9 Semantic Roles of Causer and Causee: Further Observations

The analysis that takes the causer in the SA construction as the executor of prior intention receives support from the specific restrictions imposed on the repertory of participants that can act as causers. As observed by Cruse (1972), the subject position in SA constructions can only be taken up by animate agents because inanimate causes (whether internal states or external causes such as instruments and natural forces) cannot act on a volitional axis, cf. also Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995: 112) and Folli and Harley (2006: 142).[35] An explanation along similar lines is offered by Davidse (1992: 122), who explains the impossibility of forming sentences like *Hunger marched the soldiers* by appeal to the inherently circumstantial (i.e. not agentive) status of *hunger*. Consider:

(9.1) a) *The wind (/The whip) galloped the horse to the stable.
b) *Fever (/Anxiety/Hunger) walked Mary home.

From the fact that the causer takes up the slot for prior intention in the verb's agentive quale it follows that the causer must be capable of executing the movement lexicalized in the verb. From this it does not, however, follow that the causer must necessarily execute a given movement. The causer's execution of prior intention may take on many different forms of realization and the type of the causer's physical activity depends on the type of scenario. For example, in an accompaniment scenario (*John walked Harry to the station*) the causer acts as a co-mover (nevertheless, even in this scenario the causer does not have to execute "walking" – he may move in a wheelchair, for example). In the scenario expressed in *The general marched the soldiers to their tents* the causer need not execute the movement and in the scenario expressed in *The lion-tamer jumped the lion through the hoop* the causer does not execute the movement.

In connection with the requirement for the animateness of the causer, it may be interesting to mention that Pesetsky (1995: 214) classes the examples in (9.2) and (9.3)

35 Let me in this connection mention Chung and Timberlake's conception of an agent as a "conscious, willful and responsible initiator" (1985: 215). Such a description rules out animals (cf. the discussion of the specificity of animal agency offered in Chapter 10).

(9.2) The wind ran Jane home.
(9.3) The wind ran my car into a brick wall.

among the group of causative constructions exemplified by the sentences

(9.4) a) John walked the dog to his grandmother's house and back.
b) Sue galloped the horse through the woods.
c) Mary jumped the horse over the hurdle.

Although the causative role in (9.2) and (9.3) is played by inanimate forces (i.e. not by animate causers), Pesetsky's classification does make sense. Note that when the wind "runs Jane home," Jane does execute a self-agentive motion (although it need not necessarily be running). An interpretation along similar lines obtains in example (9.3). When the wind "runs the car into the wall," the car "runs into the wall." The car can thus be conceived of as capable of "operating itself". As can be seen, then, the verb *run* can appear in causative – inchoative pairs, in which the inchoative variant presents the movement as abstracted from the activity of the causer, cf.:

(9.5) a) John ran the car over him.
b) The car ran over his foot.
(9.6) a) John ran the car into the side of the train.
b) The car ran into the side of the train.

The specific causal structure of caused motion situations expressed in SA constructions also manifests itself in the specific constellation of properties displayed by both the causer and the causee. In Dowty's (1991) conception, agents and patients represent clusters of so-called proto-agent and proto-patient properties, respectively. Dowty proposes the following sets of properties (1991: 572):
Agent proto-role:
(1) volitional involvement in event
(2) sentience/perception
(3) causing event/change in another participant
(4) movement relative to another participant
(5) (exists independently of the event)

Patient proto-role:
(1) undergoes change of state
(2) incremental theme

(3) causally affected by another participant
(4) stationary relative to movement
(5) (does not exist independently of the event)

The degree of the prototypicality of the participant's role depends on how many properties out of a given set the participant has. From this it follows that semantic roles may involve varying constellations of these properties and hence they are a matter of degree. Nevertheless, both the causer and the causee in SA constructions have a unique status in that neither of them can be specified in terms of a combination of the properties proposed for the agent and the patient, respectively. In addition to displaying all the features proposed by Dowty for a prototypical agent (the feature 'movement relative to another participant' is optional), the causer in SA constructions displays another feature, namely, 'initiative' ("initiation of an action by giving a command", Cruse 1973: 20). The causee in SA constructions displays three features characteristic of Dowty's prototypical agents: 'volitional involvement in the event','sentience/perception' and 'movement relative to another participant'. Nevertheless, the feature 'volitional involvement in the event' is overshadowed by the causee's affected status. Being causally affected by the causer's action, the causee displays what may be called "reduced agentivity". The reason lies in the dominant (controlling) position of the causing event. Since the causing event is superimposed on the caused event, the causer not only instigates the caused event (the movement) but also controls its course in its entirety. This explains the ungrammaticality of the sentence

(9.7) *John walked Mary (all) by herself.

The causer, being the bearer of primary responsibility for the action and controlling the entire event, plays a dominant role, curtailing in this way the degree of agentivity of the causee.

Evidence in support of this account comes from the possible use of the expression *(all) by oneself* in periphrastic causative constructions:

(9.8) John made Mary walk (all) by herself.
(9.9) John had Mary walk (all) by herself.

As opposed to SA constructions, periphrastic constructions admit of use of the expression *all by oneself* in reference to the movement carried out by the causee. The reason is obvious. Periphrastic constructions present the causing event and the caused event as two causally related, yet self-

contained units. The causee is a fully-fledged agent, hence he is in full control of the movement in spite of the fact that its execution is induced from outside.[36]

In this connection also consider the status of the modifying expressions *deliberately, on purpose* and *with a limp* in the following examples:

(9.10) John deliberately walked Mary to the kitchen.
(9.11) John danced Mary around the room on purpose.
(9.12) John walked Mary to the door with a limp.

The subject-oriented expressions *deliberately* and *on purpose* relate to specific aspects of agentivity; the event-oriented expression *with a limp* relates to the manner of the execution of the action. In any case, however, the scope of operation of these expressions is confined to the causing event.[37]

As we have seen, the roles of the causer and the causee in SA constructions involve specific configurations of features, which reflect the specificity of the causal structuration of this type of caused motion situation.

36 This is the reason why, e.g., the sentence *The director had (/made) the actor stagger to the other end of the stage* means that Harry faked staggering.

37 According to Van Valin and LaPolla (1997: 152), *the soldiers* is an animate EFFECTOR argument both in (a) *The soldiers marched to the mess hall (on purpose)* and in (b) *The sergeant marched the soldiers to the mess hall on purpose.* Since in (b) the animate EFFECTOR argument is undergoer, *on purpose* in (b) can only modify the sergeant's action.