SUCH: BINDING AND THE PRO-ADJECTIVE*

1. Introduction

A great deal has been written about pronouns and quite a bit has been written about pro-VPs. However, the possibility that one form of such is a pro-adjective has not been fully explored recently, and the implications for binding theory of the possible existence of a pro-adjective have not been detailed. In interesting and detailed earlier studies, both Bresnan (1973) and Carlson (1980) treat such as a pro-modifier of some kind. Bresnan analyzes both the "character or kind" such (as in I don't like such books) and the "degree or extent" such (as in I don't like such long books) as originating in a pre-NP QP.1 Carlson proposes instead that the character or kind such is better analyzed as a CN-external full AP with a semantic translation containing a variable over "kinds." However, at least superficially, this character or kind such seems to be just like a simple adjective except that it also exhibits pronoun-like behavior:

(1) Conscientious students know that everyone resents them.

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1 I will be treating only what Bresnan called the character or kind such, where such clearly takes on another meaning from within or outside of its sentence, as in (2). Bresnan discusses at length the other major use of such, to indicate degree or extent, either explicitly or elliptically:

(i) The kids made such a mess! (that it will take all night to clean it up)
(ii) She goes out with such sexist pigs! (that I can't stand to be in the same room with them)

Other such expressions which are beyond the scope of this study are compound expressions like such that and such as and the "legalese" such, pointed out to me by Louis Mangione. This latter form appears to be a determiner, rather than an adjective, tolerating no co-occurring determiners or preceding adjectives:

(i) A gratuity awarded to any junior clerk will be divided among all clerks employed during the period during which such junior clerk served.

(2) Conscientious students know that everyone resents such students.

Like the pronoun in (1), the such in (2) may be either structurally bound by the adjective "conscientious" or free within the sentence and identified in discourse with an earlier adjective meaning or a similar one-place predicate salient in the context. If, for instance, (2) were uttered while watching students attending a wild three-day party, such might well be taken to mean the sort of un-conscientious student who might attend such a party.

I will first argue that such is indeed a simple pro-adjective in the sense that it behaves like a basic adjective syntactically (section 2). However, I will propose that semantically it is bound by common noun meanings, not by those of adjectives or Carlson's kinds (sections 3 and 4). Even more surprisingly, I will show that such counts as a pro-form for purposes of the binding theory (section 5); even though it clearly does not represent an argument, such must be free within its governing category.

2. Adjective Syntax for Such

Syntactically, such behaves much like a typical adjective like tall or red, appearing prenominally or, more rarely, predicatively:

(3) This substance is dangerous. Such substances should be labelled. It should be labelled as such.

(4) I'd love a vacation in a private house on a beach, but perfect vacations rarely turn out to be such, but such vacations rarely turn out to be perfect.

(5) The guilty person never admitted to being such, Such people never admit to being guilty.

We can tell that the character or kind such is an adjective and not, say, a determiner or a quantifier by virtue of the fact that it may appear either before or after other adjectives ((6) and (7)) and may co-occur with determiners and quantifiers ((8) and (9d)):

(6) With all our planning, we had hoped to avoid encountering new problems in these later stages that would significantly delay the project, but today we encountered two such new problems.

(7) We thought that we had solved all the merely mechanical problems, but today we encountered two new such problems.

(8)a. such a dog