Expletive selection and CP arguments in Dutch

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Abstract It has recently been claimed (Hazout 2004) that the English expletives *it* and *there* do not differ in their theta-properties. This paper argues that Dutch *het* and *er* do differ: all instances of *het* bear a (quasi-)theta-role; no instance of *er* does. Evidence comes from an analysis of expletive selection in constructions with *seem*-type verbs.

Keywords Expletive · Impersonal passive · Quasi-argument · *Seem*-verb

1 Introduction

Consider the pattern of expletive selection in (1).

- (1) a. there / *it is a man (in the garden)
b. it / *there is cold (in the garden)
c. it / *there seems CP¹

Why does the existential construction (1a) disallow the *it*-expletive, and why do weather-verb and *seem*-constructions (1b) and (1c) disallow the *there*-expletive?

One approach is to distinguish *it* and *there* in terms of Case- and theta-properties. For instance, Chomsky (1995) and later work argued that *it* has a full set of ϕ -features, including Case, but *there* does not. In addition, Chomsky (1981) and later work assumed that *it* sometimes, as in (1b), bears a (quasi-)theta-role, but *there* never does. It is not difficult to make these differences between *it* and *there* conspire to yield the pattern in (1), as discussed in more detail below.

In a recent paper, Hazout (2004) endorses an entirely different approach: the expletives *there* and *it* differ neither in their theta-properties, nor in their Case-

¹In example sentences, I use CP to stand for some finite, closed-phase embedded CP.

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properties. Following Williams (1994), Hazout argues that both *a man* in (1a) and *cold* in (1b) are predicates, which take the expletives as their subjects, but without assigning them a theta-role. But if there is no Case- or theta-distinction between *there* and *it*, how can we account for the expletive selection facts?

Hazout attributes the distinction between (1a) and (1b) to an ‘idiosyncratic’ property of English: *there* subcategorizes for a predicate containing specified ϕ -features (those on *man* in (1a)), whereas *it* subcategorizes against such a predicate. Motivation for playing down the distinction between the two constructions comes from Hebrew, which supposedly uses the same covert expletive in both cases:

- (2) a. *pro* haya iš ba-gina [Hebrew]
 was man in.the-garden
 b. *pro* haya kar ba-gina
 was cold in.the-garden

In the present paper, I want to argue that the expletives *er* and *het* which appear in the Dutch counterparts of (1) do show important differences. I will focus in particular on the theta-properties of these elements, and argue (contra Hazout) that, over and above any differences in Case- and ϕ -features, *het* always bears a theta-role (if only a quasi-theta-role), whereas *er* does not. The main argument will be based on the Dutch counterpart of the *seem*-construction (1c). Some Dutch *seem*-verbs require the *it*-expletive, while other verbs allow both the *there*-expletive and the *it*-expletive:

- (3) a. *het*/**er* schijnt CP [Dutch]
 it/*there* seems CP
 b. *het*/*er* blijkt CP
 it/*there* turns.out CP

I will argue that expletive selection in these examples is determined by the theta-properties of the verbs. I will concentrate on Dutch, and to a lesser degree on Danish and English. In other Germanic languages, distinguishing the *it*- and *there*-expletives is not straightforward, and more research is required to determine whether my conclusions extend to these languages. For the same reason, non-Germanic languages are outside the scope of this paper as well.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 summarizes Reuland’s (1983) argument for the theta-relatedness of *het*, which is based on Dutch impersonal passives; I show that this argument holds good only under certain specific assumptions on feature checking relations in impersonal passives. Section 3 introduces the expletive selection properties of different *seem*-type verbs in Dutch, which will provide the basis for the argument in the following sections. Section 4 discusses various previous accounts of *it*-expletives, including Bennis’ (1986) analysis of the relevant *seem*-constructions, and argues that these accounts are insufficient. In subsequent sections, I propose an alternative, which requires *het* to bear a theta-role. Section 7 returns to impersonal passives and suggests that Dutch *seem*-constructions may support an analysis of feature checking relations in impersonal passives under which Reuland’s argument from section 2 can be maintained.

2 Impersonal passives, weather-verbs, and default ϕ -valuation

Before turning to my main argument, I want to explore an existing argument for the obligatory theta-marking of *het*-expletives, on the basis of Impersonal Passives (passives of unergative verbs). The present section assesses whether this argument, which appears in the literature in the GB-framework, can be upheld in a minimalist setting.

Before we can reconstruct the argument, we first need to address the question of feature checking in impersonal passive constructions. Consider the data in (4) (unless otherwise noted, all data are from Dutch or English):

- (4) a. er wordt gedanst
 there is-PASS danced
 b. er wordt op Piet gerekend
 there is-PASS on Piet counted
 c. er wordt beweerd CP
 there is-PASS claimed CP

If we assume, following Chomsky (1995) and later work, that a finite T must check (value and delete) its uninterpretable nominal ϕ -features, and that this requirement can be met by the *it*-expletive but not by the ϕ -defective *there*-expletive, then the question arises how T checks its features in (4), where no nominal element appears to be present for T to agree with and assign NOM to. Let us assume for the moment that T in (4) is subject to a default rule, as stated in (5):

(5) **Default ϕ -valuation**

Dutch, Danish (, ...) have a rule of default valuation [3, sg] and deletion of ϕ on T; English does not.²

This rule takes care of the technical problem raised by (4), while at the same time stating the cross-linguistic variation in our sample of languages, shown in (4), (6), and (7): the English impersonal passives in (7) crash on the undeleted, uninterpretable ϕ -features on T.

- (6) a. at der er blevet danset Danish; Vikner (1995:209/210/243)
 that there has-been-PASS danced
 b. at der er blevet skudt på båden
 that there has-been-PASS shot at the.boat
 c. at der blev sagt CP
 that there was-PASS said CP
 (7) a. * there was danced
 b. * there was counted on Peter
 c. * there was claimed CP

Naturally, the default ϕ -feature valuation rule stipulated in (5) is only one of several ways in which we might deal with impersonal passives; I will discuss a

² In the framework adopted here, default ϕ -valuation will further entail absorption of Nominative Case (assignment of which is contingent on agreement between T and the subject; see, e.g., Chomsky 2000). This would serve to block (5) in constructions other than impersonals.

possible alternative shortly. For now, my purpose is merely to set up a theoretical background which will allow us to reconstruct in a minimalist setting the GB-style argument for the theta-relatedness of the *het*-expletive.

Once we adopt the default rule (5), we can construct arguments to the effect that a Case-distinction between *er* and *het* does not suffice to describe their distribution; we need to assume in addition that *het* is theta-related. Consider first the weather-verb construction in (8)³:

- (8) a. *het regende*
 b. * *er regende*
 it / **there rained*

One obvious way of blocking the *er*-expletive in this construction is along the lines of Chomsky (1995, 2000, 2001). The *it*-expletive *het* in (8a) can receive Case and has the full set of ϕ -features necessary to value and delete those on T. The *there*-expletive does not bear Case, and has an incomplete set of ϕ -features, hence cannot satisfy the requirements of T. However, under the assumption that Dutch has rule (5), this rule should be able to delete the ϕ -features on T in (8b). That leaves theta-theory as another obvious explanation: if weather verbs must assign a (quasi-)theta-role, as proposed in Chomsky (1981, 1986), and *er* cannot bear a theta-role, this will block (8b). The well-formedness of (8a) then supports the conclusion that *het* at least *can* bear a theta-role.

A stronger conclusion can be drawn from expletive selection in impersonal passives.⁴

- (9) a. * *het wordt gedanst*
 it is-PASS danced
 b. * *het wordt op Piet gerekend*
 it is-PASS on Piet counted

- (10) * *it was danced / counted on Peter*

Again, we can show that postulating a difference in Case- and ϕ -features between *er* and *het* is not enough to block (9) and (10). If the only distinction between the *er* and *het* expletives were the absence or presence of a full set of ϕ -features, and the corresponding ability to satisfy the ϕ -requirements of T (and need to receive Case), then it should be possible to license the *het*-expletive in impersonal passives (9), simply by *not* applying the default ϕ -feature valuation rule (which obviously has to be optional): then *het* should be allowed in (9) just as in weather-constructions. Moreover, if English disallows impersonal passives with *there* because it lacks rule (5), nothing should block an impersonal passive with the *it*-expletive, as in (10). And again, theta-theory provides an explanation: passive verbs do not assign an external theta-role, hence *er* is allowed as subject, but *het* is not: then the ill-formedness of (9) and (10) provides evidence that the *het*-expletive *must* bear a theta-role, and the

³ Borrowing from Bolinger (1973), I will mostly refer to such constructions as ‘ambience constructions’ (also ‘ambience verbs’), since ‘weather verb’ does not cover the full range of cases; see notes 5 and 30.

⁴ The discussion below disregards passives with internal CP arguments, as in (4c). Although these are often regarded as impersonal passives, they are not passives of intransitives, and require a separate discussion, as the CP might potentially be involved in feature checking. I postpone discussion of this construction to Section 7.

er-expletive need not. This reconstructs the argument for the theta-relatedness of *het* from Reuland (1983) (see also Bennis 1986:109).

Moreover, Hazout's (2004) method of expletive selection (*it* subcategorizes for a predicate without ϕ -features; *there* for a predicate with ϕ -features) fails. It correctly predicts that *het* / *it* shows up with weather verbs, but it also predicts that *het* should occur with the impersonal passives in (4): the predicate does not appear to contain a nominal argument with ϕ -features.⁵

We now have an argument from impersonal passives that *het* requires a theta-role, but one that goes through only if (5) is the correct way of dealing with the Case/Agreement requirements of T in this construction. I will outline one potential alternative manner of dealing with these checking requirements, which does not support an argument for the theta-relatedness of *het*.

Recall the influential GB-analysis of passives from Jaeggli (1986).

- (11) a. the man T was kissed-PRT
 ↑ NOM ↑ ↑ ACC ↑
 b. er T werd gedanst-PRT
 ↑ ↑ ↑
 NOM ↑
 c. * het T werd gedanst-PRT
 ↑ ↑ ↑
 NOM *

In an ordinary passive such as (11a), the verb assigns its external theta-role to the participial ending; in order to satisfy the visibility requirement, the ending is also assigned Accusative case. As a result, no Accusative is left for the internal argument, which therefore moves to Spec,IP to receive Nominative. A promising extension of this analysis to impersonal passives is the one in Roberts (1985): unergative verbs do not have accusative Case to assign, but Dutch Infl has the ability to assign Nominative to the participial ending, as in (11b); English Infl lacks this ability, blocking (7). Expletive selection can now come from case considerations alone: *het* in (11c) requires Case, but if *het* is assigned Nominative, no Case is left for the participial ending (or vice versa). This reasoning blocks *het* in impersonal passives without any assumptions on the theta-relatedness of *het*; if the analysis can be transposed to a minimalist framework, our argument for the theta-relatedness of *het* is seriously undermined.

⁵ The correct prediction for weather verbs does not extend, furthermore, to ambience constructions with nominal predicates. In the examples in (i), the *there*-expletive should be expected. The same may hold for (ii): assuming that the object has argumental status, it should contribute ϕ -features to the predicate in the same way *a man* does in (iib), on Hazout's analysis.

- (i) het is winter / een koude winter / vrijdag / feest / groot feest / mijn verjaardag
 it is winter / a cold winter / Friday / celebration / big celebration / my birthday
 (ii) a. het regende pijpestelen / klachten
 it rained cats.and.dogs / complaints
 b. there appeared a man

In addition, note that on this analysis Hazout's ϕ -subcategorization approach to expletive selection can also deal with impersonal passives: *er* is selected because of the ϕ -features present on the passive participle.⁷

What the exercise in this section shows is that, as suggested in the literature, impersonal passives provide an argument that *het* needs a theta-role, but they do so only under specific assumptions on feature checking and Case-assignment. The argument would be strengthened if we could provide independent evidence that the default ϕ -valuation rule (5), and not an alternative such as sketched in (12), is the correct analysis of impersonal passives; we will return to this issue in Section 7. More importantly, it would be desirable to find evidence for the theta-relatedness of *het* that is independent of Case/Agreement considerations. I will argue that the data in the next section provide such evidence.

3 Two types of CP selecting intransitives

As discussed at length in Bennis (1986) (see also Koster 1987), Dutch intransitive verbs selecting CP arguments come in two variants:

Dutch	English
(13) a. <i>het schijnt CP</i>	(15) a. <i>it seems CP</i>
<i>it seems CP</i>	b. * <i>there seems CP</i>
b. * <i>er schijnt CP</i>	<i>non-existent:</i>
<i>there seems CP</i>	(16) a. <i>it TURNS-OUT CP</i>
(14) a. <i>het blijkt CP</i>	b. <i>there TURNS-OUT CP</i>
<i>it turns.out CP</i>	
b. <i>er blijkt CP</i>	
<i>there turns.out CP</i>	

⁷ Another analysis of impersonal passives that can be made compatible with Hazout's approach to expletive selection is proposed by Mohr (2002): impersonal passives contain a covert cognate object (say *a dance* in (4a)): this can value ϕ on T (and absorb NOM, again blocking the *het*-expletive without recourse to theta-theory), and provide the ϕ -features for the predicate required under Hazout's analysis. The main problem I see with Mohr's approach is that it does not extend to (4b), an impersonal passive where an internal, non-DP argument is present and the verb never allows an additional DP as an internal argument. Also, the contrast in (i) indicates a lack of evidence from control for the presence of an abstract cognate object:

(i) *er werd *(een dans_i) [zonder PRO_i eerst ingestudeerd te zijn] gedanst*
 'there was (a dance) [without PRO first having been practiced] danced'

An anonymous reviewer proposes this variant of Mohr's analysis: impersonal passives (4), and the variant of (3b) with *er*, contain a covert *het*-expletive in addition to the *er*-expletive. The main conceptual problem with this option is that the existence of a covert expletive cannot easily be disproved or independently motivated (the hypothesis is immune, for instance, to the test in (i)). The main empirical problem is that it requires an explanation for why *het* cannot be overt in these structures: this would yield ill-formed (9) (or a variant of (9) with both *er* and *het*, equally ill-formed). (Conversely, additional assumptions are needed to block the covert version of *het* in ambience constructions and with *schijnen* verbs (see (3a))). Finally, the proposed structures with both *er* and covert *het* violate the Definiteness Restriction.

The first category, exemplified by *schijnen* ‘seem’ in (13), selects *het* as a subject, and disallows the *there*-expletive, just like its English counterpart. The second category, exemplified by *blijken* ‘turn out’ in (14), allows both *het* and *er*. There is no such verb in English.

Several questions arise. First of all, if unvalued ϕ -features on T need to be valued and deleted, how is this accomplished in (14b), which contains no nominal argument and only the *er*-expletive? Secondly, what distinguishes languages like Dutch, which allow *blijken*-type verbs with one CP argument and an *er*-expletive, from languages like English, which do not? The answer I will suggest to these questions is, of course, that Dutch has the default ϕ -valuation rule (5), and English does not. I will discuss this in a little more detail in section 7.

The question that will be central to the discussion in this paper is the following. What distinguishes *blijken*-type verbs (which allow *er*) from *schijnen*-type verbs (which allow only *het*)? Given that Dutch permits the construction in (14b), with an internal CP argument and an *er*-expletive subject, what property could *schijnen* have that could prevent it from appearing in this construction? The answer, I will argue, is that *schijnen* assigns an external quasi-theta-role, which *het* can bear, but *er* cannot.

4 Two theories of *it*

This section presents the empirical evidence that underlies my argument for the theta-relatedness of the *it*-expletive in Dutch *seem* constructions. As a point of departure, I outline two opposing views of the theta-properties of *het* / *it* expletives: those defended by Williams (1994) (and Postal and Pullum 1988) and by Bennis (1986). I will argue that neither proposal can deal successfully with the Dutch facts introduced in the previous section, and with some further properties of the *blijken* and *schijnen* type verbs that I will present.

Let us start by reviewing some contexts in which expletive *it*-elements may occur (for convenience, I will continue to refer to all these elements as ‘*it*-expletives’, even if I do not adopt the position that they are truly expletives, i.e. do not bear theta-roles):

(17)	a. it rained
b. I will wing it
c. I went for it	‘unlinked’ expletives
(18)	a. I regret it CP
b. I count on it CP
c. I consider it deplorable CP	‘CP-linked’ expletives
(19)	a. it drives me nuts CP
b. it was regretted CP	
(20)	it seems CP	

Firstly, there are *it*-expletives which occur by themselves, in the subject position of ambience constructions (17a) (see Bolinger 1973 for an inventory), and in the complement position of verbs or prepositions in various more or less idiomatic

expressions (17b), (17c). Following Postal and Pullum (1988), I will refer to these as ‘unlinked’ expletives.

Secondly, there are *it*-expletives which co-occur with CPs; I will refer to all such cases as ‘CP-linked’ expletives. We can further distinguish, for presentational purposes, two classes of CP-linked expletives: ones that occupy apparent theta-positions, and ones that do not. The expletives in (18) occupy positions (the complement position of V and P; the subject position of a small clause) that typically function as theta-positions, or positions of first merge. Furthermore, the theta-roles that these positions normally receive are in fact being assigned in these examples (and are semantically associated with the CPs co-occurring with the expletives: compare, e.g., (18b) with *I count on Peter*). It therefore seems initially plausible that these *it*-expletives are theta-marked. The subject-expletives in (19) are different in that they clearly do not occupy a theta-position; whether or not they originate in one remains to be seen. The *seem*-construction (20) which is our primary focus also falls into this category.

Various potential ways of dealing with CP-linked expletives have been proposed. One option is that all CP-linked expletives are true theta-less expletives (Williams 1994), as might seem initially plausible for (19) and (20). I argue in Section 4.1 that this approach fails to give us a handle on the *schijnen* / *blijken* contrast. Another option is that all CP-linked expletives receive regular theta-roles (Bennis 1986), as appears initially plausible for the cases in (18). This might provide a basis for analyzing the *schijnen* / *blijken* contrast (section 4.2), but I argue in Section 4.3 that it fails to explain the differences between cases like (19) and (20), and some additional differences between *schijnen* and *blijken*, which I will present. My proposal (Section 5) will be that, whereas all CP-linked expletives receive a theta-role, in some cases this is the quasi-role that is commonly attributed to the unlinked expletives in (17).

4.1 Theory 1: all CP-linked expletives are true expletives

At one end of the spectrum of potential analyses of CP-linked expletives we find the one advocated by Williams (1994:131ff), assumed also in Postal and Pullum (1988): all CP-linked expletives are true expletives, not bearing any kind of theta-role. Postal & Pullum propose several tests for detecting expletives: they do not bind emphatic anaphors, cannot function as subjects in *tough*-constructions, cannot coordinate, and cannot function as the *of*-complement of a nominalization. Postal & Pullum claim that all CP-linked expletives uniformly pass these tests; in particular, the CP-linked expletives in (18), which appear in typically theta-marked positions, also qualify as expletives by these test. If so, no distinction between (18) on the one hand and (19), (20) on the other is necessary.⁸ This is not the place to examine Postal & Pullum’s

⁸ Postal & Pullum’s position on whether expletives can be theta-marked is actually somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, they state that a version of their argument will also go through if expletives *are* theta-marked, and that they assume that expletives are not theta-marked merely for the sake of argument, because it is so assumed in the theories they are attempting to disprove. They even provide an example of a CP-linked expletive which they suspect does receive a theta-role. However, when it comes to CP-linked expletives, it seems to me that their argument collapses if these bear a real theta-role, the one semantically associated with the linked CP: then their examples do not show that real expletives can occur in subcategorized positions.

tests; I am interested here in determining whether an analysis such as this can deal with expletive selection in Dutch.⁹

Can we account for the expletive selection properties of *schijnen* and *blijken* type verbs, if all CP-linked expletives are real expletives? Theta-theory then cannot distinguish between *het* and *er*. One alternative is to rely on a distinction in Case/ ϕ -features. This works well enough for expletive selection in existential and weather-constructions:

- (21) a. there / *it T_ϕ is [someone in the room]
b. it / *there T_ϕ is snowing

If *it* checks Case but *there* does not, *it* is blocked in (21a) as it would absorb the Case necessary for *someone*. If Case/ ϕ on T must be checked, *there* is blocked in (21b).

How can this Case/ ϕ -based approach be extended to CP-linked expletives?

- (22) a. it / *there T_ϕ seems CP
b. it / *there T_ϕ was reported CP

One option is that *there* is blocked in (22a) and (22b) because CP cannot check Case (see, e.g., Safir 1985). Another option is to postulate that English *there* requires a nominal associate (Chomsky 1981, 1991). Yet another option is that *there* subcategorizes for a predicate with ϕ -features (Hazout 2004). But none of these solutions can account for the contrast between (13) and (14) (repeated):

- (13) *het* / **er* *schijnt* CP
it / **there* *seems* CP

- (14) *het* / *er* *blijkt* CP
it / *there* *turns.out* CP

If *er* (or the CP) manages to check Case and satisfy the requirements of T in (14), why does it fail to do so in (13)? Or if *er* fails to form a chain with the CP in (13), what does it form a chain with in (14)?

The simple fact appears to be that the constructions do not differ in any relevant way: they contain the same Case- and ϕ -features. One might attempt to introduce such a difference, which could be exploited by the Case/ ϕ -approach, by postulating that *schijnen* combines with a T that is not satisfied by *er*, and *blijken* combines with

⁹ I see three problems with Postal & Pullum's tests. Firstly, P&P do not explain why it is that expletives pass these tests (the tests only constitute an 'informal syntactic diagnostic'), so that potentially, the tests might be for something else. For instance, idiom chunks also do not function as subjects of *tough*-constructions (**the shit is tough to prevent from hitting the fan*; see Chomsky 1981:309); similarly, coordination is blocked also for weak or clitic pronouns that do receive theta-roles (Cardinaletti and Starke 1996). Secondly, other, equally plausible tests yield the opposite result; see the discussion of Bennis (1986) below. Finally, P&P do not present the results of their tests for all categories distinguished here in (18) to (20); whether the results generalize, and how they can be extended to Dutch, remains to be seen. Embedding (18b) in a *tough*-construction in Dutch does not, e.g., appear impossible; cf. *het is fijn om over te speculeren dat Jan de wedstrijd zou kunnen winnen* 'it is nice to speculate about that J. might be able to win the match'.

Williams (1994:133) provides one additional test: CP-linked expletives are blocked in pseudo-passive **It was talked about that John had arrived* (hence are not thematically related to the CP). But *talk about* also disfavors the CP-linked expletive in the active voice. Williams also argues that unlinked expletives must be considered not theta-marked, as this would explain, by Burzio's generalization, why weather verbs cannot be transitive; however, this appears to be factually incorrect: see footnote 30, and (iia) in footnote 5.

a different T that is. However, raising variants of these and related examples show that it is the position of first merge of the expletive that fixes its choice, not the position where it checks its features. *Schijnen* allows an *er* subject, if it originates in a position that allows *er*; *blijken* blocks *er* if its position of first merge does:

- (23) a. *het* / *er* T_φ *schijnt* [IP t_{expl} *te blijken* CP]
 it / *there seems* *to turn.out* CP
 b. *het* / **er* T_φ *blijkt* [IP t_{expl} *te schijnen* CP]
 it / **there turns.out* *to seem* CP
 c. *het* / **er* *blijkt* [IP t_{expl} *te regenen*]
 it / **there turns.out* *to rain*

I conclude that the Dutch expletive selection facts are not easily accounted for if all CP-linked *het*-expletives are like the *er*-expletive in not bearing a theta-role.

4.2 Theory 2: CP-linked expletives are not expletives

At the opposite end of the spectrum is Bennis (1986), who argues that the *it*-elements in (17)–(20) all bear a theta-role. This approach seems particularly appropriate, of course, for the CP-linked expletives in (18), repeated in (24) below, which appear to have been base-generated in theta-positions. The question of how the CPs come to be semantically associated with the theta-roles assigned to the linked expletives has received various answers in the literature. In Rosenbaum (1967), e.g., the CP is generated as a modifier of the NP headed by *it* and then extraposed. Bennis (1986) proposes that the CP is generated as an adjunct binding the pronoun; this makes the pronoun a regular Case-marked and theta-marked variable operator-bound by the CP. The details lie outside the scope of this paper, but I will assume below that some such method of transmitting the theta-role is possible. I will refer to a CP-linked expletive that receives and transmits a theta-role in this way as a ‘CP-placeholder’, and use co-superscripting as a theory-neutral notational device to indicate the relation, as shown in (24):

- (24) a. I regret [DP_{+θ} it]ⁱ CPⁱ CP-placeholders
 b. I count on [DP_{+θ} it]ⁱ CPⁱ
 c. I consider [DP_{+θ} it]ⁱ deplorable CPⁱ

According to Williams (1994), then, there exist no CP-placeholders; according to Bennis, all CP-linked expletives are CP-placeholders. Like Postal and Pullum (1988), Bennis presents some tests which, in his case, supposedly show that CP-linked expletives are arguments: they can control PRO; they can bind parasitic gaps; they can bind anaphors.¹⁰ Again, I shall not discuss these tests, but attempt to use the *schijnen* / *blijken* contrast as a new one. The question therefore is whether Bennis’ approach can explain the Dutch expletive selection facts.

Bennis (1986) is in a better position than Williams (1994) to explain the *schijnen* / *blijken* contrast: the assumption that *het*-expletives, unlike *er*-expletives, function as arguments, provides an additional means of describing the differences in their

¹⁰ Like Postal and Pullum (1988), Bennis does not demonstrate that all his tests yield the same result for all instances of *it*-expletives distinguished here (cf. footnote 9 above). For instance, Chomsky (1981:323f) showed that weather-*it* can control (*it sometimes rains after PRO snowing*) but claimed that the *it*-subject of *seem* cannot (on the other hand, Hornstein 1999, fn. 29, allows *it seemed CP without PRO appearing CP*).

distribution. Bennis discusses the *schijnen* / *blijken* contrast at length. His analysis of the *blijken*-case (14) is as follows.

- (25) a. [IP hetⁱ [VP blijkt t_{het}]] CPⁱ “*blijken* (cf. (14)) c-selects DP or CP”
 it *turns.out* CP
 b. [IP er [VP blijkt CP]]
 there *turns.out* CP

Blijken has one internal, propositional theta-role to assign. In (25a), it assigns this role to a CP-placeholder, which subsequently moves to the subject position for Case; this yields the *het*-variant. Alternatively, *blijken* can assign its theta-role to a CP directly, as shown in (25b), in which case *er* is inserted to satisfy (Bennis’ variant of) the EPP; this yields the *er*-variant. The analysis of the *blijken* / *schijnen* contrast I will propose in Section 5 below will follow Bennis’ analysis for the *blijken* case given in (25). But I will not adopt Bennis’ solution for the *schijnen*-case (13), given in (26):

- (26) a. [IP hetⁱ [VP schijnt t_{het}]] CPⁱ “*schijnen* (cf. (13)) c-selects only DP”
 it *seems* CP
 b. * [IP er [VP schijnt CP]]
 there *seems* CP

The *het*-variant (26a) receives the same analysis as the *het*-variant with *blijken*: *het* is again a CP-placeholder. Bennis blocks the *er*-variant in (26b) by assuming that *schijnen* subcategorizes for a DP-complement; therefore, only the derivation with the CP-placeholder pronoun is allowed. Clearly, the appeal to subcategorization is not available in a Postal & Pullum type approach, which has to treat the CP itself as the argument in every case.

In the next section, I will discuss a major problem attending Bennis’ proposal; here, I want to make some initial observations that shed doubt on his analysis of the Dutch expletive selection facts.

First of all, Bennis must treat both *schijnen* and *blijken* as ergative verbs that assign one, internal theta-role. Ergativity tests (see in particular Hoekstra 1984:176ff) do not apply easily to these verbs; but as far as can be determined, *blijken* is indeed ergative, but verbs of the *schijnen* category (which includes *lijken*/ *geleken*, in (28),(30)) are not:

- (27) *het* is *gebleken* CP
 it *is-PERF* *turned.out* CP
- (28) a. *het* heeft *geleken* [CP alsof ...]
 it *has-PERF* *seemed* *as if* ...
 b. *het* heeft *erop geleken* CP
 it *has-PERF* *like.it seemed* CP
 c. *Jan* heeft *altijd dom geleken*
 J. *has-PERF* *always stupid seemed*
- (29) a. *de* *gebleken* *feiten*
 the *turned.out* *facts*
 b. *het* *mooi* *gebleken* *boek*
 the *beautiful* *turned.out* *book*

- (30) a. * de geleken feiten
 the seemed facts
 b. * het mooi geleken boek / * [_{DP} the beautiful seemed book]

Blijken takes the *be*-auxiliary *zijn* in the perfect tense in (27); those *schijnen*-type verbs that can appear in the perfect tense take the *have*-auxiliary *hebben*; see (28).¹¹ Furthermore, the past participle of *blijken* can be used as a prenominal modifier, either by itself (29) or when selecting a small clause; the past participles of *schijnen*-class verbs cannot; see (30).¹² These tests are far from conclusive; but at the very least, ergativity of the *schijnen*-class would be hard to prove.

Clearer evidence exists against Bennis' claim that the *schijnen*-variant subcategorizes for DPs, and against CPs. Some observations seem to confirm it:

- (31) a. CP blijkt t_{CP} nu wel
 CP *turns.out now truly*
 b. * CP schijnt t_{CP} nu wel
 CP *seems now truly*
 c. * CP seems to many people

Blijken in (31a) allows its CP argument to appear itself as preverbal subject, without an expletive. *Schijnen* in (31b) and its English counterpart in (31c) do not allow this. This is as predicted, if *schijnen* can assign its theta-role only to a DP.

However, when we attempt to combine these verbs with DP arguments, a different pattern emerges. While *blijken* can take a DP argument, which can move to subject position or remain VP-internal, the corresponding constructions with *schijnen* are ill-formed:

- (32) a. zijn onschuld is gebleken
 his innocence is turned.out
 'he has turned out to be innocent'
 b. er zijn geen tekortkomingen gebleken
 there are no flaws turned.out
 'no flaws have turned up'
 c. * zijn onschuld schijnt
 his innocence seems
 d. * er schijnen geen tekortkomingen
 there seem no flaws

¹¹ This test is far from uncontroversial. It has been argued, in particular by Zaenen (1993), that auxiliary selection is determined by telicity, not by ergativity; this would also describe the facts in (27) and (28): *blijken* is telic, the *schijnen*-verbs are atelic. However, the claim that all and only telic verbs take *be* is not correct: many (presumably unergative) telic verbs (e.g., *zegevieren* 'win') take *have*. Still, one could maintain that *only* telic verbs take *be*; e.g., Hoekstra and Mulder (1990) proposed that all and only telic ergative verbs take *be*; this gives the correct auxiliary selection in (27) / (28) even if all *blijken* and *schijnen* verbs are ergative, as in Bennis' analysis. See however (51d) below for an atelic ergative verb taking *be*.

¹² It would be hard, however, to maintain that (30b) is due to unergativity of *lijken*, since we are dealing with the raising-variant.

It appears as though *schijnen* c-selects against DPs, rather than for them. Bennis suggests that (32c), (32d) are blocked because *schijnen*, unlike *blijken*, only assigns a propositional theta-role. However, other verbs that strictly require propositional arguments (e.g., *zeggen* ‘say’) allow a broad range of DP-arguments (*this*, *that*, *something*, *the same*, etc.): all these are blocked with *schijnen*, as they are with English *seem*. Bennis (1986:115) provides only two examples of DP-arguments with *schijnen*-verbs:

- (33) a. dat lijkt me ook
 that seems to.me too
 b. ?? het schijnt
 it seems

I find these examples unconvincing. (33b) is ill-formed to me (at best, it’s elliptical for *het schijnt zo* ‘it seems thus’, where *schijnt* selects a small clause). (33a) is a fixed expression; almost any other DP is disallowed. Another choice of *schijnen*-verb also leads to ill-formedness in (33): the constructions are not productive.¹³ In the next section, we will explore several constructions which freely and productively allow DPs to stand in for propositions, and find that they cannot do so with *schijnen*-verbs. I will argue that Bennis’ claim that all CP-linked expletives are CP-placeholders cannot be maintained in view of the *schijnen* / *blijken* contrast.¹⁴

¹³ See Section 6.1 for discussion of Slifting, a construction which allows the CP argument to be suppressed, leading to wellformed examples that contain the string (33b).

¹⁴ There is one other analysis of the *schijnen* / *blijken* contrast in the literature. Vikner (1995), following Moro (1997), proposes that *schijnen* verbs always select a Small Clause, with the CP as subject and *het* as the predicate which undergoes raising to subject, as shown in (ia) and (ib) (whereas *blijken* can also select an internal CP argument and then allows *er* in the subject position):

- (i) a. it seems [_{SC} CP t_{it}]
 b. het schijnt [_{SC} CP t_{het}]
 c. * de waarheid_i schijnt [_{SC} CP t_i]
 the truth seems CP
 d. * het blijft CP
 it remains CP

However, this approach predicts that other NP/DP predicates should also be allowed in the subject position of *seem CP*, contrary to fact (see (ic)), and that *het* should also appear as a raised predicate with other verbs that select Small Clauses, such as *blijven* ‘remain’, also contrary to fact (see (id)). Another problem is the obligatoriness of predicate raising in (ia), (ib). For further arguments against Moro’s approach, and comparison with Hazout (2004)/Williams (1994), see Hartmann (2005) and references cited there.

An anonymous reviewer proposes this variant of Moro’s and Vikner’s analysis: *schijnen* selects a Small Clause; *het* is the CP-placeholder subject of the SC; the predicate is a deleted *zo* ‘thus’ or *zo te zijn* ‘to be thus’. This blocks the *er*-expletive because (for unknown reasons) *er* is blocked with small clauses with *zo* (not with some other adjectives). There is, however, no independent evidence for the presence of this hidden predicate. On the contrary: there are verbs that select Small Clauses with CP-placeholder subject and *zo*-predicate, but they disallow deletion of *zo*:

- (ii) het blijft / wordt *(zo) CP
 it remains / becomes so CP

Secondly, the analysis presupposes that *het* with *schijnen* is a CP-placeholder, and predicts it should behave accordingly; in the next section I argue that this is not the case (see note 18 for the reviewer’s position on this).

4.3 Two classes of CP-linked expletives

What the two approaches to CP-linked *het*-expletives discussed in the preceding sections have in common, is that they treat all such expletives alike: for Williams (1994), all CP-linked expletives are real expletives; for Bennis (1986), all CP-linked expletives are CP-placeholders. This section discusses four constructions in which not all CP-linked expletives behave alike. In subsequent sections, I will propose an alternative analysis which takes this non-uniformity among CP-linked expletives into account.

The first construction that differentiates among CP-linked expletives is the pseudo-clefting construction. Consider first the *it*-expletives in (18), which occupy apparent theta-positions, hence are particularly susceptible to an analysis as CP-placeholders. These are in free variation with the pseudo-clefting operator:

- (34) a. what I regret t_{what} is CP
 b. what I'm counting on t_{what} is CP
 c. what I consider t_{what} deplorable is CP

This is hardly surprising: if a DP functioning as CP-placeholder can satisfy the relevant Case-, theta-, and c-selection requirements in these positions, then a DP *wh*-trace should do so as well. In fact, what we are really testing for is whether a DP with a propositional interpretation is allowed in these positions. For the same reason, relativization is equally allowed here¹⁵:

- (35) CP, which I regret

When we apply this test to CP-linked expletives in subject position (the cases in (19) and (20)), we find that their behavior is not uniform. The examples in (19) allow pseudo-clefting and relativization as well:

- (36) a. what t_{what} drives me nuts is CP
 b. what t_{what} was regretted t_{what} was CP

But the *it*-expletive with *seem*-verbs cannot be replaced with a *wh*-trace (the observation is due to Bresnan 1972:136):

- (37) a. * what seems is CP
 b. * what appears is CP
 c. * CP, which appears to me

What this shows is that not all positions in which CP-linked expletives appear should be treated alike. If the expletives in (18) and (19) are indeed CP-placeholders, as seems plausible, then the *it*-expletive with *seem* verbs must be something else: a true expletive, or a quasi-argument. For if *seem* could combine with a CP-placeholder (a DP bearing Case and a propositional theta-role), how could (37) possibly be blocked?

¹⁵ For convenience, the English examples with relativization use CP as abbreviation for a main clause.

Turning to Dutch, we find the same pattern. The Dutch counterparts of (18) and (19) also allow pseudo-clefting (and relativization):

- (38) a. wat ik _{t_{wat}} betreur is CP
 what I regret is CP
 b. waar ik [_{PP} t_{waar} op] reken is CP
 what I on count is CP
 c. wat ik _{t_{wat}} aannemelijk vind is CP
 what I plausible find is CP
- (39) a. wat mij verbaasde was CP
 what me surprised was CP
 b. wat betreurd wordt is CP
 what regretted is-PASS is CP

But when we apply this test to the *schijnen* and *blijken* verbs, we discover a difference between the two verb types:

- (40) a. * wat (er) schijnt is CP
 what (there) seems is CP
 b. * CP, wat (er) schijnt, ...
 ‘CP, which (there) seems, ...’
 c. wat (er) blijkt is CP
 what (there) turns.out is CP
 d. CP, wat gebleken is, ...
 CP, which turned.out is-PERF, ...

Like its English counterpart, *schijnen* does not allow pseudo-clefting or relativization on its subject position; but *blijken* does. It follows that Bennis’ (1986) analysis described in Section 4.2 must be wrong, as it treats the CP-linked expletives with both verb classes uniformly as CP-placeholders. The fact that *schijnen*-verbs cannot take *wh*-traces as arguments strongly suggests that they should not be able to take CP-placeholders either. It follows that the *it*-expletive with *schijnen* must be something else: a true expletive, or a quasi-argument. Furthermore, Bennis’s claim that *schijnen*-verbs subcategorize for DPs seems falsified: the facts in (40), like those in (32) above, rather suggest the reverse.

An approach along the lines of Williams (1994) and Postal and Pullum (1988), which does not postulate CP-placeholders with *seem*-type verbs (or anywhere else), might still be made to work, if certain stipulations are allowed. For subject positions which allow both *it*-expletives and *wh*-traces (the subject position of *was regretted* or *blijken*) one may suppose that the *wh*-trace reaches it by A-movement while the expletive is merged in it. For non-subject positions that allow both *it*-expletives and *wh*-traces (the object position of *regret*), one must suppose that the position is optionally theta-marked. Finally, when a subject position allows only the expletive, not the *wh*-trace (the subject position of *schijnen* / *seem*), one must somehow prevent a *wh*-trace from moving there; e.g., by postulating that *seem* c-selects against DP arguments: this will block (37). This also allows a description of the *schijnen* / *blijken* contrast in (40); but the expletive selection properties of these verbs described in Section 3 remain out of reach.

A second test that distinguishes among different CP-linked expletive positions involves right-dislocation. CPs in right-dislocation, associated with a pronominal in argument position, can be distinguished by intonation from CPs associated with a CP-linked expletive:

- (41) a. I like him, DP
 b. I said it, CP
 c. I regret it, CP
 d. I regret it CP

The right-dislocation structure, also allowed with DPs (41a) and other categories, and with verbs that resist CP-linked expletives (41b), requires a ‘comma-intonation,’ involving at least an Intonational Phrase boundary. Thus we have both (41c) with a CP in right-dislocation and (41d) with a CP-linked expletive. We can now construct the minimal pairs in (42):

- (42) a. it seems CP
 b. * it seems, CP
 c. it is believed CP
 d. it is believed, CP

The ill-formedness of (42b) strongly suggests that *seem* cannot take just a DP argument. This entails that the CP-linked expletive in (42a) cannot be a CP-placeholder (if it were, we would be forced to assume that *seem* can take a DP-argument, but only if it somehow ‘transmits’ its theta-role to a CP; it is implausible that a verb could impose such a requirement on its argument). Consider now the Dutch pattern:

- (43) a. het lijkt CP
 b. * het lijkt, CP
 c. het blijkt CP
 d. het is gebleken / ? blijkt, CP

We find the same pattern as before: the *schijnen* verb in (43a,b) does not behave like the *blijken* verb in (43c,d); Bennis’ uniform treatment of the two verb types must be on the wrong track.¹⁶ The ill-formedness of right-dislocation with *schijnen* verbs suggests that the CP-linked expletive with these verbs is not a CP-placeholder, hence must be something else: a real expletive, or a quasi-argument.

A related test makes use of focusing. If a CP-linked expletive is a CP-placeholder, an argument bearing a theta-role, one expects that it should be possible to place it in focus, provided that the expletive pronoun is replaced with a variant that allows stress.¹⁷ We expect the same for a pronominal associated with

¹⁶ Many speakers find constructions with the verb *blijken* (somewhat) marked in the present tense, and prefer the perfect tense. This does not, however, hold for all verbs in this class (e.g., *opvallen* ‘strike’).

¹⁷ *Het* is a weak pronoun and cannot be stressed or contrastively topicalized on any usage; the strong (demonstrative) variants *dit* and *hier* in (44), (45) (not allowed on the quasi-argument usage) can be stressed (and topicalized: *hier reken ik wel op*, CP ‘here I count PART on, CP’). It is not clear whether the strong variants can be CP-placeholders; perhaps these examples all involve right-dislocation.

a CP in right-dislocation. We can facilitate the test by associating the pronominal with a focus-particle. This is allowed with typical CP-placeholders:

- (44) a. Ik betreur alleen dit CP
 I regret only this CP
 b. Ik reken alleen hier op CP
 I count only this_[+R] on CP
 c. I vind alleen dit aannemelijk CP
 I find only this plausible CP

Focusing is allowed as well for those subject expletives that behave like CP-placeholders for the earlier tests:

- (45) a. alleen dit verbaasde mij maar CP
 only this surprised me PART CP
 b. alleen dit werd betreurd CP
 only this was-PASS regretted CP

As (44) and (45) show, focusing is allowed in the same constructions that allow clefting and relativization. The same possibility exists in right-dislocation structures:

- (46) a. Ik zag alleen dit, het nieuwe huis van Jan
 ‘I saw only this, John’s new house.’
 b. Ik vroeg alleen dit, of Jan een nieuw huis ging kopen
 ‘I asked only this, whether John would buy a new house.’

I see no reliable way of determining whether the examples in (44) and (45) involve CP-linked expletives or right-dislocation: the intonational distinction is blurred in the context of focusing. But the contrast in (47) shows that both analyses must be blocked with *schijnen* verbs, which, unlike *blijken*-verbs, do not allow focusing:

- (47) a. alleen dit is maar gebleken CP
 only this is-PERF PART turned.out CP
 b. * alleen dit schijnt maar, CP
 only this seems PART CP
 c. * dat alleen dit mij maar toeschijnt CP
 that only this me PART seems CP
 ‘that only this seems to me CP’

I conclude again that the CP-linked expletive subject of *seem*-verbs cannot be a CP-placeholder, unlike the subject of *blijken* verbs.

In summary, we have inspected four contexts in which DPs bearing a propositional theta-role are freely allowed: pseudo-clefting, relativization, right-dislocation of CP, and focusing. We have seen that Dutch *blijken* allows such a propositional DP as its subject. But we have also seen that *schijnen* and *seem* do not allow such a propositional DP-argument. It follows that the *het/it* subject of *schijnen* and *seem* does not bear a propositional role (is not a CP-placeholder). It must be something else: a true expletive, or a quasi-argument. I conclude that Bennis’ uniform treatment of all CP-linked expletives as CP-placeholders fails. And since we had already decided in the previous section that the *het*-expletive with *schijnen* must

also not be treated as a pure expletive, we are now left with only one option: that it is a quasi-argument. I will take this up in the next section.¹⁸

5 Deriving the *schijnen* / *blijken* contrast

Table 1 summarizes the differences (seen so far) between the two verb classes. I propose that we can derive these facts by means of the following assumption¹⁹:

(48) The *het*-expletive must bear a theta-role, the *er*-expletive cannot.

In combination with the selectional properties of the *blijken* and *schijnen* verbs, this assumption yields the following patterns.

(49) *blijken*: ergative, internal DP or CP argument

- a. DP blijkt t_{DP}
- b. *er* blijkt DP
- c. *wat* (*er*) blijkt t_{wat} is CP
- d. *het*ⁱ blijkt t_{het} CPⁱ
- e. *er* blijkt CP
- f. CP blijkt t_{CP}

Blijken assigns one internal theta-role. This theta-role may be assigned to a DP, which may then move to Spec,TP (49a) or remain in situ, with an *er* expletive inserted for EPP (49b). As a special case, the argument DP may be a *wh*-operator in a pseudo-clefting (49c) or relativization construction; this operator may also undergo A-movement itself, or *er* may be inserted. In another special case, the DP is a CP-placeholder (49d), which moves to Spec,TP (the Definiteness Restriction rules out insertion of an *er*-expletive here). Alternatively, the internal theta-role may be assigned to a CP, in which case EPP may again be satisfied by an *er*-expletive (49e) or by the CP itself (49f).²⁰ The right-dislocation example (43d) and the focusing example (47a) fall out as special cases of (49a).

¹⁸ An anonymous reviewer proposes a different account of the properties of *schijnen*-verbs discussed in this section. *Het* with these verbs is a CP-placeholder, but the verbs are semantically not 'rich' enough to function as predicates by themselves; this blocks, e.g., (40a), (40b), (43b), (47b). However, in the absence of a theory of such semantic deficiency, and a method of measuring semantic richness, I feel this hypothesis is as yet insufficiently specific. As it stands, it does not seem to explain why *blijken* behaves differently, and why adding modifiers (or coordinated verbs) to a VP with a *schijnen*-verb does not improve the relevant structures (**wat t tegenwoordig wel degelijk schijnt is CP* 'what nowadays quite surely seems is CP'), while having a CP linked to the CP-placeholder does (as in (3a)).

¹⁹ (48) is not intended as an exhaustive statement of the differences between *er* and *het*. It is likely that they also differ in Case- and ϕ -features. My argument here is that, over and above any difference in Case and ϕ -features, *er* and *het* must minimally differ also in their theta-properties. See note 32 for a brief discussion of the option that *er* does check Case.

²⁰ Another analysis for (49f) is that the argument is a covert DP, associated with a topicalized CP, as in Koster (1978).

Table 1 Two types of verbs

<i>Blijken</i>	<i>Schijnen / seem</i>
<i>er</i> and <i>het</i>	only <i>het</i> / <i>it</i>
pseudo-clefting, relativization, right-dislocation, focusing	no pseudo-clefting, relativization, right-dislocation, focusing
CP in subject-position	no CP in subject-position
ergative	unergative

(50) *schijnen / seem*: quasi-transitive, internal CP argument, external quasi-argument

- a. *het* schijnt CP
- b. * *er* schijnt CP
- c. * *het* schijnt DP (including pseudo-clefting, with DP = t_{wh})
- d. * DP schijnt t_{DP} (including pseudo-clefting, with DP = t_{wh})
- e. * CP schijnt t_{CP}

Now consider the *schijnen* verb in (50a) with a CP-linked *het*-expletive subject. We have determined in the previous section that this *het*-expletive cannot be analyzed as a CP-placeholder. But it also cannot be analyzed as a pure expletive: our discussion of Williams (1994) and Postal and Pullum (1988) in Section 4.1 has led us to conclude that this would not provide a basis for distinguishing the *het*-expletive from the *er*-expletive in such a way as to block *er* from appearing with this verb in (50b). This leaves us with the third option: the *it*-expletive is the quasi-argument that also appears with weather verbs; *schijnen* assigns both an internal propositional role and an external quasi-theta-role.²¹

We can now derive the properties of the *schijnen* class as follows. (50a) with *het*-expletive allows both theta-roles to be assigned; (50b) is blocked because *er* cannot bear a theta-role. The occurrence of a DP internal argument can be blocked in several ways. One option is that *schijnen* c-selects against DPs; another option is that *schijnen* does not assign Accusative (the traditional assumption; see, e.g., Safir 1985:72). The data considered here provide no grounds for deciding between these options. Both options block (50c), as well as (50d). On the first option, the internal DP-argument is blocked at first merge in both examples. On the second option, the internal DP argument violates the Case filter in (50c), because *het* absorbs Nominative; but omitting *het*, as in (50d), is not a solution, since this yields a theta-theory violation. Absence of relativization and pseudo-clefting, and absence of right-dislocation and focusing fall out as special cases. (50e) with the CP in subject position is also blocked by theta-theory, and perhaps by c-selection on Koster's (1978) account. Finally, we derive the fact that *schijnen* does not behave

²¹ The idea is not entirely new: Safir (1985:356:footnote 65) suggests, in view of (50b), that "[p]erhaps, the expletive subject of *seem* in some languages is a quasi-argument." For Safir, the alternative analysis as a CP-placeholder was not an option. Schwartz (1972:70) on the other hand proposed that *it* in English *it seems* CP is also the *it* of ambience constructions.

as an ergative verb; it is in fact a quasi-transitive one. I will return to some technical issues involved in this analysis in section 6.2.²²

Several predictions follow. First, since the appearance of the *er*-expletive is conditional only on the absence of an external theta-role (recall that, for whatever reason—perhaps rule (5)—the Case/ ϕ -deficiency of *er* does not block its appearance in the relevant construction in Dutch), we predict that, whenever we can determine independently that a verb assigns no external role, *er* should be allowed. This should hold, first of all, for ergative verbs; (51) shows that the class of ergative CP-selecting verbs is not limited to *blijken*.

- (51) a. *er* / *het* is (uit onderzoek) naar voren gekomen CP
 there / *it* is-PERF (from research) to.the.front come CP
 ‘it has emerged from research CP’
 b. *er* is uit mijn onderzoek gekomen CP
 there is-PERF from my research come CP
 ‘it has emerged from my research CP’
 c. *er* / *het* is mij opgevallen CP
 there / *it* is-PERF me struck CP
 ‘it has struck me CP’
 d. *er* / *het* is mij bijgebleven CP
 there / *it* is-PERF me remained CP
 ‘I remember CP’

By auxiliary selection and adjective formation, these are ergative verbs; a subclass for which we typically expect ergative behavior are the experiencer verbs in (51c),

²² There are two further distinctions between the *blijken* and *schijnen* verbs. First, the *er*-expletive with *blijken* may be dropped when some other element is available to satisfy (the Dutch counterpart of) the EPP (as is also the case in impersonal passives). But theta-marked *het* with *schijnen*, like *het* in ambience constructions, does not allow this variant (one anonymous reviewer feels *het* can sometimes be dropped with a *schijnen*-verb, but I (and my informants) disagree with this judgment, which contradicts Bennis 1986):

- (i) a. *mij* is gebleken CP
 me is turned.out CP
 b. uit onderzoek blijkt CP
 from research turns.out CP
 (ii) * op grond van onderzoek lijkt CP
 on grounds of research seems CP

The data in (i) and (ii) do not differentiate further between the theories discussed here (for Bennis, (ii) violates the c-selection properties of *schijnen*; a Williams-style analysis fails for the same reason it fails on (13) and (14)).

Of greater potential interest are the data in (iii), brought to my attention by an anonymous reviewer. Bennis (1986:104) (see also references cited there) argues that a CP that is linked to a CP-placeholder is opaque for extraction (presumably because it is an adjunct). On my assumptions, this predicts that *blijken* should allow extraction only when *het* is absent, whereas *schijnen* should allow extraction with *het* because *het* with *schijnen* is not a CP-placeholder. This is confirmed by the reviewer’s judgments:

- (iii) *de man die het schijnt* / **blijkt* dat Jan gezien heeft
 the man who it seems / turns.out that Jan seen has

I tend to agree, but Bennis (p. 113) presents different judgments, so the issue requires further research.

(51d). These verbs all allow the *er*-expletive, as predicted. A second class of verbs that allows us to test this prediction are passives:

- (52) *er* / *het* werd betreurd CP
there / it is-PASS regretted CP

As is well known, passive CP-selecting verbs in Dutch also allow the *er*-expletive; this is predicted by my account, as they assign no external role. I return to this construction in Section 7.

The second prediction is the following. When a CP-selecting verb allows *er*, it does not assign an external role. Hence, if we find the *het*-expletive with such a verb, it cannot be the quasi-argument. It also cannot be a pure expletive, since by hypothesis every *het*-expletive must bear a theta-role: there is no pure expletive *het* (assumption (48)). Hence, it must be a CP-placeholder. As a result, it must be in free variation with pseudo-clefting and relativization, and allow focusing. This prediction is correct as far as I can tell. It is illustrated in (53) and (54) for an ergative, ergative experiencer, and passive verb:

- (53) a. *wat uit onderzoek naar voren is gekomen* is CP
what from research to the.front is-PERF come is CP
 'what has emerged from research is CP'
 b. *wat mij is opgevallen/bijgebleven* is CP
what me is-PERF struck / remained is CP
 'what has struck me/ what I remember is CP'
 c. *wat (er) aangenomen wordt* is CP
what (there) assumed is-PASS is CP
- (54) a. *alleen dit is uit onderzoek naar voren gekomen* CP
only this is-PERF from research to the.front come CP
 'only this has emerged from research CP'
 b. *alleen dit is mij bijgebleven* CP
only this is-PERF me remained CP
 'I remember only this CP'
 c. *alleen dit werd betreurd* CP
only this was-PASS regretted CP

This prediction is in fact an instance of a more general constraint. We predict that no verb can pattern as in (55).

- (55) proscribed pattern:
- a. *er* V CP
 - b. *het* V CP
 - c. * *wat* t_{wat} V is CP

Any two of the structures in (55) blocks the third. For instance, when *het* in (55b) occurs, but the pseudo-clefting *wh*-trace does not (55c) (as is the case with *schijnen*-verbs), *het* must be a quasi-argument, hence *er* in (55a) should be blocked (as indeed it is). I am not aware of any verbs that show the pattern in (55).

It follows, furthermore, that we can check this prediction: there is no ergative (or passive) verb V which patterns as follows.

(56) proscribed pattern:

- a. het V CP
- b. * wat t_{wat} V is CP

Verbs like V in (56) do exist (*schijnen* / *seem*) but these are not ergative so they can assign an external role, making the *het* subject a quasi-argument. If V is ergative or passive, the quasi-argument is blocked; and since there is no pure expletive *het*, (56a) can occur only with CP-placeholder *het*; but this leaves no factor (such as c-selection against DP) that could block (56b). I know of no ergative/passive verb that patterns as in (56).²³

A final prediction is illustrated in (57):

- (57) a. het^i werd t_{het} betreurd CPⁱ
it was-PASS regretted CP
- b. Ik redeneerde (*het) CP
*I reasoned (*it) CP*
- c. er / *het werd geredeneerd CP
*there / *it was-PASS reasoned CP*

(57a) is my analysis of a passive CP-selecting verb with *het*-subject. *Het* must be a CP-placeholder: it cannot be a quasi-argument in the absence of an external role, and true *het*-expletives do not exist. Now consider a CP-selecting verb that disallows

²³ There is one apparent counterexample. The slightly archaic verb *voorkomen* fore.come ‘appear’ seems to pattern as follows (although intuitions are insecure):

- (i) a. het komt mij voor CP
it comes me fore CP
‘it appears to me CP’
- b. * wat mij voorkomt is CP
what me appears is CP
- c. het *heeft / ??is mij voorgekomen CP
it has / is-PERF me appeared CP

To the degree that the verb allows a perfect tense, the *be*-auxiliary is preferred over the *have*-auxiliary, suggesting it is ergative. On the other hand, adjective formation is blocked. I want to suggest that the verb is not ergative, but inherits its choice of auxiliary from the ergative verb *komen* (from which it is derived). Evidence that such an inheritance process exists comes from the surprising fact that some verbs (*binnenvallen*, *bijvallen*, *overeenkomen*), which are also obtained by compounding with an ergative verb, take the *be*-auxiliary, but otherwise behave as transitives: they take a DP-internal argument, and allow passivization (note that passive in Dutch cannot promote an indirect object):

- (ii) a. de Duitsers zijn ons land binnengevallen
the Germans are-PERF our country invaded
- b. ons land werd binnengevallen door de Duitsers
our country was-PASS invaded by the Germans

Independent evidence that this analysis of *voorkomen* is correct comes from (iii). If *voorkomen* is indeed quasi-transitive, and its *het* subject the quasi-argument, the *er*-subject will be blocked (see the discussion of (55) in the text):

- (iii) * er komt mij voor CP
there comes me fore CP

CP-placeholders; one such verb is *redeneren* ‘reason’ in (57b). Given that the CP-placeholder is blocked, and the quasi-argument cannot appear in a passive, the assumption that the true expletive does not exist predicts that this verb does not allow a passive with *het*. This prediction is confirmed by (57c).²⁴

6 Some further exploration of the hypothesis

The purpose of our reanalysis of the *schijnen* / *blijken* contrast was to provide evidence, independent of weather-verb and impersonal passive constructions, for a difference in theta-relatedness between the Dutch *het* and *er*-expletives, as stated in (48). This section briefly summarizes the evidence so far, and adds some additional considerations.

Firstly, if our analysis is correct, we have evidence that *er* does not need a theta-role: it can appear as the subject of ergative (and passive) (CP-selecting) verbs, where an external theta-role is not available (see (14b), (51), (52)).

Secondly, we have evidence that *er* cannot bear a theta-role: *er* is excluded as the subject of *schijnen*-verbs, because these assign an external quasi-role (see (13b)), on our analysis.

Thirdly, we have evidence that *het* can bear a theta-role, by the same reasoning: *het* is allowed as the subject of *schijnen* verbs (see (13a)).

Lastly, we have evidence that *het* must bear a theta-role. First of all, this explains why every *het* that occurs as the subject of a verb without external theta-role is a CP-placeholder (see (53) through (56)): there is no real expletive *het*. Secondly, it explains how passives of verbs like *redeneren* that disallow CP-placeholders, can disallow *het* subjects (see (57)).

It follows, that Hazout’s (2004) account of expletive selection discussed in the introduction, which assumes that English *it* and *there* do not differ in their theta-properties, does not extend to Dutch.

Section 6.1 provides some additional empirical evidence in support of the postulated theta-properties of *er* and *het*; Section 6.2 addresses some issues of technical implementation.

²⁴ Note that we do not predict that all verbs that disallow CP-placeholders in object position should behave like *redeneren*. It is well known that verbs idiosyncratically allow or disallow CP-placeholders depending on factivity and other factors; some disallow them in object position but not, with passivization, in subject position (*aannemen* ‘assume’ and *beweren* ‘claim’ are examples). There is also some speaker variation; e.g., for Reuland (1983, 1985) and others, but not Bennis (1986), *beweren* ‘claim’ is in the same category as *redeneren*. The exact conditions on the appearance of the CP-placeholder fall outside the scope of this paper. What we do predict is that the pattern in (57) with *redeneren* can exist; if the grammar allowed a non-theta-marked *het* expletive, *het* in (57c) could not be blocked. The following alternative explanation for (57) might be suggested: verbs like *redeneren* are (associated with a *v* that is) inherently incapable of checking Case. Then, on a theory of Case absorption in passives as sketched in (12), (57c) might be blocked because only Nominative is available for both the passive morphology and *het*. But this would not extend to *beweren* ‘claim’, which for many speakers (like Reuland) patterns like *redeneren*, but can take a DP internal argument.

6.1 Further evidence

Some additional evidence for the postulated properties of *er* may come from (58):

- (58) a. *het* ziet [_{PP} *er*_[+R]ⁱ *naar*] uit CPⁱ
 it looks [*it*_[+R] *to*] *out CP*
 ‘it looks like it CP’
 b. * *er* ziet [_{PP} *er*ⁱ _[+R] *naar*] uit CPⁱ
 there looks [*it*_[+R] *to*] *out CP*
 c. *waar*_[+R] *het* [_{PP} *t*_{waar} *naar*] uit *ziet* is CP
 *what*_[+R] *it* [*t* *to*] *out looks is CP*
 ‘what it looks like is CP’

(58a) contains two expletives: one in subject position, and one as the complement of the postposition *naar* (confusingly, the second expletive takes the shape of *er*: this is in fact not the *er*-expletive under discussion here, but the [+R] variant of *het* that appears as the complement of adpositions; see Van Riemsdijk (1978)). Clearly, the two expletives cannot both be CP-placeholders; the pseudo-clefting example (58c) shows, unsurprisingly, that the complement of the postposition is the CP-placeholder. Since the subject expletive is not a CP-placeholder, and our theory excludes a pure expletive *het*, we predict that it must be a (quasi-)argument (and indeed, the verb does not behave as ergative for auxiliary selection). As a result, we correctly predict that *er* is blocked: see (58b). This provides further evidence that *er* cannot bear a theta-role (but *het* can), but the evidence is not (yet) decisive: since the subject expletive in these cases is not CP-linked, the construction has the same properties as the weather-verb construction, hence might allow the same Case/Agreement analysis as (8) above: perhaps *het* is needed here to check ϕ on T.

A related argument can be based on Danish:

- (59) a. *at* *det* / **der* *lod* [_{PP} *til* CP] Danish; Vikner (1995:266/247)
 that it / **there seemed to CP*
 b. *at* **det* / *der* *blev regnet* [_{PP} *med* CP]
 *that *it* / *there was counted with CP*

The Danish counterpart of the *seem*-construction in (59a), with the CP in a PP complement, disallows the *there*-expletive just like Dutch (58b), whereas the impersonal passive construction (59b), in the absence of an external theta-role, blocks the quasi-argument *it*-expletive (CP-placeholder *det* is not allowed in (59b) because Danish does not have pseudo-passives). But again, one could assume instead that *det* in (59a) is needed to check ϕ on T, while PRT in (59b) absorbs NOM, blocking *det*. I return to (58) and (59) in Section 7 below.

There is also some additional evidence for the postulated properties of *het*. Consider the speaker-oriented Sifting parenthetical (Ross 1973; Reinhart 1983) in (60a):

- (60) a. *de koningin, (zo) beweerde Jan, houdt van spruitjes.*
 ‘The queen, so claimed Jan, likes Brussels sprouts.’
 b. ?? *de koningin, (zo) beweerde Jan iets opmerkelijks, houdt van spruitjes.*
 ‘The queen, so claimed Jan something remarkable, likes Brussels sprouts.’

In this construction, the propositional internal argument of certain CP-selecting verbs is suppressed, and the resulting phrase parenthetically attached to a main clause that is interpreted as bearing the verb's internal theta-role. The parenthetical clause is optionally accompanied by a pronominal adverb such as *zo* 'thus, so'.²⁵ Unsurprisingly, since the direct object function is already performed by the main clause (perhaps mediated through a fronted operator, see Corver and Thiersch (2001) and references cited there), the verb in the parenthetical cannot take a direct object: see (60b). Accordingly, we expect that a CP-placeholder will also be blocked inside the parenthetical. Thus, constructions that ordinarily allow an optional CP-placeholder disallow it in the parenthetical:

- (61) a. Jan bracht (het) onder onze aandacht dat de koningin van spruitjes houdt
'Jan brought (it) to our attention that the queen likes Brussels sprouts.'
b. de koningin, (zo) bracht Jan (*het) onder onze aandacht, houdt van spruitjes
'The queen, (so) brought Jan (it) to our attention, likes Brussels sprouts.'

whereas verbs that require a CP-placeholder cannot appear in this construction:

- (62) a. Jan haat ??(het) / vindt ??(het) jammer CP
'Jan hates (it) / finds (it) deplorable CP'
b. * de koningin, zo haat Jan (het) / vindt Jan (het) jammer, houdt van spruitjes.
'The queen, so hates Jan (it) / finds Jan (it) deplorable, likes Brussels sprouts.'

The data in (62) are as expected: since *het* is required with these verbs, omitting it in (62b) is disallowed, but retaining it is as well, since the construction requires absorption of the internal argument (we cannot, of course, rule out that these verbs are also blocked for some other, presumably semantic reason). We find the same pattern with the obligatory CP-placeholders that appear in argument PPs:

- (63) a. * De koningin, zo rekent Jan (er) op, zal de troonrede uitspreken. 'The queen, thus counts Jan (it_[+R]) on, will deliver the Queen's speech.'
b. De koningin, zo verwacht Jan, zal de troonrede uitspreken.
'The queen, thus expects Jan, will deliver the Queen's speech.'

(63a) is blocked both with and without the obligatory CP-placeholder complement of *op*, even though a DP-selecting verb with the same meaning is allowed in (63b).

Given this background, consider the passives in (64):

- (64) a. het werd aangenomen/aangetoond dat de koningin van spruitjes hield.
'It was-PASS assumed/demonstrated that the queen liked Brussels sprouts.'
b. de koningin, zo werd (*het) aangenomen/aangetoond, houdt van spruitjes.
'The queen, thus was-PASS (it) assumed/demonstrated, likes Brussels sprouts.'

²⁵ To avoid confusion: Dutch *zo* is not the result of So-pronominalization.

Verbs like *aannemen* ‘assume’ and (for some speakers) *aantonen* ‘demonstrate’ in (64a) allow a CP-linked *het*-expletive (a CP-placeholder, on my analysis) in the passive. These passives are also allowed in the parenthetical construction (64b), but only without the *het* subject. How can this be explained? We can understand why the CP-placeholder is blocked: the construction requires suppression of the propositional argument. We can also understand why the quasi-argument is blocked: passives assign no external role. But what could block merger of a pure expletive *het*? On our analysis, what blocks the pure expletive *het* is that there is no pure expletive *het*.

This version of the argument is not yet decisive, however, in view of the, now familiar, alternative analysis in terms of Case/Agreement. Since the passive verbs in (64b) have no internal argument, these constructions are instances of impersonal passives. Hence, if one rejects the analysis of impersonal passives on the basis of default ϕ -checking (see (5)), and adopts instead the analysis in (12), then one can block *het* on the grounds that T cannot satisfy the checking requirements of both *het* and the passive participle head PRT.

A version of the argument that does not depend on Case/Agreement assumptions again utilizes the *schijnen* / *blijken* contrast. On our analysis, a *het*-subject should not be allowed in case we are dealing with an ergative or passive verb, but should be allowed with one that assigns a (quasi-)theta-role that *het* can bear. This holds true for ambience verbs, for instance:

- (65) Ga maar slapen, ga maar slapen, zo roffelde het op mijn zolderraam.
 ‘Go to sleep, go to sleep, so it pattered on my attic window.’

More significantly, we find the expected difference between *schijnen*-verbs and *blijken*-verbs:

- (66) a. De koningin, zo lijkt *(het), houdt van spruitjes.
 ‘The queen, so it seems, likes Brussels sprouts.’
 b. De koningin, zo blijkt *(het) uit onderzoek, houdt van spruitjes.
 ‘The queen, so it turns out from research, likes Brussels sprouts.’
 c. De koningin, zo is *(het) naar voren gekomen, houdt van spruitjes.
 ‘The queen, so it has emerged, likes Brussels sprouts.’

I have argued that the expletive with *schijnen*-verbs is not a CP-placeholder, but a quasi-argument: it therefore may, and must, be present in (66a).²⁶ The crucial examples are (66b) and (66c). *Het* is disallowed with ergative *blijken* in (66b) and *naar voren komen* in (66c), as CP-placeholder *het* is blocked by the construction, and quasi-argument *het* would receive no theta-role. In these examples, Case/Agreement considerations could not block the pure *het*-expletive, if it existed;

²⁶ A deviation from the pattern (66a) is *De koningin houdt van spruitjes, lijkt me* ‘the queen likes Brussels sprouts, seems to me’, with a fixed expression which I suspect is a Slifting variant of the exceptional (33a).

hence, the fact that *het* is disallowed confirms our assumption that *het* must bear a theta-role.²⁷

Clearly, these remarks must remain tentative, pending a full treatment of the Slifting construction; but the initial evidence suggests that it confirms our approach to *het*-expletives.

6.2 Merger of expletives

This section addresses a technical question raised by the analysis of expletive selection proposed here. Consider again the *schijnen*-verb paradigm in (50) (repeated).

- (50) a. *het schijnt* CP
 b. * *er schijnt* CP
 c. * *het schijnt* DP
 d. * DP *schijnt* t_{DP}
 e. * CP *schijnt* t_{CP}

I argued in Section 4.3 that (50b) is blocked because *er* cannot bear the external quasi-theta role assigned by *schijnen*. I also argued in Section 2 that, if Dutch allows default ϕ -feature checking by rule (5), the same reasoning is required to rule out *er* with weather verbs:

- (8) a. *het regende*
 b. * *er regende*

However, we can only exclude (50b) and (8b) in this manner if *er* must be merged in the position where the quasi-theta role is assigned. And it is commonly assumed that subject *there*-expletives (and putative pure *it*-expletives) are exempt from the VP-internal Subject Hypothesis: they are not first merged in VP (or ν P), but in Spec, IP, where they satisfy the EPP (see, e.g., Chomsky 1981). This section briefly considers some ways in which this problem might be resolved, although a full discussion of the conditions on expletive insertion is beyond the scope of this paper. It is important to note, though, that the problem is not particular to my analysis of *schijnen*-verb: given this analysis, it becomes just an instance of the more general issue of how to block **there reads a book*.

²⁷ Related facts in English were noted by Ross (1973). He “confess[es] bafflement” (footnote 4) at the contrast exemplified by (i):

- (i) a. He has only one left foot, it seems to me.
 b. * He has only one left foot, I explained it to Jo.

We are un baffled by (i), which conforms exactly to our predictions. However, further examples indicate an apparent breakdown of the parallelism between Dutch *het* and English *it*. Next to the expected quasi-argument *it*-expletive in (ia), we also find an *it*-expletive in (ii) ((iia) from Ross (1973:fn. 4)):

- (ii) a. It rained, it is true.
 b. ? CP, or so it is claimed/believed.

On first inspection, the facts in (ii) seem to indicate that English *it* can appear without a theta-role; I must leave these examples for further research.

One solution would be to postulate that the *er*-expletive is indeed merged in Spec,IP, and that the ill-formedness of (50b) and (8b) does not result from *er* being assigned a theta-role, but from the external quasi-theta-role remaining unassigned. This will block (50d) and (50e) as well.²⁸ However, this solution presupposes that theta-roles must be discharged. As a C-I interface requirement, this might be plausible in some cases, but not in the cases at hand: it would be hard to argue that a quasi-role remaining unassigned would lead to semantic oddity. And while the existence of quasi-theta roles without semantic import may in itself constitute an argument against removing theta theory from narrow syntax, obligatory theta discharge also does not appear plausible as a grammatical requirement (see Chomsky 1981, 1995, and esp. 1986:143 for some discussion). For this reason, although an assumption of obligatory theta-discharge would deal with the facts immediately, I want to explore an alternative that does not rely on this assumption.

The alternative solution I want to pursue is that expletives are never merged in Spec,IP, but always in spec,vP. Rather than introducing a complication, this assumption removes an anomaly. In order to allow expletives to merge directly in their feature-checking position in Spec,IP, Chomsky (1995) needed to stipulate that expletives, exceptionally, engage in ϕ /case checking upon first merge (which is disallowed, e.g., for subjects merging in spec,v, or they would check Accusative). Likewise, the exemption of expletives from the VP-internal Subject Hypothesis forced Chomsky (2000) to assume that the expletive can act as Probe, finding Goal T (the reverse, T probing the expletive, is not possible if the expletive is first merged in Spec,TP). This requires the otherwise unmotivated assumption that expletive pronominals are bare heads, whereas other pronominals, which must not be allowed to probe, must contain some further internal structure. If, on the other hand, expletives are merged in spec,vP and move to T, no special assumptions are required. There are also empirical advantages. In the framework of Chomsky (2000), if the expletive can probe, this predicts incorrectly that a *there*-expletive always becomes inert after first merge: in an example such as *there seems t_{there} to be someone in the room*, the expletive as a probe will Match and Agree with the embedded T (or even with *someone*) at first merge; this is enough to delete the single uninterpretable feature [person] on the expletive, rendering it ineligible for subsequent raising to subject (the problem is discussed at length in Ruys 2003; see also Bošković 2002:fn.50 for some discussion). Various solutions can be considered; as was pointed out by Ten Have (2004), the problem disappears if the expletive is merged in spec,vP, and does not probe but is probed by T, like any normal argument: then it becomes inert only upon reaching the (non-defective) matrix T.

²⁸ But for these cases, alternative solutions are available: (50d) can be blocked by c-selection, and so can (50e) on a Koster (1978) style approach to subject CPs; alternatively, it may be supposed that the movement operations in (50d) and (50e) can be blocked by phase theory (see Chomsky 2008 and references cited): if *schijnen* assigns both an internal and external role, the dominating strong vP phase should block Agree from T (unless a phase is only closed off at the next phase boundary, as in Chomsky 2001). In any case, the issue goes beyond expletives and does not need to be addressed here: if *schijnen* is transitive, (50d) and (50e) are blocked by whatever blocks **this book reads*.

Assume, therefore, that expletive subjects—i.e., *er* and quasi-argument *het*—are merged in spec,vP (CP-placeholder *het* of course is merged wherever its non-quasi role is assigned).²⁹ We can show that expletive selection can then be determined by ergativity or unergativity of the verb, as argued above. We have the following situations to consider. V can be transitive or unergative intransitive, with *v* assigning an external role (following Chomsky 2001 I will write this *v* as *v**; perhaps the light verbs associated with transitives and unergatives have different Case properties, a refinement we can ignore here), or V can be ergative intransitive (with passive as a special case), with *v* not assigning a theta-role (notation: *v*⁻).

Het must be merged in a theta-position. The only option therefore is the inner (theta-marked) spec,*v** occurring with transitives and unergative intransitives, as indicated in (67a); excluded is the spec,*v*⁻ of ergative intransitives, as in (67b), and an outer (non-theta-marked) spec,*v**, as in (67c).

Er/there may not be merged in a theta-position, so the theta-marked inner spec,*v** of (67a) is excluded, but merger is allowed in the spec,*v*⁻ of ergative intransitives, as in (67b). For *er/there*, there is an additional option: merger in a second, outer (non-theta-marked) spec,*v**, if available, as indicated in (67c). Whether an outer spec,*v** is available for this purpose depends on whether or not the language has TECs. Needless to say, this is not the place to develop a theory of TECs; but on our approach, the difference between TEC languages like Dutch, which allow *there*-insertion with transitives and unergatives, and non-TEC languages like English, can be described as the availability or non-availability of an outer spec,*v* created by first merge; see Van Zoelen (2005) for a theory of the cross-linguistic variation in TEC constructions that is based on this description.

Consequently, we find *het* with CP-selecting *schijnen/seem*, including the PP-selecting *seem*-verb *uitzien* in (58), as these are unergatives (whether the assignment of a quasi-role requires a special version of *v** is a question we will leave open here): see (67a). We find *er / there* with ergative *blijken* and its kin (51) and with CP-selecting passives (52): see (67b). Beyond CP-selecting verbs, we find *het* with

²⁹ For a related proposal see Deal (2009), which was not available to me at the time of writing of this article.

(unergative or transitive³⁰) ambience verbs (67a), but *er/there* with passives (both normal and impersonal) and ergatives, including presentational verbs (*appear*) (67b). In addition, in TEC Dutch we find *er*, in combination with an agentive subject, with unergatives and transitives (67c).

I have argued that expletives merge in spec,vP: I have demonstrated how this accounts for expletive selection with all verb types discussed here. But one technical issue remains to be resolved: what guarantees that expletives merge only in spec,vP? In most cases, merging an expletive directly in Spec,TP will cause the derivation to crash, since we assume it cannot check its features by probing T, and T cannot probe its specifier. But suppose we have a structure (67a) (which should disallow *er/there*) dominated by a non-tensed TP; and suppose *there* is first merged in the specifier of this T, and then attracted by the T of a dominating tensed clause: this will satisfy the properties of the expletive, while circumventing merger and proscribed theta-marking in spec,v*. I want to suggest a tentative solution based on a discussion in Chomsky (2008). Suppose that, theta-theory apart, satisfaction of the feature-checking and EPP-requirements of a head can only be satisfied by an element Agreeing with that head. If so, first merge in Spec,XP will never check features of X or satisfy X's EPP-requirement. In the example under discussion, if an expletive merges in Spec,TP then the EPP requirement of that T is not satisfied. I must leave further discussion of the details of this solution for another occasion, except to point out one immediate consequence: it works only on the assumption that every T, including non-tensed T, must satisfy the EPP, contra, e.g., Bošković (2002). But note that this is already entailed by our account. If expletive selection is to be partly determined by theta-theory, we must prevent expletives from being merged in the matrix clause of a raising construction, whether it be in Spec,TP or spec,vP: selection is always determined by the theta-properties (ergativity or non-ergativity) of the embedded verb, not of the raising verb (see, e.g., the data in (23) above).³¹

³⁰ Examples of transitive ambience constructions are *it's brewing a tempest*, *it will manage a shower by this afternoon*, *it's oozing oil*. A CP-selecting transitive verb of this type occurs in *it says in the Bible CP* (examples from Bolinger 1973).

³¹ There is one further important technical question, which I cannot resolve here: what is the relation between the CP-selecting verbs discussed in the text, and their raising variants? Like *seem*, both *schijnen* and *blijken* have raising counterparts. Raising *blijken* is unproblematic: it has the same ergative properties as CP-selecting *blijken*, assigning neither Accusative nor an external theta-role, the only difference being that its internal theta-role is assigned to an IP. Raising *schijnen/ seem* is less straightforward: what happens to the supposed external quasi-theta-role? The question is not so much why it may remain unassigned, so long as we do not opt for a theta-theory that requires all roles to be discharged. But we are faced with the problem how the raising subject can cross the v*P projected by transitive *seem*, in possible violation of phase theory (cf. footnote 28 above). And a further question is why the external theta-role must remain unassigned when *seem* takes a non-tensed, IP complement. Some derivations will be blocked by Case theory: if *het/ it* is merged as matrix subject, Nominative case is not available for the embedded subject. But it remains to be explained why an ECM construction, as in (i), is blocked:

(i) * it seems [_{IP} him to have won the race]

Since *seem* in (i) assigns an external theta-role, Burzio's generalization entails that it can assign Accusative Case to *him*. We can solve both problems by assuming that the variant of *seem* that can c-select IP is ergative (projects v*), and does not assign an external role. Further research must determine whether a principled basis can be found for this assumption.

I propose, therefore, that we reject the alternative analysis of Case/Agreement in impersonals sketched in (12), and adopt (5) as a (presumably lexical) rule. It follows, as explained in Section 2, that several pieces of independent evidence for the postulated theta-properties of *er* and *het* come into force. Selection of *er* and blocking of *het* in impersonal passives and in the passive Slifting cases (64) shows that *er* need not bear a theta-role, but *het* must. Selection of *het* in ambience constructions, in the double expletive construction (58), and of *det* in the Danish *seem*-construction (59a) shows that *het* can bear a theta-role but *er* cannot. Assuming the correctness of (5) or some similar account, these facts all provide additional support for our proposal that *er* is not theta-marked, but *het* is.³⁴

Naturally, my argument for (5) goes through only in the absence of an alternative and better analysis of Case/Agreement in impersonal passives that might be extended to impersonal ergatives. I am aware of one such account: that of Vikner (1995). Vikner proposes that in impersonal passives the expletive forms a CHAIN with the participial ending (as in Roberts 1985), but in impersonal ergatives the expletive forms a case-CHAIN with the CP complement of the verb, as shown below:

- (11) b. *er* T werd gedanst-PRT impersonal passive
 ↑ NOM ↑
- (70) *er* T blijkt CP impersonal ergative
 ↑ NOM ↑

If we incorporate this in the minimalist implementation of Roberts (1985) sketched in (12), this would mean that whereas in the impersonal passive (11b), the participial ending Agrees with T, in the impersonal ergative (70) it is the CP complement that values and deletes the uninterpretable ϕ -features on T, and absorbs nominative Case.

³⁴ It might be argued that such examples as (i) show that English does have a rule of default ϕ -valuation on T:

- (i) there's a few problems with that

However, while I do not have a strong opinion about the proper analysis of these cases, it does not involve the type of default ϕ -valuation on T I am attributing to Dutch. First of all, Dutch does not allow the process in (i): in the Dutch translation, agreement is obligatory. Secondly, the rule of default ϕ -valuation I am proposing entails absorption of Nominative in the framework I have adopted; by such a rule, (i) should crash. Hence, whatever rule is operative in (i) (let's call it rule R), it is not my rule (5). As a result, I can, without contradiction, maintain that English does not have rule (5), and therefore disallows the impersonal ergative construction. My theory need not, furthermore, predict that English should allow impersonal ergatives because it has rule R, for two reasons: 1) Rule R has a very limited scope, and does not apply to *seem*-verbs but only to *be*, and sometimes only to certain instances of *be* (e.g., only to copula *be* in *wh*-questions: Schütze 1999) (although Schütze allows *there appears to be some men in the garden*); and 2) since Rule R does not absorb case for the associate (wherever it originates), even if it turns out that rule R can delete the uninterpretable features on T, it might be that impersonal ergatives are blocked because this case remains unassigned. See Schütze (1999) and references cited there for further discussion.

Table 2 Two types of languages

<i>Dutch / Danish</i>	<i>English</i>
Impersonal passive	No impersonal passive
Impersonal ergative (<i>blijken; siges</i>)	No impersonal ergative (<i>emerge</i>)

reducible to a general ban on CHAINS in this construction, as might be argued for the passive case (73b), since we know that (a subset of) English ergatives do allow a CHAIN between *there* and a (nominal) internal argument: see (73c). Hence, we are left with two separate distinctions between Dutch/Danish and English: expletive-CP CHAINS in impersonal ergatives are allowed in Dutch/Danish but not English; and expletive-participial CHAINS in impersonal passives are allowed in Dutch/Danish but not English. In a minimalist implementation: CP can check Nominative and ϕ on T in Dutch/Danish but not English; and the participial ending can check Nominative and ϕ on T in Dutch/Danish but not English.

One might suspect that the absence of a *blijken* type verb in English could be an accidental lexical gap. However, English has a verb that would seem to fit the requirements for this construction exactly:

- (74) a. some new facts emerged
 b. the recently emerged facts
 c. there emerged some new facts
 d. it emerged CP
 e. what emerged was CP
 f. * there emerged CP

Emerge in (74a) is ergative (thus, it allows adjective formation: (74b)), and can appear in the presentational construction (74c) with the argument VP-internal and a *there*-expletive (it is one of Milsark's (1974) "inside verbals"). It allows a propositional argument in (74d) (with the *it*-expletive a CP-placeholder, allowing pseudo-clefting (74e)), but it does not allow the impersonal ergative construction (74f).

I tentatively conclude that the analysis in terms of rule (5) is to be preferred, as it provides one uniform account of all three relevant distinctions between Dutch/Danish and English: English lacks default ϕ -valuation, hence disallows

Table 3 Two types of verbs

<i>Blijken</i>	<i>Schijnen / seem</i>
<i>er</i> and <i>het</i>	only <i>het</i> / <i>it</i>
pseudo-clefting, relativization, right-dislocation, focusing	no pseudo-clefting, relativization, right-dislocation, focusing
CP in subject-position	no CP in subject-position
ergative	unergative
loses <i>het</i> in Slifting	retains <i>het</i> in Slifting

impersonal passives, impersonal ergatives, and *there* insertion with CP-passives as in (71).

8 Conclusions and further research

In this paper I have argued for the following assumptions.

(5) Default ϕ -valuation

Dutch, Danish (, ...) have a rule of default valuation [3, sg] and deletion of ϕ on T; English does not.

(48) The *het*-expletive must bear a theta-role, the *er*-expletive cannot.

These assumptions allow us to describe the pattern of cross-linguistic variation shown in Table 2, as well as the distinctions among CP-selecting intransitive verbs shown in Table 3.

The evidence for (48) that is based on the *blijken* vs. *schijnen/seem* contrast does not depend on (5). If (5) is accepted, additional evidence for (48) comes from impersonal passives and ambience constructions.

Various questions remain to be resolved. In particular, further research is needed to establish whether the theory of expletive merger put forward in Section 6.2 can be maintained. Also, further research must determine whether the distinction I have drawn between English/Dutch/Danish *there/er/der* and *it/het/det* extends to other Germanic languages such as German, in which the difference between two expletive types is less easily discerned,³⁵ and to languages outside this family (and indeed, to English, given the facts in footnote 27).

On a more concrete note, I must leave for future research the following puzzling gap in the paradigm of Dutch impersonal ergative constructions:

- (75) a. er ontstaat DP
 there arises DP
 b. er blijkt CP
 there turns.out CP
 c. * er V PP

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³⁵ The difference, if it exists, shows up only in whether the expletive is dropped in certain contexts. In addition, the class of usages under which the expletive is dropped is not constant across languages.

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