is interesting to note that this mark is independent of the occurrence of a finite verb, as (23 c) shows:

- (23) a. Busca un libro que vio la semana pasada.  
Looks for a book that saw-3sg last week  
'(S)he is looking for a book that (s)he saw last week'
- b. Busca un libro que trate de lógica.  
Looks for a book that deals-SUBJ with logic  
'(S)he is looking for a book about logic'
- c. Busca un libro con que pasar el rato.  
Looks for a book with that to pass the time  
'(S)he is looking for a book with which to pass the time'

Moreover, we will suppose that the head of the CP of a relative clause is marked with the feature [+Rel], which must be adequately saturated in the course of derivation. The values of [+QU] and [+Rel] are different. [+QU] stands for the subordinate nature of the clause, as we have argued. As for [+Rel], it expresses the relative nature of the construction. We will see later

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<sup>5</sup> If it is assumed that (22 a) constitutes a projection of IP (not of CP), this sentence would not be marked with respect to [+QU]. What is important here is the contrast between this example and the rest of the sentences in (22), which present a [+QU] mark in spite of being "independent sentences".

that in Spanish [+Rel] units exist that do not saturate a [+QU] feature. Therefore, both features must be considered separately.<sup>6</sup>

We will assume that the features [+QU, +Rel] must be adequately saturated in order to license a relative construction. Moreover, we will suppose, as usual in the generative grammar from its very beginning, that the relative pronoun is generated in the position that corresponds to its syntactic function in the subordinate clause and that it is moved to Spec,Comp in the syntax, a particular case of the general phenomenon of movement of XP to Spec. Therefore, the S-structure representation of a DP containing a relative clause like *La persona a quien tú admiras...* is reflected in (24):

- (24) [NP La persona<sub>k</sub> [CP [Spec a quien<sub>i</sub> ] [C <+QU> <+Rel><sub>i</sub>] [[P tú admiras t<sub>i</sub>]]]  
The person whom you admire...!

Suppose that the index of a relative clause is fixed in the head of CP and that it is licensed by the presence of a relative operator in Spec,CP. This relation is an instance of the general mechanism of spec-head agreement. Therefore, the coindexing relations shown in (24) are due to the interaction of three different mechanisms: principles of trace theory, which coindex *quien* with its trace; spec-head agreement, which relates *quien* with the [+Rel] feature in C<sup>0</sup>; and principles of predication establishing the relation between the subordinate clause and its antecedent.

At LF, the relative pronoun in (Spec,CP) is interpreted as an operator that binds the variable *t*. Being a true relative pronoun, *quien* is lexically marked [+QU, +Rel] and, therefore, it saturates the identical features placed in the head of CP.

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<sup>6</sup> It is likely that [+Rel] results from the combination of some more basic features. As a matter of fact, it is equivalent to the cluster [+wh, +pred(icative)] proposed by Rizzi (1991) as a characterization of relative clauses. However, in that which follows we will continue using the feature [+Rel] for ease of exposition.

## 2.2. *The analysis of restrictive relative clauses*

First, we will try to explain the behaviour of restrictive relative clauses headed by *que*. We will assume that this is not a true relative pronoun generated inside IP, but the unmarked complementizer generated in  $C^0$  that also appears in completive clauses. It can occur in a relative clause only if there is no overt relative pronoun inside it. In our account, *que* has the feature [+QU], but it lacks the [+Rel] mark, a consequence of the fact that it is not a true relative pronoun. Its only function is to saturate the [+QU] feature when it is not previously saturated by a relative pronoun. In such a case, *que* must be inserted at S-structure as a last resort in order to avoid an ungrammatical representation (as is suggested in Chomsky (1991)).

We have just said that *que* does not saturate the [+Rel] feature. Given that this mark is obligatory in any relative clause, we must now address the issue of which unit it is that saturates this feature. To this purpose, we will assume that Spanish has an empty relative operator that occupies the position corresponding to the relativized element at DS and that is moved to (Spec,CP) at SS in order to adequately bind the variable left in its original position.<sup>7</sup> Such a unit has been previously proposed for English (Chomsky (1977)), French (Kayne (1976)), Italian (Cinque (1978; 1982)), Spanish (Rivero (1980; 1982); Ojeda (1992)) and Portuguese (Brito (1991)). A syntactic piece of evidence for the existence of this operator is provided by constructions like (25), studied by Fernández Soriano (1992), in which Spanish must have recourse to the strategy of placing a personal pronoun in the relativized position:

- (25) a. El chico que me preguntaste cuándo lo conocí...  
          'The guy that you asked me when I met him...'  
      b. \*El chico a quien me preguntaste cuándo conocí...  
          'The guy whom you asked me when I met...'  
      c. Un libro que quien lo compra \*(lo) lee con gusto.  
          'A book that whoever buys it reads it with pleasure'

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<sup>7</sup> On empty operators, see Browning (1987).

- (25) d. Un libro que (lo) lee con gusto quien lo compra.  
 e. Un libro que \*(lo) lees y \*(lo) recomiendas.  
 Lit.: 'A book that you read it and you recommend it'  
 'A book that, if you read it, you recommend it'  
 f. Un libro que, si \*(lo) lees, \*(lo) recomiendas.  
 'A book that, if you read it, you recommend it'  
 g. El niño ese que su padre es médico y su madre arquitecta...  
 'The child such that his father is a physician and his mother an architect'

For different reasons, the preceding structures reject the normal strategy for relativization in Spanish (with the single exception of (24d), which admits both forms in our idiolect) and replace it by the presence of a clitic in the place of the variable bound by the relative operator. In (24a,b) the constraints on the extraction from a *wh*-island preclude the movement of the relative operator to the specifier of CP in the matrix clause. In (24c-f) the same effect can be attributed to the arbitrary or generic value of the subordinate and the occurrence of a clitic coindexed with the relativized element in the domain of the relative clause. Finally, in (24g) the constraints on gapping inhibit the occurrence of the relative *cuyo*, which must be replaced by a possessive clitic. As a matter of fact, such a substitution is increasingly attested in colloquial Spanish, where it affects all contexts, possibly due to the paradigmatic isolation of this relative adjective.

Notice that in all the cases in (24) the subordinate is a relative clause and therefore its head must contain the [+Rel] feature (otherwise, it would be impossible to guarantee the presence of an antecedent coindexed with the clitic). In fact, the clitic in these constructions adopts the value of a bound variable. Therefore, it is necessary to assume that there is an empty operator placed in the specifier of CP that binds the clitic and saturates the [+Rel] feature of the subordinate. This seems to be the same strategy followed by languages that lack overt relative pronouns and that head relative clauses with the complementizer. The appearance of this pattern in a language that has overt relative pronouns seems to suggest that the option exemplified by (24) represents the unmarked value of the parameter.

As has been said in § 1.1 and 1.3, a very important difference between Spanish and the rest of the languages for which an empty operator has been proposed is that *que* can occur as object of preposition, often preceded by the definite article. Thus, besides constructions as (25) -identical to the corresponding ones in English, French, Italian, Catalan or Portuguese-, Spanish also has the cases in (26), which are only possible in the other languages with the occurrence of a true relative pronoun:<sup>8</sup>

- (26) a. El niño que jugaba en el parque...  
           The boy that played in the park...'  
       b. El niño que vimos en el parque...  
           The boy that we saw in the park...'
- (27) a. El niño al que viste...  
           The boy to-the that saw-2s  
           The boy whom you saw...'

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<sup>8</sup> In Catalan, the occurrence of a tonic form homonymous with the unstressed *que* is possible when preceded by a preposition, although other pronouns (such *el qual*) are preferred:

- (i) El llibre que vam llegir l'any passat...  
       The book that we read last year...'
- (ii) \*El llibre de(l) que et vaig parlar ahir...  
       The book about which I spoke to you yesterday...'
- (iii) El llibre de què et vaig parlar ahir...  
       The book about which I spoke to you yesterday...'
- (iv) \*El llibre del què et vaig parlar...  
       The book about which I spoke to you yesterday...'
- (v) El llibre del qual et vaig parlar ahir...  
       The book about which I spoke to you yesterday...'

The contrast in tonicity between *que* and *què* seems to reflect the different nature of these forms: the first is the complementizer, the second behaves as a relative pronoun. As the other true relative pronouns, *què* cannot occur in a restrictive clause with an overt antecedent if it is not preceded by a preposition. Another significant difference with respect to Spanish is the non-availability of an intervening definite article between the preposition and *què*, as is shown in (iv).

(27) b. El niño de que te hablé...

The boy of that to-you spoke-1s

The boy about whom I spoke to you...<sup>1</sup>

If we accept the presence of an empty relative operator in (26), we must explain why the insertion of the complementizer is obligatory in these cases. Our idea is that the empty operator cannot saturate the [+QU] feature, by virtue of its lack of phonetic content. Therefore, it is necessary to insert a complementizer to show the subordinate nature of the construction.<sup>9</sup>

The analysis of the examples in (27) is a bit more problematic. The minimal hypothesis consists in supposing that Spanish has recourse to the empty operator strategy in these cases also, with the subsequent insertion of the complementizer at SS. The main advantage of this view is that it gives a unified account of the relative *que*, whether it is preceded by a preposition or not. However, such an analysis poses an important problem, since it makes it possible for an empty unit to act as the object of a preposition in Spanish, an option clearly not attested in any other case. However, we do not think that this problem about restrictivity is insoluble, because relative constructions possess a cluster of peculiar characteristics that can license some mechanisms that are not accessible to other constructions (in particular, the existence of a local antecedent of the relativized element, as well as the presence of the [+Rel] feature in the operator that binds the variable). Notice that English does not accept the identification of null subjects and objects in general. Nevertheless, *that* relatives are possible in both cases.

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<sup>9</sup> The fact that the complementizer can be absent in English (as in (i)) does not necessarily imply that the empty relative operator saturates the [+QU] feature, since its absence is also possible in complement clauses such as (ii). For an account of the ungrammaticality of (iii), cf. Rizzi (1990, § 2.7):

- (i) The man (that) I spoke to yesterday was a famous actor.
- (ii) I think he is wrong.
- (iii) The man \*(that) spoke to you yesterday was a famous actor.

In order to avoid the restrictivity problem, almost all studies about Spanish relatives propose differentiating between three types of "relative *que*": the complementizer (that occurs in absence of a preposition); the true relative pronoun *que*, and the compound relative pronoun *el que* (these latter two forms being in complementary distribution with the former and occurring as objects of a preposition). If this analysis is accepted, the [+Rel] feature must be attributed to the second and to the third units. However, we think that it is possible to posit a unified analysis for all these forms; one that does not compel us to consider their similarity as a mere case of homonymy.

First we will examine the contrast between the two patterns represented in (27). As has been suggested in § 1.3, there are several factors that seem to intervene in the choice between preposition + *que* and prep + article + *que*. In our opinion, the increasing preference of Spanish for the second pattern is due to the fact that the definite article reproduces the grammatical features of the antecedent and therefore permits the identification of the empty relative operator more easily.<sup>10</sup> An empirical argument for the analysis we are presenting is provided by the superlative constructions of Canariense Spanish studied in Bosque & Brucart (1991). In this dialect, (28) is grammatical, just like the standard forms *El amigo con el que tengo más confianza* and *El amigo con el que más confianza tengo* 'The friend in whom I have the most confidence':

(28) El amigo con el más confianza que tengo...

In (28), the phrase containing the superlative operator has raised to a position between the article and *que*. Consequently, the sequence *con el que* cannot form a unitary constituent, as is

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<sup>10</sup> It is interesting to note that the possibility of the occurrence of the definite article before *que* is correlated to the fact that this unit has retained some deictic force in Spanish, in contrast with other Romance languages (cf. Brucart & Gràcia 1987).

predicted by our account. On the contrary, (28) constitutes a serious problem for the analysis that considers *que* preceded by a preposition as a true relative pronoun.

Although our account implies a unified treatment of the form *que* in Spanish, it is important to note that the distinction suggested by Bello (1847) for the sequence *el que* is reproduced as the contrast in (29) shows:

- (29) a. El *pro*<sub>i</sub> [CP OP<sub>i</sub> que<sub>i</sub> [IP te compraste t<sub>i</sub>]]...  
The one that you bought...'  
b. El argumento  $\epsilon$ <sub>i</sub> [CP  $\epsilon$  con el OP  $\epsilon$  que  $\epsilon$ <sub>i</sub> [IP no comulgas t $\epsilon$ <sub>i</sub>]]...  
The argument with which you do not agree...'

Notice that, as Bello (1847) argues, only in the second case is the definite article inside the relative clause.

### 2.3. The defective behaviour of *quien* and *el cual* in restrictive relatives

As has been previously mentioned, restrictive clauses introduced by a true relative pronoun not included in a PP are always ungrammatical. The examples in (30) show that the occurrence of the complementizer and the empty relative operator is the only possibility in these cases:

- (30) a. El chico que estudia matemáticas...  
The boy that studies math...'  
b. \*El chico quien / el cual estudia matemáticas en la UAB...  
The boy who studies mathematics in UAB...'  
c. El coche que vimos saliendo del garaje...  
The car that we saw leaving the garage...'  
d. \*El coche el cual vimos saliendo del garaje...  
The car which we saw leaving the garage...'

Schroten (1984) attributes the contrast in (30) to government theory: relative pronouns in COMP must be governed. Since a preposition is an adequate governor for a relative pronoun, *quien* and *el cual* give rise to wellformed sentences when they are preceded by a preposition. The ungrammaticality of (30b,d) can be attributed to the lack of an adequate governor for the relative pronoun. However, any attempt to accounting for this asymmetry must bear in mind that no governor is present in appositive relatives, as the examples in (31) show:

- (31) a. El chico, quien / el cual estudia matemáticas,...  
b. El coche, el cual vimos saliendo del garaje,...

It seems difficult to assume that the status of the relative pronouns in (31) with respect to government is essentially different from the one corresponding to (30b,d).

A different, perhaps more promising strategy consists in having recourse to two proposals presented in Chomsky (1986; 1991). The first suggests that it is possible not to apply a transformation if the movement is vacuous. In order to exemplify this idea we can compare the sequences in (32):

- (32) a. Tu madre, con quien María habló ayer,...  
'Your mother, with whom Mary spoke yesterday,...'  
b. Tu madre, quien habló ayer con María,...  
'Your mother, who spoke with Mary yesterday,...'

In (32a) the speaker has an unequivocal indication that a transformation has been applied, given that a complement of the predicate has been placed to the left of the clause, before the subject. On the contrary, in (32b) there has not been any change with respect to the underlying order of elements, since the relative was in the subject position at DS, to the left of the verb. In this case, we can say that the movement has been vacuous.

However, this principle of vacuousness cannot adequately explain the asymmetry in (30) by itself, since direct objects are also affected by the phenomenon, as (30d) shows. As a matter of fact, any grammatical function that can be performed without a preposition manifests the same contrast. For instance, locative and temporal NPs:

- (33) a. Un sábado que / \*el cual viajé a Tenerife...  
'A Saturday that I traveled to Tenerife...'  
b. La hora que / \*la cual pasé en la parada del autobús...  
'The hour that I spent at the bus stop...'

A slightly different, perhaps more promising way of explaining the contrasts in (30) consists in relying on the idea that transformational processes are sensitive to economy principles, as has been proposed in Chomsky (1991). Both *quien* and *el cual* share the characteristic of including grammatical features that permit the identification of their antecedent. *Quien* has number inflection in present-day Spanish and can head a relative without an overt antecedent. For its part, *el cual* includes the definite article, whose features identify the antecedent (by means of gender and number inflection). When the relative operator is not preceded by a preposition, the grammatical information carried out by these units is redundant with the one obtained through the coindexing between the head of CP and the antecedent. We can suppose that one of the contexts in which the application of a transformational rule is vacuous is found when a relative pronoun reproduces the grammatical features of the antecedent. This situation takes place when a relative pronoun is projected as an NP, but not when it is inside a PP, because the lexical and structural information carried out by the preposition is not contained in the antecedent. If there is an absolute identity, Spanish adopts the strategy of using the empty relative operator and inserting the complementizer. This mechanism seems to be governed by economy criteria similar to the ones that have been proposed in the "Avoid Pronoun Principle", exemplified in (34):

- (34) a. *Él llegó tarde. / Llegó tarde.*  
 He came-3s late. / Came-3s late.  
 'He came late'
- b. *Luis puso la mesa y (\*él) cenó.*  
 'Luis laid the table and (he) had dinner'

In (34), the pronoun tends to be omitted -except if it includes some emphatic operator<sup>11</sup>-, given that the verbal morphology guarantees the recoverability of the information it carries out. In a similar way, in (30b,d) the relative reiterates the grammatical content of the antecedent. In such a context, the recourse to the empty operator implies "least effort".

Finally, it must be assured that this analysis rules out sequences like (35), in which the relative pronoun has remained *in situ* and the complementizer has been inserted:<sup>12</sup>

- (35) \**El libro que le(mos) el cual...*  
 'The book that we read which...'

It is not difficult to determine the illformedness of this sequence: as a true relative pronoun, *el cual* possesses the features [+QU] and [+Rel]. In order to license the relative pronoun, its features must be matched with the selectional features in COMP. But in (35) such a matching is impossible for various reasons. On one hand, the insertion of the complementizer saturates the [+QU] feature in COMP. On the other hand, the relative *in situ* cannot enter into an agreement relation with the head of CP. In the event that an empty relative operator is inserted in order to saturate the [+Rel] feature in COMP (as is presumably the case in examples of relative clause

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Rigau (1986) on the emphatic nature of subject pronouns in pro-drop languages.

<sup>12</sup> For a different account of the ungrammaticality produced by the presence of two operators, cf. Bok-Bennema (1990).

with a resumptive clitic as in (25)), the problem lies in the fact that the relative *in situ* is not licensed, since its features cannot be matched.

#### 2.4. *The analysis of appositive relatives*

The last asymmetry is that which sets up the ungrammatical status of (30b,d) against the grammaticality of its corresponding explicative counterparts in (31). According to our account, what (31) shows is that the reasons that precluded raising of the relative pronoun to COMP in (30b,d) have disappeared. This fact intuitively has some correlation with the higher degree of syntactic independence that appositive relatives have with respect to the matrix clause. In effect: whereas the restrictive clause acts as an intensional modifier of the antecedent and contributes to the very reference of the NP or DP to which it is subordinated, the appositive carries an independent secondary predication that does not affect the intensional content of the NP or DP that includes it. This explains why personal pronouns or proper nouns can have appositive relatives, but not restrictive ones.

In the literature there are several proposals that establish this essential difference between both types of relatives. In our analysis, we will take the proposal presented in Safir (1986), that is independently motivated by reasons related to binding theory. Safir's proposal consists in considering that the grammatical level where coreference between the relative and the antecedent is fixed is different in restrictive and appositive relatives. Whereas the coindexing between the relative and the antecedent in restrictive sentences applies at SS or LF,<sup>13</sup> the same relation in appositive clauses is not established until a later derivational stage, namely LF' (as proposed in Chomsky (1986b)). If we accept this suggestion, the reasons that inhibited the raising of some pronouns in restrictive relatives when they were not preceded by a preposition are not operating anymore. Thus, we can predict that relative pronouns will not be blocked in

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<sup>13</sup> In order for our account to work, we must assume that the coindexing in restrictive relative clauses takes place at SS. Perhaps this point is subject to some parametric variation. For instance, the nonexistence of extraposed relatives in Spanish could be derived from the different value taken by Spanish and English, if we accept that the coindexing in an extraposed relative implies a previous operation of reconstruction in LF.

these cases and raising to (Spec,CP) in syntax will be an available option -in fact, the only option-, as is shown by the wellformedness of (32). Of course, as the empty relative operator can also be present in these constructions, the option of inserting the complementizer is also possible in such cases.

An interesting consequence of our theory is that it does not properly predict an asymmetry between restrictive and appositive clauses, but one between relatives with antecedent and without antecedent, as was suggested by Bello. This explains why the sentences in (36) are grammatical, despite their restrictive nature:

- (36) a. Quien pronunció el discurso...  
          'Who gave the speech...'  
      b. No encuentro quien me ayude.  
          'I cannot find anyone to help me'

In the examples above the raising of the relative pronoun to (Spec,CP) is not blocked, since there is no lexical antecedent that can induce such an effect.

### 3. Conclusions

In the preceding sections, we have attempted to outline a theory on the functioning of relative pronouns in Spanish that is essentially based on four premises:

- (a) The saturation of [+QU], the selective feature of subordination, in syntax. When this saturation is not produced by the syntactic movement of the relative pronoun, complementizer *que* must be inserted at SS.
- (b) The saturation of [+Rel], the selective feature characterizing relative clauses, at SS. This is done through the raising of the relative operator, overt or empty, to Spec,COMP.

- (c) The blocking of the raising of the relative operator to (Spec,CP) when the syntactic projection that contains it merely reproduces the grammatical features of the antecedent.
- (d) The coindexing of the head of the relative clause with the antecedent at SS in restrictive relatives and at LF in appositive relatives.

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*Departament de Filologia Espanyola*  
*Facultat de Lletres*  
*Edifici B*  
*E-08193 Bellaterra*