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On the New Passive

Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson

Abstract. The so-called New Passive in Icelandic takes the form 'it was elected us' (or, e.g., 'then was elected us', without an expletive), instead of the standard passive form 'we were elected'. It has neither A-movement to subject nor ACC-to-NOM conversion, which are otherwise diagnostic of the canonical passive in Icelandic and related languages. Some researchers have argued that "passive" is in fact a misnomer and that the construction should instead be analyzed as an active one, with a nominative *pro*. This paper argues instead in favor of a minimalist analysis, where the New Passive is closely related to the impersonal P passive (with a PP, type 'then was shouted at us'), which is highly common and productive in Icelandic. On the approach pursued, ACC-to-NOM conversion involves *case-star deletion*, absent from the New Passive (much as from so-called psych and fate (un)accusatives in standard Icelandic). Additionally, the New Passive has a strong vP phase edge, blocking A-movement, in contrast to the defective vP edge in the canonical passive. The paper argues that A-grounding or "freezing" is brought about by ϕ-minimality, A-islands thus arising in a parallel fashion with A′-islands.

1. Introduction: The Traditional Passive(s)

Icelandic has several types of passives, as illustrated in (1). Agreement-triggering arguments are set in boldface, whereas agreeing verbs and participles are underlined.[1]

(1) The traditional passive(s)

a. **Þeir** voru barðir. — NOM passive
they.N.M were.3PL hit.N.M.PL
'They were hit.'

b. Þeim var hrint. — Quirky (DAT) passive
them.D was.DFT pushed.DFT
'They were pushed.'

c. Þeirra var leitað. — Quirky (GEN) passive
them.G was.DFT looked-for
'They were looked for.'

d. Henni voru gefnar **bækurnar**. — DAT-NOM passive
her.D were.3PL given.N.F.SG books.the.N.F.SG
'She was given the books.'

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[1] I use the following abbreviations in glosses: capital N, A, D, G for nominative, dative, accusative, and genitive; small capitals M, F, NT for masculine, feminine, and neuter; SG, PL for singular and plural; DFT for both "default" finite verb forms (3SG) and "default" past participle forms (N/A.NT.SG), even though some such forms are taken to be agreeing forms in the present approach. Grammatical features that are directly translatable by the English glosses (e.g., the tense of verbs and the number of most arguments) are not specifically pointed out.

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e. **Þær** voru gefnar bókasafninu. NOM-DAT passive
they.N.F.SG were.3PL given.N.F.SG the library.D
'They were given to the library.'

f. Það var talað hátt. Impersonal passive (plain)
it was.DFT talked.DFT loudly
'There was loud talking.'/'Someone spoke loudly.'

g. Þá var talað hátt til þeirra. Impersonal P passive
then was.DFT talked.DFT loudly to them.G
'They were then spoken to/addressed loudly.'

h. Það var talað um að fara. Impersonal P passive
it was.DFT talked.DFT about to go (+ infinitive)
'People talked about going.'

i. Þá var talað um að ég færi. Impersonal P passive
then was.DFT talked.DFT about that I went (+ finite clause)
'Then people talked about that I would/should go.'

These facts are well known and have been discussed and described by many (including Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson 1985, Sigurðsson 1989, Thráinsson 2007). The corresponding active sentences take various shapes, as sketched in (2), where the case correlations between the active and passive are highlighted in boldface, whereas the object-controlled agreement in the DAT-NOM passive is indicated by underlining:

(2)

	Passive	Corresponding active
a.	**Nom_i** V/AGR_i Pcpl/AGR_i	Nom_k V/AGR_k **Acc_i**
	they were hit	*we hit them*
b.	**Quirky_i** V/DFT Pcpl/DFT	Nom_k V/AGR_k **Quirky_i**
	them was pushed	*we pushed them*
c.	**Dat_i** $\underline{\text{V/AGR}_l}$ $\underline{\text{Pcpl/AGR}_l}$ $\underline{\text{Nom}_l}$	Nom_k V/AGR_k **Dat_i** Acc_l
	her were given they	*we gave her them*
d.	**Nom_i** V/AGR_i Pcpl/AGR_i Dat_l	Nom_k V/AGR_k Dat_l **Acc_i**
	they were given her	*we gave her them*
e.	X V/DFT Pcpl/DFT (P…)	Nom_k V/AGR_k (P…)
	then was talked (about…)	*we talked (about…)*

X = usually the expletive *það* 'there, it' or an adverbial, e.g., *þá* 'then'

Note the following general patterns (partly stated in relational-grammar terms for descriptive clarity only):

(3) Passive generalizations
a. In all cases the active subject, NOM_k, is demoted.
b. Agentive *af-* 'by' phrases are relatively rare, or at least much rarer and more marked than in English, often even unacceptable (especially in the impersonal passive).

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c. "First" objects are (usually) promoted to subject and usually also A-moved, whereas "second" (direct) objects in the double-object construction usually remain unpromoted. In certain cases, though, direct objects can be promoted and A-moved across indirect ones, yielding a NOM-DAT pattern, as in (1e).
d. Accusative objects in the active voice show the familiar ACC-to-NOM conversion,[2] even when they are not promoted to subject, as in the DAT-NOM passive. Dative and genitive case are always preserved in the (dynamic) passive—that is, promoted DAT objects show up as DAT passive subjects and promoted GEN objects show up as GEN passive subjects.
e. In the absence of an object in the active voice there is no promotion, a subjectless impersonal passive showing up instead (the expletive *það* 'there, it' is just an optional placeholder, confined to the first position of finite clauses). In particular, Icelandic has no (dynamic) pseudopassive of the English type 'They were spoken to'; thus, there is never any promotion out of PPs, a full PP subtype of the impersonal passive showing up instead, as in (1g).
f. Both finite verb agreement and past participle agreement is with NOM only. Even in the DAT-NOM passive, the (third person) NOM object controls agreement, as in (1d). In the absence of a NOM argument, both the finite verb and the passive past participle show up in forms that are traditionally referred to as default forms, 3SG in finite verbs and NOM/ACC.NT.SG in participles. However, the approach pursued here suggests that some such forms should be analyzed as agreeing with silent expletive ϕ-bundles.

The impersonal passive is very common and highly productive, basically applying to any intransitive unergative main verb, including verbs that take prepositional complements ('then was run over/under/nearby/past/ahead of/with/along/out of it', etc.), transitive verbs when optionally intransitive ('then was hunted/cooked/eaten every day', etc.), and also including even aspectual verbs like *vera* 'be' (progressive and durative, much like English *be* V-*ing*) and *fara* 'begin' (literally 'go, leave, travel') as well as many control verbs, like *reyna* 'try':

(4) Impersonal passives of aspectual verbs and control verbs
a. Hér er **verið** að vinna.
here is been to work
'People are working here.'/'There is ongoing work here.'
b. Það var **farið** að vinna.
it was gone to work
'People began to work.'
c. Þá var **reynt** að vinna.
then was tried to work
'Then, somebody tried to work.'

[2] I use the term ACC-to-NOM conversion for expository convenience, but it is a slight misnomer. What is "converted" is the clausal argument structure and not the morphological ACC feature (which is not assigned until in PF morphology; see further below and Sigurðsson 2009).

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It is also worth noticing that the personal passives in (1a–d) have a "less personal" subtype, in which the passivized subject is indefinite and does not raise to Spec,TP. This is illustrated in (5). The "late" indefinite subjects are set in boldface:[3]

(5) Indefinite passives
   a. Þess vegna voru bara kosnar **konur** í stjórnina.
      that for were.3PL only elected.N.F.PL women.N to board.the
      'Therefore only women were elected to the board.'
   b. Það var bara boðið **konum** í veisluna.
      there was.DFT only invited.DFT women.D to party.the
      'Only women were invited to the party.'
   c. Þá var leitað **tveggja kvenna**.
      then was.DFT looked-for.DFT two women.G
      'Two women were then being looked for.'
   d. Það voru bara **tveim konum** gefnir þrír pennar.
      there were.3PL only two women.D given N.M.PL three pens.N.M.PL
      'Only two women were given three pens.'

From all these facts, it is evident that Icelandic passive morphology commonly combines with three phenomena that are absent from canonical NP-movement passives of the English type.

(6) Common traits of Icelandic passives (absent from the English passive type)
   a. Absent NP movement
   b. Absent NOM
   c. Hence also absent agreement (agreement being contingent on structural case marking)

[3] Depending on specificity, quantifier scope, and other poorly understood factors, indefinite subjects may also show up in several intermediate positions, above the basic object position but below the canonical subject position (Spec,TP). This *Subject Floating* is illustrated for a nominative indefinite subject in (i) (adapted from Sigurðsson 2003:253) but parallel facts pertain to quirky subjects. Bare indefinites and NPs modified by other quantifiers are somewhat differently constrained, but the type in (id), with the NP between two nonfinite verb forms, is ungrammatical for all NP types.

(i) Indefinite Subject Floating
   a. Það mundu **einhverjir bátar** þá sennilega verða seldir á
      there would.3PL some boats.N.M then probably be sold.N.M.PL at
      uppboðinu.
      auction.the
      'Some boats would then probably be sold at the auction.'
   b. Það mundu þá **einhverjir bátar** sennilega verða seldir á uppboðinu.
   c. Það mundu þá sennilega **einhverjir bátar** verða seldir á uppboðinu.
   d. *Það mundu þá sennilega verða **einhverjir bátar** seldir á uppboðinu.
   e. Það mundu þá sennilega verða seldir **einhverjir bátar** á uppboðinu.

Even some definite quantifier-containing NPs can raise to some of the intermediate positions, whereas pronominal subjects have to raise all the way to Spec,TP (see Thráinsson 2007:313ff.).

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2. The New Passive

The canonical NOM passive in Icelandic is similar to the regular English/Germanic type passive. Most importantly, as we just saw, it is subject to the familiar ACC-to-NOM conversion, a fact further illustrated in (7).

(7) ACC-to-NOM conversion in the canonical passive
   a. Strákarnir börðu **þá** í gær.
      boys.the.N hit.3PL them.A.M in yesterday
      'The boys hit them yesterday.'
   b. **Þeir** voru barðir í gær.
      they.N.M were.3PL hit.N.M.PL in yesterday
      'They were hit yesterday.'

However, some speakers can also use a substandard passive type, in addition to the standard NOM passive in (7b). This additional type, commonly referred to as the *New Passive* (or the New Impersonal) is illustrated in (8), where the percent sign indicates that the construction is acceptable to only some speakers.

(8) The New Passive
   a. %Það var barið **þá** í gær.
      it was.DFT hit.DFT them.A.M in yesterday
      'They were hit yesterday.'
   b. %Í gær var (*það) barið **þá**.
      in yesterday was.DFT (*it) hit.DFT them.A.M
      'They were hit yesterday.'
   c. %Var (*það) barið **þá** í gær?
      was.DFT (*it) hit.DFT them.A.M in yesterday
      'Were they hit yesterday?'
   d. *Var **þá** barið í gær?
      was them.A.M hit in yesterday

Notice that expletive *það* is confined to clause-initial position even in this substandard construction; that is, it is a placeholder of some sort and not a subject.

This construction has some seemingly striking properties:

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(9) Innovative properties of the New Passive
   a. It has no NP movement of (DAT, ACC, or GEN) direct objects, cf. (8d),[4]
   b. it has no ACC-to-NOM conversion (seemingly violating Burzio's Generalization/the Sibling Correlation),
   c. hence it has no verb and participle agreement, either.

As we have seen, absent NP movement and absent NOM assignment are typical of common subtypes of the standard Icelandic passive. Here, these characteristics are found in the "wrong type" of passives, but the ground for their spread is plausibly the extensive use of impersonal constructions in the language, including impersonal, indefinite, and nonnominative passives (see also Kjartansson 1991, Thráinsson 2005:569ff.).

Maling & Sigurjónsdóttir (2002; henceforth M&S) studied the geographical and social distribution of the New Passive in considerable detail. Their major results and conclusions can be summarized as follows:

(10) Major conclusions and results of M&S
   a. The construction is a recent innovation—the oldest attested examples are from the middle of the twentieth century, and it was first mentioned in the linguistic literature in the 1980s.[5]

[4] This does not extend to indirect objects of ditransitive verbs, at least not across the board. As pointed out by Árnadóttir & Sigurðsson (2008) and Jónsson (2009:303), raising of indirect objects is acceptable to some speakers of the New Passive variety, in at least some cases, yielding examples like (i).

(i) %Var **þeim** ekki einu sinni sýnt íbúðina fyrst?
was them.D not one time shown apartment.the.A first
'Were they not even shown the apartment first?'

The corresponding standard Icelandic passive also raises the DAT indirect object and has exactly the same word order, but instead of a preserved ACC it has an agreement-triggering NOM direct object (*sýnd íbúðin* 'shown.N.F.SG apartment.the.N.F.SG'; cf. (1d)). This suggests, first, that indirect objects are licensed in a different fashion than direct objects (DAT, ACC, or GEN), say, by a secondary Voice head or an Appl(icative) head, as has been widely assumed (see, e.g., Pylkkänen 2008, Schäfer 2008, and references cited there). Second, it illustrates that nonnominatives sometimes undergo passive A-movement in the New Passive variety, thereby showing that case and passive A-movement are independent of each other, not only in standard Icelandic (as has long been known), but also in the New Passive variety. These facts tally well with the analysis pursued here, but, for reasons of space, I will not discuss the double-object construction any further.

[5] M&S (p. 129) also mention that the oldest person known to them to have expressed a New Passive clause was born in 1941, but I heard an example uttered by a (highly educated and eloquent) person born in 1903 (on a radio program from 1973, rebroadcasted by RÚV, Rás 1, June 17, 2008):

(i) En það hefur nú ekki verið leitað **hennar**.
but it.EXPL has well not been looked-for it.G[a grave]
'But, well, it has not been looked for.'

In standard Icelandic, in contrast, pronominal NPs must raise (regardless of case); see (3) and the discussion in section 5.

For a historical change the New Passive is unusual in being more widespread in rural than in urban areas. Actually, it is not evident that it is a recent innovation (although it seems to be presently on the increase); that is, the fact that it was not discussed by linguists until in the 1980s might be coincidental or have social explanations that have nothing to do with the phenomenon itself. It might even have been a marginal, stigmatized phenomenon for centuries (even in Iceland, the language of adolescents and "common persons" has not been generally "visible" until recently). For the analytical purposes of this article, however, this is unimportant, so I will keep on referring to the phenomenon as the "New" Passive.

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b. It was widely accepted by 15- to 16-year-olds (in 1999–2000), while adults generally rejected it. In a written test (questionnaire), the acceptance ratio was commonly around 50% for the adolescents (28–73%, depending on constructions, areas, and social class),[6] whereas it was commonly around 5% for the adults (1–9%). The construction was least commonly accepted in Inner-Reykjavik, which has the highest education level in the country.
c. All speakers accept the standard NOM passive.[7]

M&S suggest that the construction is in the process of being reanalyzed as an active construction in the disguise of passive morphology, and hence that "passive" is a misnomer. Under the *active analysis*, the structure of a New Passive clause would be roughly as sketched in (11) (see the slightly different presentation in M&S, p. 100).

(11) The active analysis
$[_{CP} \ldots[_{TP}\ pro_{NOM}\ldots \text{Voice}\ [_{vP}\ \ldots \text{v-V}\ NP_{ACC/DAT/GEN}]]]$

Extending the general approach of Kratzer 1996 and much related work, I assume that *any* predicate is embedded under some Voice head, matched by the v head of the predicate (and indirectly matched by the highest argument of the predicate, via v, see shortly). Voice is thus the lowest category in the T system, from where it enters an Agree relation with the v-V complex.[8] This assumption is of central significance for the analysis I will pursue, so I need to take a short detour here, in order to briefly explain it before I proceed to discuss the active analysis.

Voice "regulates" argument structure. It may be expletive, as for instance in anticausative structures (Schäfer 2008, see further below), but it is commonly "contentful," licensing for instance an agent or an experiencer. Case marking is closely tied to Voice and argument structure, simple predicates containing either no or only a single argument (most commonly NOM), monotransitive predicates adding one more argument and one more case (typically yielding NOM-ACC), ditransitives adding a third argument and commonly also a third case (yielding, e.g., NOM-DAT-ACC). Voice itself may license certain cases. Thus, agentive Voice canonically licenses ergative case in ergative languages. More commonly, however, Voice licenses case only indirectly, via v heads. As will be discussed in section 4, there is

[6] Despite these high acceptance numbers, the New Passive is infrequent in writing, on the internet for instance (and some of the examples nonetheless found there are actually from linguistic discussions about the construction). Googling (April 11, 2009) gave seven results for *var tekið hana* 'was taken her/it.ACC' as compared to 25,600 results for the standard *hún var tekin* 'she/it.NOM was taken'.

[7] It has not been studied whether there are any aspectual or functional differences between the standard passive and the New Passive.

[8] In addition to the tense feature itself ("plain" T), the T system minimally contains Mood, Person and other φ-heads, higher than "plain" T, and Voice, lower than "plain" T; see section 5 (alternatively, Voice could be seen as the highest category in the v system). For a number of slightly different approaches to Voice and vP structure, see, for example, Alexiadou, Anagnostopoulou, and Schäfer 2006, Pylkkänen 2008, Ramchand 2008, and, in particular, Svenonius 2006 and Schäfer 2008, two works that have been important sources of inspiration for the approach I am pursuing.

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evidence that different Voices alter the case licensing properties of v heads in different ways.[9]

In accord with mainstream minimalism, then, I conceive of C and T as cover terms or "surrogates for richer systems" (Chomsky 2000:143, n. 31; see also Chomsky 2001:43, n. 8). I also follow Chomsky (2000, 2001), rather than, for example, Kratzer (1996), in assuming that the external argument is generated in the left periphery of the v system. However, Voice enters an Agree relation with little v, hence an extended Agree relation (Agree chain) with the external argument, via little v (in line with the control theory in Landau 2004, 2008 and related work).[10] Thus, the external argument is jointly licensed by the Voice-v "connection." Subsequently, its θ-role gets an interpretation at the Conceptual-Intentional interface as an Agree chain, involving Voice, v, and V.

The term *Voice* is a cover term (much as *Aspect* in Cinque 1999 and related work). Voice types, including the following ones, are mutually exclusive:

- $\text{Voice}_{\text{ACT/+AG}}$ (in structures with agentive predicates)
- $\text{Voice}_{\text{ACT/–AG}}$ (with nonagentive predicates)
- $\text{Voice}_{\text{PASS/+AG}}$ (with passive agentive predicates)
- $\text{Voice}_{\text{PASS/–AG}}$ (with passive nonagentive predicates)
- $\text{Voice}_{\text{PSYCH}}$ (with psych predicates)
- $\text{Voice}_{\text{FATE}}$ (with unaccusative predicates with a fate reading, like *drift*, *swamp*, etc.)
- $\text{Voice}_{\text{EXPL}}$ (with anticausative predicates and regular unaccusatives)

The sense of these terms will become clearer as we proceed. There are more Voice type heads than just these, but these are the ones that matter for my present purposes.[11]

Now, let us return to the active analysis in (11). The presence of an arbitrary or expletive NOM *pro* in Spec,TP would explain the otherwise mysterious ACC preservation without any further ado, so that aspect of the analysis would seem to be rather attractive. It would also account for the fact that the New Passive (of monotransitives) is exempted from A-movement, hence also from the Definiteness Effect (cf. M&S, pp. 117–118).

(12) No A-movement to subject (hence no Definiteness Effect)
  a. %Það hefur oft verið barið **mig**.
    it has.DFT often been hit.DFT me.A
    'I have often been beaten up.'

[9] However, more categories than just Voice can affect the case assignment properties of v-V, such as negation in languages like Russian and Finnish.

[10] Introducing the external argument into clausal structure is distinct from its "final" positional licensing, triggering high NP movement (see the discussion of NP movement in section 5).

[11] Nonagentive passive predicates (like *be missed*) are few and atypical of the Icelandic passive (see Sigurðsson 1989:chap. 6). Many active transitive predicates take a nonagentive subject. Some such predicates (*acquire, experience*,…) seem to be embedded under other Voice head types than $\text{Voice}_{\text{ACT/–AG}}$ (Sigurðsson 2009), but I put this aside here.

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b. *Það hefur **mig** oft verið barið.
it has.DFT me.A often been hit.DFT

The active analysis was first tentatively suggested by Sigurðsson (1989:356), precisely for the reason that it would simply explain away the ACC preservation, henceforth *the accusative problem*. M&S develop further arguments in favor of the analysis, claiming that the New Passive shares the following properties with regular active clauses:

(13) ''Activeness'' tests
a. Agentive *af-* 'by' phrases are disallowed.
b. Anaphoric binding is possible.
c. Control of subject-oriented adjuncts is possible.
d. The main verb may be unaccusative.

However, as argued by Eythórsson (2008), the results of these tests are rather vague, indeed so vague that they do not sharply distinguish the New Passive from traditional passives, in particular the standard impersonal passive (agentive *af-* 'by' phrases, for instance, usually being awkward or unacceptable in the impersonal passive). I will not review Eythórsson's arguments here, but they seem sound to me.[12]

It is very true, as argued by Maling (2006), that passive morphology does not necessarily entail ''passive syntax'' (not any more than, say, past tense morphology always has to signal ''past tense syntax''). However, showing that a construction partly passes the tests in (13) for some speakers does not amount to showing that it is ''nonpassive.''

Arguing that a construction is ''passive'' or ''nonpassive'' is, in fact, not as innocent or simple as it might appear to be. The ''passive'' is not a syntactic primitive (see Chomsky 1981 and much related work) but a complex of variably salient characteristics, such as nonfinite passive morphology (commonly past participles), usually combined with a copula of some sort, a ''missing'' agentive overt subject, a silent agentive θ-role, and NP movement from V object to subject or, more rarely, from P object to subject (pseudopassives). Not a single one of these characteristics is exclusively found in constructions that are traditionally referred to as ''passive.''

Similarly, ''active'' is a term that is commonly used to refer to a complex of characteristics, but I believe it is fair to say that ''active constructions'' prototypically involve a spelled out vP-external agentive or at least ''active'' subject (usually in Spec,TP) and no hidden agentive θ-role. By excluding unaccusatives, unergatives, and other predicates that do not take an argument acted upon by an active or agentive subject, one could also take transitivity to be a defining property of active constructions, at least in a narrow sense (see Trask 1993:5).

With the potential exception of transitivity (depending on how one understands that notion), the New Passive lacks the salient properties of ''active constructions,'' while

[12] Jónsson (2009) presents some additional arguments against the active analysis. See also the discussion in Thráinsson 2007 (p. 273ff.).

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having many of the common characteristics of "passives." Thus, in addition to passive morphology, it has the hidden agent reading typical of the passive and disallows the suppressed agent to be lexicalized outside of vP. The hidden agent reading is evident in the translations in (8) and (12a), and, as seen in (14), the agent cannot be spelled out in Spec,TP, no matter how semantically vague it may be (as also pointed out in Eythórsson 2008).

(14) No subject in Spec,TP
*Var [$_{TP}$ einhver/fólk/maður [$_{vP}$ barið hana…]]?
was somebody/people/one hit her

Moreover, subject control of secondary predicate agreement is excluded in the New Passive, (see also Jónsson 2009), whereas object-controlled agreement is well formed:

(15) No subject control of secondary predicate agreement
a. %Var barið hana (*full**ur**)?
was hit her.A drunk.N.M.SG[13]
'Was she hit (by somebody who was drunk)?'
b. %Var barið hana (full**a**)?
was hit her.A drunk.A.F.SG
'Was she hit (when she was) drunk?'

In regular active clauses, on the other hand, the subject may control secondary predicate agreement, no less (or even rather) than the object:

(16) Secondary predicate agreement in active constructions
a. Hann barði hana (full**ur**).
he hit her drunk.N.M.SG
'He hit her (when he was drunk).'
b. Hann barði hana (full**a**).
he hit her drunk.A.F.SG
'He hit her (when she was drunk).'

Much as in the New Passive, agent-controlled agreement is impossible in the standard passive, whereas it is well formed in active arbitrary PRO infinitives (showing that the reason why agreement is ill formed in (15a) is independent of "subject silence"). This is illustrated in (17).

(17) Agent-controlled agreement in standard passives vs. active PRO infinitives
a. Var hún barin (*full**ur**)?
was she hit drunk.N.M.SG
Intended: 'Was she hit (by somebody who was drunk)?'

[13] Elements that agree with a covert subject commonly show up as masculine singular; see below on PRO infinitives and impersonal *pro* constructions.

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b. Að berja hana full**ur** var skammarlegt.
to hit her drunk.N.M.SG was shameful
'To hit her when (one was) drunk was shameful.'

All these facts suggest that the New Passive has more properties in common with the standard passive than with regular active predicates.

Icelandic has an active construction with arbitrary/generic *pro*, the so-called Impersonal Modal Construction (IMC: Sigurðsson 1989:163ff., Sigurðsson & Egerland 2009; see also, e.g., Thráinsson 2007:311ff.). As suggested by Sigurðsson (1989:356), this construction would seem to be structurally related to the New Passive, hence perhaps a model for it. However, a closer look reveals that the two constructions have different properties. Thus, the IMC tolerates both an optional overt subject and *pro*-controlled agreement, as illustrated in (18).

(18) The IMC
a. Má (**maður**) ekki vera hérna?
may (one) not be here
'Is it not allowed to be/stay here?'
b. Má ekki vera hérna full**ur**?
may not be here drunk.N.M.SG
'Is it not allowed to be/stay here drunk?'

Even though the Icelandic impersonal *pro* is not just a null version of impersonal *maður* 'you, one' (Sigurðsson & Egerland 2009), it normally triggers M.SG agreement, like *maður*.

In line with traditional generative approaches (Jaeggli 1986, Chomsky 1981 and much related work; see the discussion in Collins 2005), one can think of passives as being ''defective,'' such that the agentive θ-role is trapped inside vP, hence blocked from being lexicalized in Spec,TP. Assume that this is brought about by passive morphology, structures containing v-V_{PASS} in turn being merged with $Voice_{PASS}$ (see Schäfer 2008).[14] If so, (19) illustrates the core structure of passives in general (in Germanic and many other languages).

(19) The passive analysis
$[_{CP}\ldots[_{TP}\ldots Voice_{PASS}\ldots[_{vP}\ldots v\text{-}V_{PASS}\ldots]]]$

''To be passive,'' then, is to have v-V_{PASS} morphology that matches $Voice_{PASS}$ (under distant Agree), nothing more and nothing less. The New Passive shares these core properties with the canonical passive.

The vP internal agent role is partly active in syntax. Thus, it can bind an AdvP-internal anaphor, as illustrated in (20a). As seen in (20b), on the other hand, an argument that raises to subject cannot contain an anaphor. Both examples are

[14] There are several ways of technically implementing this basic idea. I assume a simple incorporation analysis, under which the participle suffix *is* the lexical representation of the external argument.

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representative of standard Icelandic (impersonal passive in (20a), NOM passive in (20b)).[15]

(20) Binding
a. Eftir vinnu var bara farið heim til **sín**.
after work was just gone home to self.REFL
'After work you just went home (to your own place).'
b. *Eftir vinnu voru bílarnir **sínir** bara keyrðir heim.
after work were cars.N self's.REFL.N just driven home

These facts follow, if the binding agent role is trapped within vP, hence able to bind vP-internal constituents, like *heim til sín* in (20a), but unable to bind NPs (like *bílarnir sínir* in (20b)) that have raised out of vP, to Spec,TP.[16]

This analysis suggests that (21) should be an acceptable New Passive sentence.

(21) Binding in the New Passive
%Eftir vinnu var bara keyrt bílana **sína** heim.
after work was just driven car.A self's.REFL.A home

This prediction gets some support from M&S's results (see p. 120ff.), but, as their results for binding were rather vague, the support is not as strong as one might have wished.

The suppressed or silent agent role can also control into infinitives (Sigurðsson 1989, Maling 2006), as illustrated in (22a,b).

(22) Control
a. Það er dansað til að skemmta sér hér.
it is danced for to amuse self.REFL here
'People dance in order to amuse themselves here.'
b. Það er reynt að dansa hér.
it is tried to dance here
'People try/are trying to dance here.'
c. *Það er reynt að vera dansað hér.
it is tried to be danced here

[15] Only 39% of the adults accepted a similar example in M&S's study (see p. 121). Their example is just plain *Það var farið heim til sín* 'It was gone home to self', which is also not really felicitous to my ears. The scene-setting adverbial *eftir vinnu* 'after work' and the focalizer *bara* 'only, just' make the example in (20a) fully acceptable to me. This is illustrative of how delicate judgments in impersonal constructions can be.

[16] This is not an entirely innocent reasoning. It is based on the assumption that the AdvPs in question are c-commanded by the vP-internal agent role in a kind of a Larsonian VP-shell structure, rather than right-adjoined to vP. However, the assumption that the agent role is trapped vP internally in passives gains support from a number of facts, one of them being the fact discussed earlier that the agent role cannot control secondary predicates, such predicates being vP external, hence not c-commanded by the vP-internal agent.

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As seen in (22c), however, the silent agent role of *vera dansað* 'be danced' cannot itself be controlled. Presumably, it is too low in the structure (trapped inside vP) and hence "too far away," in some sense not formalized here, for being successfully probed by the controller (the silent matrix agent; see Holmberg 2005 on similar facts in Finnish impersonal constructions).

The "half-active" status of the silent agent is further highlighted by examples like (23), with simultaneous overt subject binding and silent agent control.

(23) Overt subject binding + silent agent control
Hann$_1$ var handtekinn-[θ_2] heima hjá sér$_1$ til að PRO$_2$ hindra
he was arrested home by self.REFL for to prevent
uppþot.
riots
'He was arrested in his home to prevent riots.'

Whereas the overt passive matrix subject "arrestee" binds the reflexive *sér*, it is the silent "arrester" that controls into the infinitive, as indicated. In general, the silent agent can only be syntactically active in the (local) absence of a more prominent syntactic "participant." Thus, it can bind an anaphor in the impersonal passive, but not in the personal (A-movement) passive, because the latter has an overt (passivized) subject that is a more prominent "participant" than the agent role. This is illustrated in (24).

(24) Variable activity of the implicit agent
a. Eftir vinnu var bara keyrt-[**θ_1**] heim til sín**$_1$**.
after work was just driven home to self.REFL
'After work you just drove home (to your own place).' (= the driver's place)
b. Eftir vinnu var **fólk$_2$** bara keyrt-[θ_1] heim til sín**$_{2/*1}$**.
after work was people just driven home to self.REFL
'After work you were just driven home (to your own place.)' (≠ the driver's place).

A simple comparison of the syntactic activity of the implicit agent in the personal passive and in the impersonal passive, including the New Passive, is thus bound to yield misleading results.

In short, it seems safe to conclude that the New Passive is a "passive construction," sharing the properties in (19) with other passives in Icelandic. It follows that we need to develop some new understanding of the accusative problem and of the absence of A-movement in the New Passive. I will discuss the accusative problem and case assignment in sections 3 and 4, turning to A-movement and phasehood in section 5. As it turns out, the analysis developed suggests that the New Passive is an unusually "active passive" (much like the standard P passive), blocking A-movement by ϕ-intervention.

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3. The Accusative Problem

Eythórsson (2008) suggests that Burzio's Generalization should be parameterized, such that accusative case can be parametrically assigned to objects independently of whether nominative case is also assigned.

Burzio's Generalization is just that, a generalization. It is not a principle or a rule of grammar or grammars, hence not plausibly amenable to parametrization. However, the gist of Eythórsson's suggestion can be interpreted such that some kind of an *independent* ACC approach is needed, which seems to be essentially correct (on the understanding that ACC assignment can in certain cases be available even when NOM is absent). If some version of such an approach is to be upheld, a number of problems that arise must be addressed and preferably solved, or else it is not clear that we are doing anything but restating the fact that the New Passive preserves ACC. I will briefly address some of these problems below.

First, accusative is not generally available or free as an independent "first case." Consider the following examples:

(25) ACC is not generally independent of NOM
   a. Það stendur **maður**/*mann í dyrunum.
      there stands man.N A in door.the
      'There is a man standing in the door(way).'
   b. Það eru horfnir **peningar**./*Það er horfið peninga.
      there are.3PL gone.N.M.PL money.N there is.DFT gone.DFT money.A
      'Some money has disappeared.'
   c. Þá var gaman að vera **kennari** /*kennara.
      then was nice to be teacher.N A
      'Then it was nice to be a teacher.'

Accusatives of this sort are unattested, also in the New Passive variety.

Unless further specified or constrained, the independent ACC approach predicts that NOM objects should generally shift to ACC in the New Passive variety, but that is not borne out either:[17]

(26) NOM objects do not shift to ACC
   a. Mér leiddist **hún**/*hana.
      me.D bored she.N/her.A
      'I found her boring.'
   b. Henni mislíkaði **þessi hávaði**/*þennan hávaða.
      her.D disliked this.N noise.N/ this.A noise.A
      'She disliked this noise.'

[17] A few examples of this sort have been found on the internet (Árnadóttir & Sigurðsson 2008), but they are not a general trait of the New Passive variety or of any other common variety of Icelandic, as far as I know. Googling the examples in (26a) on April 14, 2009 gave 63 results for the DAT-NOM pattern (*Mér leiddist hún*), but zero for the DAT-ACC pattern.

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A DAT-NOM > DAT-ACC shift of this sort is commonly observed in Faroese (Eythórsson & Jónsson 2003, Thráinsson et al. 2004:228ff.), so it is clearly a possible change, but the fact that it has not been observed as a general trait of the New Passive variety suggests that the accusative problem does not have a solution or an explanation in terms of a *generally* applicable or available independent ACC approach. In other words, if such an approach is to be successful, it has to be restricted somehow, such that it becomes at least descriptively adequate for (active as well as passive constructions in) the New Passive variety.

Recall that the New Passive shares a number of properties with the standard impersonal P passive (of the type 'it/then was talked to me'). Postulating a silent preposition in the New Passive might thus seem to be a possible way to go here (as discussed in Barðdal & Molnár 2003). Such an empty-P approach is sketched in (27).

(27) The empty-P approach
a. %Þá var beðið [$_P$ Ø] **mig** að fara.
then was asked me.A to go
'Then I was asked to go.'
b. %Það var sagt [$_P$ Ø] **mér** að fara.
it was told me.D to go
'I was told to go.'

If one were to adopt an approach along these lines one would have to say that the empty P is like a particle in not assigning any case of its own, instead allowing ''transmission'' of the V case to the object.[18] Simultaneously, however, the empty P would have to be like overt prepositions (but unlike particles) in exempting NPs from A-movement.

The empty-P approach is seemingly attractive in that it would ''automatically'' account for the ACC preservation in the New Passive, as the New Passive would simply be a subtype of the standard (dynamic/eventive) P passive. Unfortunately, however, this approach suffers from much the same fundamental problems as a BG parametric approach—that is, it is unprincipled and also too inaccurate, hence descriptively inadequate. Basically, it is unclear why New Passive speakers should specifically insert an empty (non-case-assigning) P in passives and not, say, in regular unaccusatives (such as (25a,b)). Also, as seen by English pseudopassives, Ps do not always block A-movement; something more than just the presence of a P is in any case required to account for absent A-movement in the New Passive (see the discussion around (39) in section 5).

An adequate solution of the accusative problem has to somehow relate it to passive Voice. I will take a closer look at this issue in the next section. The analysis developed hypothesizes that ACC-to-NOM conversion involves ''case-star deletion'' under Voice Agree, absent from the New Passive (much as from so-called psych and fate [un]accusatives in standard Icelandic). The A-movement issue, in turn, is discussed in

[18] As in *færa (til)* ACC 'move (around) ACC', where *til* is a non-case-assigning particle, distinct from the GEN-assigning preposition *til* 'to(ward)', as in *færa* ACC til GEN 'bring ACC to GEN'.

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section 5, where I argue that the New Passive is indeed related to the standard P passive, not by inserting a silent P but by inducing ϕ-intervention in a parallel fashion as overt Ps do in Icelandic and many other languages (as opposed to English).

4. Voice, v, and Case

Adopting, by and large, mainstream minimalism (Chomsky 2000, 2001 and related work), the central properties of the core argumental case system in nominative-accusative languages can be simply described as follows, where the arrow reads as "assigns" (in PF morphology):

(28) The central NOM-ACC system
  a. v* → ACC
  b. v → Ø

In a similar vein, we may designate DAT- and GEN-assigning v heads as v** and v***, respectively. Plausibly, there is internal logic to the star notation, such that the (verbal) cases are the more oblique the more stars they represent, but I put that issue aside here. Designations of this sort are, in any event, abstractions and they are also simplifications, as suggested by a number of facts, such as the fact that grammar contains many types of accusatives and datives.[19] However, the exact nature of the differences between distinct accusatives or datives is largely unimportant in the present context, so I will not go into any further details here. Additionally, I disregard case agreement and all instances of case marking of NPs (adverbial NPs, etc.) that do not belong to the core argumental system (including subjects, V objects, and P objects).

Transitive vPs are headed by an ACC-assigning v* or DAT/GEN-assigning v**(*), whereas (NOM) passive vPs are headed by noncase- (Ø-) assigning plain v, like (most) unaccusatives and other "defective" predicates. Plausibly, NP matching of v heads is a syntactic Agree relation (v* ↔ NP, etc.), whereas case-assignment rules like (28a,b) operate in postsyntactic (PF) morphology, where v* ↔ NP is interpreted as NP_{ACC}, whereas v ↔ NP (a "null-case relation") is interpreted as NP_{NOM} (Sigurðsson 2009). If the finite verb successfully probes NOM in subsequent (PF) agreement morphology, finite verb agreement is triggered; otherwise, the finite verb shows up in third-person singular (in Icelandic).

Given this approach, all case marking of arguments is structural (see also Svenonius 2006), but it does not follow that it is always *predictable*. That is, I do not claim that idiosyncratic factors cannot affect argument case. Thus, even though an argument gets DAT in a structural configuration with v**-V_x, the fact that the particular

[19] A nonexhaustive list for Icelandic includes DAT and ACC subjects of several sorts, DAT and ACC indirect objects, DAT and ACC direct objects, DAT and ACC P objects, and several types of adverbial DAT and ACC NPs. Thus, as discussed by Sigurðsson (2009), the overt case features cannot be assimilated with v*, v**, etc., instead being morphological interpretations of a number of disparate abstract syntactic relations (as underlined by the fact that nonargumental NPs are case-marked).

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V_x in question matches v** rather than v*, for instance, may be due to idiosyncratic factors, internal to V_x. I will not discuss such factors here, though (but see Sigurðsson 2009 for some observations).

We are now in a position to briefly outline at least an initially plausible approach to case preservation and "case elimination" in various kinds of constructions, including the standard passive and the New Passive. Suppose defective v is truly defective in the sense that it is not a lexical category, hence not available in any numeration, instead being derived from v* and v**(*), by elimination of their case-assigning property (in the externalization process). Call this *case-star deletion*. As we saw in the introduction, the standard passive eliminates ACC (v* > v), whereas it "keeps" DAT (and GEN). Assume therefore that embedding a v-type head under $\text{Voice}_{\text{PASS}}$ leads to a single case-star deletion, but not to a double (or triple) case-star deletion. If so, a regular NOM passive has the structure in (29a), after single case-star deletion, whereas a DAT passive has the structure in (29b).

(29) NOM vs. DAT passives

a. $[_{\text{CP}} \ldots[_{\text{TP}} \ldots \text{Voice}_{\text{PASS}} \ldots[\ldots \text{v-V}_{\text{PASS}}\ \text{NP}\ldots]]]$ (i.e., vP)

b. $[_{\text{CP}} \ldots[_{\text{TP}} \ldots \text{Voice}_{\text{PASS}} \ldots[\ldots \text{v**-V}_{\text{PASS}}\ \text{NP}\ldots]]]$ (i.e., v**P)

Passive case preservation (of DAT) versus case-star deletion in standard Icelandic and many other languages can thus be described as in (30), where the arrows indicate a matching (Agree) relation between Voice and v (cf. the Agree approach in Landau 2004, 2008).

(30) Passive case-star deletion vs. case preservation in standard Icelandic

a. $\text{Voice}_{\text{PASS}} \ldots \text{v*} \ldots$ > $\text{Voice}_{\text{PASS}} \ldots \text{v} \ldots$ (yields Ø = NOM in PF)

b. $\text{Voice}_{\text{PASS}} \ldots \text{v**} \ldots$ > $\text{Voice}_{\text{PASS}} \ldots \text{v**} \ldots$ (yields DAT in PF)

Accordingly, the New Passive can be analyzed as lacking single case-star deletion under $\text{Voice}_{\text{PASS}}$ matching by v*. The analysis thus captures the fact that the accusative problem is confined to passives. It also accommodates Burzio's Generalization or the Sibling Correlation (SC) between NOM and ACC. As formulated by Sigurðsson (2003, 2006), the SC is a generalization about morphological case externalization. Here (and in Sigurðsson 2009), I extend the approach by analyzing the *syntactic* factors that yield the SC in the externalization part of language.

Informally, the SC says that ACC cannot be assigned unless NOM is also assigned to another argument of the same predicate. In the present approach, however, NOM is is not a syntactically active feature or relation but a PF interpretation of noncase (Ø). Given that v (v*, v**,…) must be in an Agree relation with Voice, the SC follows: Either the Voice-v "connection" (Agree chain) jointly licenses an external argument and does not induce any case-star deletion, yielding ACC on the internal argument and noncase (NOM) on the external argument; or the Voice-v chain does not license an

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external argument and induces case-star deletion, which yields only noncase = NOM. The rationale behind this is that whenever an "extra" argument is not introduced there is no need to activate case (to distinguish between arguments), hence the case star is simply deleted.

SC thus follows from the interaction of two factors: ± licensing of an external argument and ± case-star deletion. Canonically, these factors coincide, yielding the SC phenomenon, in prototypical NOM-ACC$_i$ versus NOM$_i$ alternations. Other constructions, however, including the New Passive, illustrate that the factors behind the SC must be teased apart (as will be discussed shortly).

Given that Voice regulates argument structure and that case distinctions commonly correlate with argument structure, a theory where Voice affects the case licensing properties of v heads is called for (see also Svenonius 2006). Notice, however, that the approach pursued here develops a framework within which case-star preservation versus case-star deletion can be analyzed and generalized over, whereas it does not explain why these phenomena have a slightly different distribution in distinct varieties or dialects. That is to say, the approach makes the generalization that case-star deletion may take place under Voice ↔ v Agree, but it does not make exact predictions or claims as to which Voice heads trigger which case-star deletion processes in which language varieties, beyond the Icelandic varieties analyzed here. As I will discuss shortly, Voice heads that reduce the number of licensed arguments commonly trigger case-star deletion, but there are exceptions, a fact that illustrates that the correlation is a tendency rather than a principle.

The case-star deletion process in the standard passive is not an isolated phenomenon. Anticausative ("middle") *-st*-verbs and stative (adjectival) passives are like standard dynamic or eventive passives in never "preserving" ACC. Moreover, they never preserve inherent case on themes, either (see Zaenen & Maling 1984, Sigurðsson 1989:chap. 6, Thráinsson 2005, 2007:289ff.). This is illustrated in (31).

(31) Variable case preservation

a. Við lokuðum **glugganum**. — Active NOM-**DAT$_i$**
we closed window.the.DAT
'We closed the window.'

b. **Glugganum** var lokað þjösnalega. — Dynamic passive **DAT$_i$**
window.the.DAT was closed brutally
'The window was brutally closed.'

c. **Glugginn** lokaðist. — Anticausative **NOM$_i$**
window.the.NOM closed-ST
'The window closed.'

d. **Glugginn** var lokaður í tvær vikur. — Stative passive **NOM$_i$**
window.the.NOM was closed for two weeks
'The window was closed for two weeks.'

Anticausatives differ from stative passives in involving a process (the vP-internal Proc[ess] head in Ramchand 2008), but both imply a result (vP-internal Res[ult] in

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Ramchand 2008).[20] In other respects, these predicate types are quite similar, both being incompatible with an agentive reading. Closely following Alexiadou, Anagnostopoulou & Schäfer (2006) and Schäfer (2008), I assume that anticausative vPs are embedded under an expletive Voice head, $\text{Voice}_{\text{EXPL}}$ (their external θ-role being noncontentful or expletive), and I hypothesize that this applies to stative passive vPs as well. If this is on the right track, we may conjecture that $\text{Voice}_{\text{EXPL}}$ differs from $\text{Voice}_{\text{PASS}}$ in triggering not only a single case-star deletion but a general case-star deletion.[21] In contrast to direct object datives, however, anticausatives do not eliminate benefactive indirect object datives (see Sigurðsson 1989:260, 270n; Thráinsson 2007:290–291), a fact that tallies well with the widely adopted hypothesis (mentioned in fn. 4 above) that such datives are licensed in a different fashion than direct objects (DAT, ACC, or GEN).

Plain unaccusatives, like *appear*, *die*, and *disappear*, differ from anticausatives in never implying an initiator or causer, but they have otherwise much the same properties as anticausatives. I thus assume that although these predicate types have different vP-internal structures they are both embedded under $\text{Voice}_{\text{EXPL}}$. If so, we expect general case-star deletion to take place, subjects of unaccusatives thus showing up in NOM rather than in ACC (or DAT or GEN). This prediction of the analysis is borne out in general, with two major types of quirky accusative exceptions: so-called *fate (un)accusatives* and *psych (un)accusatives*. This is (very briefly) illustrated in (32).

(32) Regular unaccusatives vs. psych and fate (un)accusatives

a. Það hurfu **margir íbúar.** Regular unaccusatives
there disappeared many residents.N
'Many (of the) residents disappeared.'

b. Það langaði **marga íbúa** heim. Psych (un)accusatives
there longed many residents.A home
'Many (of the) residents wanted to go home.'

c. Það rak **marga íbúa** að landi. Fate (un)accusatives
there drove many residents.A to land
'Many (of the) residents drifted ashore.'

Icelandic psych predicates commonly take a nominative or a dative subject, whereas psych accusatives are relatively rare (Jónsson 2003). If psych predicates in general are embedded under $\text{Voice}_{\text{PSYCH}}$, we can interpret this fact as a tendency to avoid combining v* (yielding ACC) with $\text{Voice}_{\text{PSYCH}}$. This understanding gains support from the much-discussed fact that psych accusatives tend to get replaced by psych datives in colloquial Icelandic ("Dative Sickness"; see Eythórsson 2000, Thráinsson 2007:224, and references therein).

[20] However, not all stative passives are resultative in the sense of Embick (2004), who distinguishes between plain and resultative statives. As far as I can judge, the distinction is irrelevant in the present context.

[21] Anticausative *-st*-formation, hence the concomitant case-star deletion, is only observed for a few GEN-assigning verbs, though.

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Fate accusatives have a *get*-passive fate reading of a sort, typical of predicates like *drift*, *swamp*, *get swept overboard*, and so forth. Most fate (un)accusative predicates have transitive and passive counterparts, as illustrated for *fylla* 'fill; swamp' in (33).

(33) Transitive, passive, fate unaccusative triples

a. Hún fyllti **bátinn**. she filled boat.the.ACC 'She filled the boat (with some cargo).'	Transitive:	Nom-**Acc$_i$**
b. **Báturinn** var fylltur. boat.the.NOM was filled 'The boat was filled (with some cargo).'	Passive:	**Nom$_i$**
c. **Bátinn** fyllti. boat.the.ACC filled 'The boat swamped.'	(Un)accusative:	**Acc$_i$**

The fate reading of fate unaccusative predicates is never shared by the "same" predicate when either transitive or passive (cf. Ottósson 1988:147–148). Thus, as seen in (33), the verb *fylla* and its passive participle *fyllt-* usually means simply 'fill' and 'filled', whereas it means 'swamp' when it is used as a fate (un)accusative verb. In all cases of this sort, the transitive and passive versions have much the same general, broad semantics as in English (and other related languages), whereas the fate (un)accusative version has a narrow, semi-idiomatic fate reading, absent from the transitive and the passive (Sigurðsson 2006:25).

The fate reading is (obviously) incompatible with agentivity. This fact is accommodated if Voice heads are in a complementary distribution, thus mutually exclusive, and if fate (un)accusative vPs are selected by Voice$_{\text{FATE}}$, hence inconsistent with, for instance, active agentive Voice and passive agentive Voice, Voice$_{\text{ACT/+AG}}$, and Voice$_{\text{PASS/+AG}}$. If so, many Voice$_{\text{FATE}}$ (and Voice$_{\text{PSYCH}}$) heads in standard Icelandic differ from Voice$_{\text{PASS/+AG}}$ and Voice$_{\text{EXPL}}$ in not triggering any case-star deletion.[22] If this approach is on the right track, the logical conclusion is that Voice$_{\text{PASS+AG}}$ in the New Passive variety is like many Voice$_{\text{FATE}}$ (and some Voice$_{\text{PSYCH}}$) heads in standard Icelandic in not triggering single case-star deletion, thereby "releasing" ACC (which, however, undergoes A-movement in the fate and psych unaccusative constructions, as opposed to the New Passive; see below).

Associating the passive with a *get*-passive fate reading is natural: In both passive and fate (un)accusative predicates, a theme argument is not in control of the ongoing event or process. "Being an undergoer" is thus a semantic factor which the ACC arguments in both types of predicates have in common. Nevertheless, fate accusatives often give way to NOM in colloquial Icelandic (see Eythórsson 2000), a tendency sometimes referred to as *Nominative Sickness* (NS). This change is thus

[22] Some unaccusative fate predicates undergo case-star deletion in standard Icelandic (thus taking a NOM subject; cf. Sigurðsson 2009:n. 25), and, as mentioned above, the same applies to many unaccusative psych predicates. I will not discuss the "irregularity" that arises from this variation, thereby simplifying the presentation of the facts. Certain variation in case marking (stemming from variation in case-star deletion) is seen throughout the history of Icelandic (and many other well-studied case languages).

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orthogonal to the New Passive, going in the opposite direction. However, at least some (perhaps most) New Passive speakers are also Nominative Sickness speakers, call them NewP/NS speakers. For these speakers, $\text{Voice}_{\text{EXPL}}$ and $\text{Voice}_{\text{FATE}}$ heads trigger single case-star deletion, as opposed to $\text{Voice}_{\text{ACT/+AG}}$ and $\text{Voice}_{\text{PASS+AG}}$. The picture that emerges for speakers of standard Icelandic and for consistent NewP/NS speakers is thus the one sketched in (34).[23]

(34) Predicate types and case-star deletion

		Standard Icelandic	NewP/NS
a. $\text{Voice}_{\text{ACT/+AG}}$:	agentive transitives	No deletion *we hit* ***them***.ACC	No deletion *we hit* ***them***.ACC
b. $\text{Voice}_{\text{PASS/+AG}}$:	agentive passives	v* > v (NOM) ***they***.*NOM were hit*	No deletion *(it) was hit* ***them***.ACC
c. $\text{Voice}_{\text{FATE}}$:	fate (un)accusatives	Often no deletion ***them***.ACC drifted	v* > v (NOM) ***they***.*NOM drifted*
d. $\text{Voice}_{\text{EXPL}}$:		General deletion	General deletion
	anticausatives	***they***.*NOM closed*-ST	***they***.*NOM closed*-ST
	most unaccusatives	***they***.*NOM appeared*	***they***.*NOM appeared*
	stative passives	***they***.*NOM were broken*	***they***.*NOM were broken*

Many NS speakers are not NewP speakers, whereas I have not yet encountered or observed any NewP speakers who are not also NS speakers. The overlapping or covariation of these phenomena remains to be systematically investigated, though.

By extending the case-star notation of Chomsky (2001), I have developed a framework within which case variation can be analyzed and generalized over. There can be no question that the notation is useful, as suggested by the fact that it enables a coherent analysis of the New Passive in relation to other major case alternation phenomena, including:

- ACC-NOM conversion in the standard, dynamic passive
- ACC-NOM and DAT-NOM conversion in stative passives (in all varieties)
- ACC-NOM and DAT-NOM conversion in anticausatives and unaccusatives (in all varieties)
- ACC-preservation in many fate and psych (un)accusative constructions versus 'NOM-sickness'

The analysis also highlights the fact that all the ''ingredients'' of the New Passive are already there, in the standard language. One only needs to identify the relevant

[23] As indicated in (34d), regular unaccusatives take a NOM subject. This extends to certain (inflectionally) strong–weak pairs, where the unaccusative strong verb takes a NOM subject that corresponds to a DAT object of the transitive weak verb (of the type 'the ship.NOM sank[strong]' vs. 'they sank[weak] the ship.DAT'). However, there are also a number of unaccusatives that take a DAT subject. See further Zaenen & Maling 1984, Sigurðsson 1989:chap. 6.2, and Thráinsson 2007:298ff.

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factors and realize that they interact in a slightly different manner in the New Passive variety than in the standard language, a typical minimalist endeavour (see section 5).

Notation is not explanatory in itself. Linking case-star deletion to Voice and analyzing different case-star deletion processes as related phenomena is explanatory, but the case-star notation as such is not (not any more than traditional case labels, ACC, DAT, etc.). However, it raises the intriguing question of whether there is some internal logic to it, for instance such that double case-star deletion (DAT > NOM) comes about in two separate single case-star deletions (DAT > ACC and then ACC > NOM). Another interesting issue is whether accusative predicative case (of the type *It is her*) in languages like English and the above-mentioned DAT-NOM > DAT-ACC shift in Faroese can be analyzed in a partly parallel fashion as the New Passive—that is, as involving ''lacking'' case-star deletion. A related question, is whether NOM-NOM constructions in languages like Turkish, Tamil, and Japanese (see, e.g., Enç 1991, Lehmann 1993, Heycock & Doron 2003) can be conversely analyzed as involving case-star deletion. Yet another question, raised by a reviewer, is whether there are any case-star-adding processes—antipassives would seem to be a case in point. I leave these and many related issues aside here. They are interesting, but beyond the scope of the present study.

5. On A-Movement and Phasehood

English differs from Icelandic in not having any inherent morphological cases, of course. However, if preposition ''assignment,'' *P assignment*, is taken to be related to inherent case assignment by v**, the English passive may perhaps be understood as involving general case-star deletion (leaving P itself intact), yielding both regular eventive passives (single case-star deletion) and NOM pseudopassives like *She was much talked about* (double case-star deletion). Icelandic has no eventive pseudopassives (see Maling & Zaenen 1985), whereas it has stative pseudopassives, where the preposition is incorporated into the participle.[24] These facts are illustrated in (35); the adverbial *þá* 'then' occupies Spec,CP, the canonical subject position thus being postverbal (the V2 effect).

(35) Impersonal P passives vs. pseudopassives

a. Þá var oft talað um **Ólaf**. — Eventive P passive
then was often talked about Olaf.A
'People then often talked about Olaf.'

b. *Þá var Ólafur oft talaður um. — *Eventive NOM pseudopassive
then was Olaf.N often talked about

c. *Þá var Ólaf oft talað um. — *Eventive ACC pseudopassive
then was Olaf.A often talked about

d. Þá var **Ólafur** oft umtalaður. — Stative NOM pseudopassive (with P incorporation)
then was Olaf.N often about-talked
'Then, Olaf was often a talked about person.'

[24] However, the formation of pseudopassive participles is lexically restricted, available for only some V+P combinations.

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P assignment does not always have any clear semantic correlates. Regardless of whether it has any such correlates or not, it does have structural effects. The clearest effect in a language like Icelandic is that P assignment exempts an NP from A-movement, hence also from the Definiteness Effect (DE), as illustrated in (36).[25]

(36) P objects are exempted from A-movement/DE

a. Þess vegna voru **þeir** kallaðir ___ í viðtal.
that for were they called in interview
'Therefore, they were called for an interview.'

b. *Þess vegna voru ___ kallaðir **þeir** í viðtal.
that for were called they in interview

c. Þess vegna voru ___ kallaðir **tveir umsækjendur** í viðtal.
that for were called two applicants.N in interview
'Therefore, two applicants were called for an interview.'

d. *Þess vegna var **þá** kallað á ___ í viðtal.
that for was them.A called on in interview

e. Þess vegna var ___ kallað á **þá** í viðtal.
that for was called on them.A in interview
'Therefore, they were called for an interview.'

A pronominal subject has to raise from the V-object position, as illustrated by the contrast between (36a) and (36b), whereas the indefinite subject in (36c) may show up as a complement of V. P-object NPs, on the other hand, are blocked from undergoing A-movement, as seen in (36d,e) (and (35b,c) above), and this holds true regardless of the definiteness of such NPs.[26]

In contrast, inherent case assignment does not exempt NPs from A-movement, quirky subjects behaving like nominative subjects with respect to A-movement, a well-known and widely discussed fact (see Sigurðsson 1989, among many):

(37) Inherent case does not exempt NPs from A-movement

a. Þess vegna var **þeim** hjálpað.
that for was.DFT them.D helped.DFT
'Therefore, they were helped.'

b. *Þess vegna var hjálpað **þeim**.
that for was.DFT helped.DFT them.D

These facts pertain to standard Icelandic, whereas (37b) is grammatical in the New Passive variety. Interestingly, the facts in (36) also hold for NewP speakers. That is,

[25] *Kallaðir* is the N.M.SG form of the participle (agreeing with a NOM subject), whereas *kallað* is its default NT.SG form.

[26] The interaction of person, definiteness, quantification, heaviness, and context in A-movement constructions is quite complex in Icelandic (see Thráinsson 2007:313ff.). As mentioned in footnote 3, however, A-movement is always obligatory if the subject NP is a personal pronoun and commonly obligatory for other definite subject NPs (although there are some context-dependent exceptions from definite-full-NP movement, as opposed to pronominal-NP movement).

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all speakers of Icelandic, including all NewP speakers, accept the canonical NOM passive in examples like (36a) (M&S, p. 114), whereas examples like (36b), with a nonraised pronominal passive NOM subject are unattested in all known varieties of Icelandic. The same is true of other types of predicates that take a NOM subject, as partly shown in (25) above, and further illustrated in (38) for raising predicates, as in (38a), and regular unaccusatives, as in (38b).

(38) Pronominal NOM subjects are never exempted from A-movement

a.	**Hún**	virtist	lesa.	/	*Það	virtist	**hún**	lesa.	
	she.N	seemed	read	/	it	seemed	she	read	
b.	**Hún**	hafði	horfið.	/	*Það	hafði	horfið		**hún**.
	she.N	had	disppeared	/	it	had	disappeared		she.N

It is thus *not* the case that the DE is absent in the New Passive variety (as also pointed out by M&S). Instead, the generalizations that emerge are as stated in (39).

(39) A-movement/DE in standard Icelandic and in the New Passive variety

	Standard Icelandic	NewP speakers
a. Defective v predicates (NOM)	DE	DE
b. Quirky predicates[27]	DE	DE
c. Passive v* predicates (ACC)	—	no A-movement
d. Passive v** predicates (DAT)	DE	no A-movement
e. P predicates	no A-movement	no A-movement

In other words, A-movement out of both P predicates and passive v*(*) predicates is blocked in the NewP variety, whereas it is only blocked out of P predicates in standard Icelandic. One could thus say that passive v*(*) predicates are A-movement barriers in only the NewP variety.

The facts summarized in (39) may seem puzzling, but they illustrate that predicates are variably strong islands with respect to A-movement. A-islands of this sort have commonly been accounted for in terms of case (Chomsky 1981 and much related work), that is to say, differently than A′-islands. However, the absence of A-movement in (39e) in standard Icelandic and in (39c–e) in the New Passive variety cannot be analyzed as a case "freezing" or grounding effect, as all varieties of Icelandic have some quirky subjects—that is, all varieties apply A-movement to some case-marked NPs. A non-case-based analysis is thus called for. Below, I will suggest an approach where A-islands are analyzed in a similar fashion as A′-islands, in terms of minimality.

In mainstream minimalism as developed by Chomsky (2000, 2001, 2008), C and v* are phase heads, as opposed to T and defective v. It does not seem very likely, though, that grammar contains some heads that can be fruitfully thought of or defined as a "100% phase head" or a "0% phase head." Rather, phasehood is a relative

[27] For instance, psych accusative predicates and dative-taking experiencer predicates like *leiðast* 'find boring'.

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phenomenon, phase boundaries thus being variably strong.[28] CPs are "fuller" or stronger phases than vPs, nonfinite CPs are commonly weaker phases than finite CPs, and subjunctive CPs, in turn, are usually weaker as phases than indicative CPs, subjunctives for instance allowing "tense spreading" (sequence of tenses), in violation of any nonrelativized understanding of phases (and in violation of the Phase Impenetrability Condition; see Chomsky 2008). Without going into further details here, I contend that also vP phases are variably strong and that (V-selected) prepositions generally strengthen vPs as phases. The reason why that is so, I hypothesize, is that prepositions come with a ϕ-variable that may act as a ϕ-intervener.

Plausibly, a phase contains "freezing" or grounding (EPP type) left-edge A-features.[29] Such features of the C system are analyzed as context-linking (or C/Edge-linking) features in Sigurðsson 2010 and related work, that is to say, as features that are matched by features of the T system, thereby linking both temporal and pronominal TP-internal elements to the linguistic context of the CP phase, thus controlling pronominal/temporal reference. Voice is lower than "plain" T itself, but the T system also contains higher ϕ-heads (above "plain" T) that must be matched by the subject as well. The most important of these is the Person head, Pn (see Sigurðsson & Holmberg 2008 and also, e.g., Rezac 2008, Rizzi 2008).[30] For simplicity, however, I will not distinguish between Pn and the other ϕ-heads, referring to them jointly as T_{ϕ}.[31]

Subjecthood (A-priority) is decided by matching of T_{ϕ} under minimality. That is, T_{ϕ} probes its c-commanding domain, entering an Agree relation with the closest possible ϕ-bundle, canonically an overt NP. In transitive constructions, the NP in Spec,vP is the closest candidate, thus winding up as the subject. In passive and other defective constructions, the V-object NP is closest. This is sketched in (40) and (41).[32]

(40) T_{ϕ}-probing in transitive constructions

$[_{CP} \ldots [_{TP} \ldots T_{\phi} \ldots [_{v*(*)P}$ **NP** v*(*)-V NP…]]]

(41) T_{ϕ}-probing in (NOM) passive constructions

$[_{CP} \ldots [_{TP} \ldots T_{\phi} \ldots [_{vP}$ v-V_{PASS} **NP**…]]]

Subsequently, NOM or "null case" subjects trigger finite verb agreement in morphology.

[28] This suggests that spell-out sometimes must be delayed beyond vP and CP boundaries, thus applying to variably sized "chunks." I will not discuss this any further here, though.

[29] In addition to A′-features, more widely studied and better understood.

[30] That is to say, subject person. I will not discuss object person here.

[31] Pn and Nr (number) are separate probes (Sigurðsson & Holmberg 2008), but I put this aside here.

[32] Voice is present and active in these structures, but, as it is not directly relevant in relation to the issues under discussion, it is not shown, for simplicity (the same applies to many other categories).

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Like T_ϕ-probing, subsequent A-movement is subject to minimality, targeting the closest possible candidate for raising into the vicinity of T_ϕ. Evidently, however, prepositions (in Icelandic) "protect" or block NPs from being A-moved, both in impersonal active constructions, like (42a), and in impersonal P passives, like (42b).

(42) Prepositions "ground" NPs (in Icelandic)
   a. Nú slokknar **á** báðum kertunum.
      now goes-out.3SG on both candles.the.D
      'Now, both the candles go out.'
   b. Þess vegna var ekki talað **við** þá.
      that for was.3SG not talked with them.A
      'Therefore, people did not talk to them.'

T_ϕ-probing must thus be analyzed as never accessing P objects in Icelandic eventive constructions (as opposed to stative passives).

Svenonius (e.g., 1996, 2007) has suggested that the extended projection of P includes a p head that takes part in argument licensing (on a par with v in vPs). Suppose that p is a ϕ-variable (triggering overt P agreement in languages like Irish). If so, a PP (or a pP) like *on the table* has, roughly, the structure $[_{PP}\ on_\phi$ the table], the clause *Mary sits on the table* having the control structure [$Mary_i$ sits $[on_{\phi\text{-}i}$ the table]]. Given this, we can analyze the fact that T_ϕ never "reaches" P objects in Icelandic passives (of the type 'then was talked with him'), as sketched in (43); for simplicity, I refer to the p-P complex as P.

(43) T_ϕ cannot access P objects in eventive passives (in Icelandic)
$[_{CP}\ldots[_{TP}\ldots\ T_\phi\ldots[_{vP}\ldots v\text{-}V_{PASS}\ [_{PP}\ldots P_\phi\ NP\ldots]]]]$


It is perhaps not immediately obvious why this is the case—it does not extend to English, as evidenced by pseudopassives (nor does it extend to stative passives in Icelandic, a fact I will address shortly). Notice also that it is an A-phenomenon, not extending to A′-movement in Icelandic (i.e., *wh*-movement and topicalization commonly strand prepositions in Icelandic).

What seems to be going on here is this: As we have seen, expletive nulls are pervasively active in Icelandic grammar (see also Sigurðsson 1989, Thráinsson 2007:309ff., Sigurðsson & Egerland. 2009), whereas English generally spells its expletives out as *it* or *there*. This very characteristic difference between the languages can be analyzed in terms of *ϕ-visibility*: Expletive null ϕ-bundles are ϕ-visible in Icelandic (actively third-person singular neuter) but ϕ-invisible in English. It follows that P_ϕ in (43) is the closest candidate for T_ϕ-probing, hence intervening between T_ϕ and the P object. In English, on the other hand, only overt NPs are ϕ-visible, hence T_ϕ goes for the P object, not "seeing" the silent ϕ-bundle on P as an intervener.[33]

[33] In a way, then, v-V+p-P can be thought of as sometimes building a φ-barrier in a similar manner as C+I in the barrier approach of Chomsky (1986).

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Following Jaeggli 1986 and much related work, I assume that passive morphology *is* the passivized subject, a bundle of θ- and expletive ϕ-features, incorporated into the lexical V: V_{PASS} or $V_{\phi/\theta}$. Evidently, the passivized subject thereby becomes invisible to T_ϕ-probing, thus not blocking a matching relation between T_ϕ and a vP-internal NP.[34] The prepositional incorporation seen in stative pseudopassives like (35d) seems to render the expletive ϕ-features of the incorporated P_ϕ invisible to T_ϕ-probing in a parallel fashion.

As stated in (39), A-movement applies out of defective v predicates and quirky $v^{*(*)}$ predicates in both standard Icelandic and the New Passive variety, whereas it applies out of passive v** predicates in standard Icelandic but not out of passive $v^{*(*)}$ predicates in the New Passive variety. It would thus seem that (only) passive $v^{*(*)}$ predicates in the New Passive variety have some intervening property X that blocks T_ϕ from probing the V object, that property being absent in defective v predicates and quirky $v^{*(*)}$ predicates and also in standard Icelandic passive v** predicates. Assume that passive morphology incorporates only the external θ-role and not the expletive subject ϕ-features in passive $v^{*(*)}$-predicates in the New Passive variety. If so, the central differences between the two varieties can be analyzed as sketched in (44)–(46).

(44) T_ϕ-probing in (passive and nonpassive) defective NOM constructions (in both varieties)

$[_{CP}\ldots[_{TP}\ldots\ T_\phi\ldots[_{vP}\ldots v\text{-}V_{(\phi/\theta)}\ \mathbf{NP}\ldots]]]$

(45) T_ϕ-probing in standard quirky passive constructions

$[_{CP}\ldots[_{TP}\ldots T_\phi\ldots\ [_{v^{**}P}\ldots v^{**}\text{-}V_{\phi/\theta}\ \mathbf{NP}\ldots]]]$

(46) T_ϕ-probing in the New Passive

$[_{CP}\ldots[_{TP}\ldots T_\phi\ldots\ [_{v^{*(*)}P}\ \phi\ v^{*(*)}\text{-}V_\theta\ NP\ldots]]]$

In a sense, then, the New Passive is an unusually "active passive," having a nonincorporated subject ϕ-bundle. However, as we have seen, the bundle does not seem to raise out of vP (or else we would expect it to, e.g., control secondary predicate agreement, in examples like (15a) above). Notice also that T_ϕ-probing of expletive ϕ in the New Passive should yield third-singular verbal agreement in morphology, which is borne out, as we have seen.

In sum, it would seem that speakers of the New Passive have reanalyzed many passive vPs as being strong vP phases. That is, speakers of this variety of Icelandic interpret not only P predicates but also many passive vPs as containing phase edge

[34] The expletive features are also invisible to participle agreement.

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features that are sufficiently strong or visible to successfully match T_ϕ, thereby exempting or "protecting" V complements from entering a matching relation with T_ϕ, hence also blocking them from raising into the vicinity of T_ϕ—in contrast to subjects of quirky nonpassive predicates, in both standard Icelandic and the New Passive variety. The New Passive is thus closely related to the highly frequent and productive impersonal P passive (as suggested by Kjartansson 1991; see also Thráinsson 2005:569ff.).

The T system enters a special relation with the subject of the finite clause. The relation in question is commonly referred to as abstract "Case" (cf. the "nexus" notion in Jespersen [1924] 1992), but it is at least twofold, involving both Voice and T_ϕ (most importantly the Pn feature of the T_ϕ complex).[35] In tandem with little v, Voice licenses the subject's θ-role, and it often alters the case licensing properties of v, thereby affecting the subject's case. T_ϕ in turn, licenses the subject's ϕ-features in relation to the linguistic context (via silent edge features in the C system). Additionally, it commonly triggers A-movement into the vicinity of T_ϕ (Sigurðsson 2009, 2010 and related work). It would thus seem that NPs enter syntax with layers of active or unvalued feature variables (α case, β person, etc.) that need to be valued for the NP to get fully licensed (see related ideas in, e.g., Déchaine & Wiltschko 2002, Caha 2007). One way of thinking of NP structure and NP licensing is to assume that the highest NP features are valued and thereby inactivated or "peeled off" first or lowest in the clausal structure, the second-highest NP features being valued second lowest, and so on. If so, unvalued case is among the highest feature variables in NP structure, valued by v features, whereas ϕ-variables are lower in NP structure but valued higher in clausal structure, by T features. I will not pursue these ideas here, though. What matters for our purposes is that an intervening ϕ-bundle at the vP phase edge blocks nonraised V objects in the New Passive from matching T_ϕ, much as P_ϕ blocks (Icelandic) P objects from doing so, and much as subjects also block objects from doing so in regular transitive constructions.

On the approach pursued here, thus, A-islands are accounted for in a parallel manner with A′-islands, in terms of relativized feature minimality.

6. Conclusion

The New Passive has two properties that are not otherwise found in passives in Icelandic, or most other related languages: It has no A-movement (blocked by ϕ-intervention at the vP edge) and no case-star deletion (hence no ACC-to-NOM conversion). These exceptional properties have commonly been taken to be interrelated (an assumption shared by, e.g., M&S and Eythórsson 2008). In the approach pursued here, however, they are independent of each other. Thus, many fate and some psych accusatives are exempted from ACC-to-NOM conversion in standard Icelandic, whereas they are subject to regular (unaccusative) A-movement, yielding ACC subjects. The fact that all varieties of Icelandic have DAT subjects further

[35] In contrast, it is not clear whether or how the tense feature of the T system ("plain" T itself) is active in the nexus relation with the subject (a moot issue that I will not try to sort out here).

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illustrates that A-movement is generally independent of case marking. Additionally, case-star deletion versus the absence thereof is a general phenomenon, by no means limited to passive constructions.

This result is representative of much recent minimalist research into the nature of language variation. Complex surface patterns arise as a result of the interplay of a limited number of independent "small" variables, such as ± *case-star deletion* and ± *ϕ-intervention*, in relation to a set of grammatical categories and processes, such as different Voice-type heads and θ-/ϕ-incorporation into V. It seems unlikely, though, that these and other similar variables that are active in the grammars of individual languages are biologically wired in "ready-for-use" parameters, stored in Universal Grammar (see the discussion in Chomsky 2005 and in, e.g., Berwick & Chomsky 2008).

As discussed by M&S some other languages, including Polish and Ukrainian, have constructions that are similar to the Icelandic New Passive in some respects but also different from it (and from each other) in some other regards. It seems that ± *case-star deletion* and ± *ϕ-intervention* are at play in the Polish and Ukrainian constructions, but scrutinizing exactly how these factors interact with each other and with other variables in these languages (such as absent definiteness marking) would require detailed research that is beyond the scope of this article. Hopefully, future research will unearth more knowledge and deeper understanding of the factors at play in the various passive types across a substantial number of the world's languages. In the meanwhile, it seems safe to conclude that the Icelandic New Passive is not an alien but a member of the passive family, albeit a somewhat odd one.

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