I received a request yesterday from my partner for “Herr Doktor Professor Language Person” to parse a sentence that one of her colleagues had encountered in a historical novel by my old colleague Rosina Lippi-Green.

Original sentence to parse:

When she looked at the available men in Rosenau, Wainwright's Katharina could see no promise in any of them but of children and farm work, things that interested her not in the least. (*The Homestead*, Rosina Lippi-Green, p. 87-88)

There are three clauses, and deletions from two rules:

- Conjunction Reduction deletes repeated material (a promise) between but and of in the second,
- Whiz-deletion removes the relative which and auxiliary verb were in the last clause.

The first clause is just an ordinary adverb clause, introduced by when

1. When she\textsubscript{j} looked at the available men\textsubscript{i} in Rosenau, \hfill (Adverb clause)

2. Wainwright’s Katharina\textsubscript{j} could see no promise in any of them\textsubscript{i} \[\textit{but [i.e., other than/ a promise of children\textsubscript{k} and farm work\textsubscript{k}, Nobbut-cleft]}\] \hfill (Main clause;

3. which\textsubscript{k} were things\textsubscript{k} that\textsubscript{k} interested her\textsubscript{j} not in the least. \hfill (Stacked relative clause)

the last clause is a Whiz-Deleted, nonrestrictive, stacked relative clause that modifies children and farm work
(I’ve put back in boldface the which were that Whiz-Deletion removed).

The weird part is in clause two, which is a “\textit{nobbut}” cleft,* which implies only X by saying nought but X (and also nothing, no one, nowhere, no … but X.

*But has to be interpreted in its sense of other than, except for in this construction).
I’ve marked coreferential NPs with subscript indices, stained the negatives (no, not), NPIs (any, in the least), the modal could, and the fulcrum (but) of the nobbut-cleft (no…but), and put back in boldface the a promise that was deleted by Conjunction Reduction. It’s not a diagrammed sentence, nor yet a tree structure. But it may make things clearer.

The implication of the nobbut-cleft is that she\textsubscript{j} was not interested in any of the men\textsubscript{i} in Rosenau.

* Examples on next page….
Some examples of nobbut-clefts from the OED, *(from the handout to my paper “Leftovers”, which is about the remain(s) to construction):*

(1588.10) *Remaineth nought but to _interre our Brethren, And with low’d Larums _welcome them to Rome.*  
Shaks. *Titus Andronicus.* i. i. 147

(1610.1) Adumbration, or Transparency, is a cleere exemption of the substance of the Charge, or thing borne, in such sort as that **there remaineth nothing** thereof to _i_—be discerned, **but** the naked and bare proportion of the outward lineaments thereof.  
Guillim *Heraldrie* ii. iii. 42

(1719.1) *Many a weary Stroke it [sc. the boat] had cost, you may be sure; and there remained nothing but to _get it into the Water.*  
De Foe *Crusoe* i. (Globe) 129

(1733.1) **There remains nothing but** to _recruit the Solids weakened in the Struggle.*  
Cheyne Eng. *Malady* ii. viii. §7 (1734) 202

(1828.7) Imagining that **nothing remained for them i, but** to _dight their nebs and i_flee up.*  
Moir *Mansie Wauch* ii. 25

(1836.13) **Nothing now remained but** to _brace every nerve for the battle.*  
Thirlwall *Greece* II. xv. 306

(1843.12) Apparently **nothing but warmth** _remained to i_indicate (that life had not already become extinct).*  

(1849.11) **Now nothing i remains to i_be discovered but** the sandy deserts of Central Africa, and the inaccessible ice-rocks of the North Pole.  
H. Coleridge *Ess.* (1851) I. 70

(1860.20) **Nothing remains but for the once enemies i to i_say farewell.*  
Tyndall *Glac.* ii. viii. 267

(1880.24) **Nothing remains no more but** to _thank you for your courteous attention.*  
(Modern)

Key to ‘slide stains’ in examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>for Proust</strong></th>
<th>to _i_summate = Infinitive Subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ruins</strong></td>
<td>to _unbury _j = Infinitive Object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_be seen</td>
<td>= <strong>Indefinite</strong> Infinitive Subject</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>any</strong></th>
<th><strong>Negative Polarity Item</strong></th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>but</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fulcrum of Cleavage</strong></td>
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<td><strong>some</strong></td>
<td><strong>Quantifier</strong></td>
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<td><strong>now</strong></td>
<td><strong>Deictic element</strong></td>
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<td><strong>will</strong></td>
<td><strong>Modal</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>nought</strong></td>
<td><strong>Negative element</strong></td>
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