Grillo & Costa (2012) identify an overlooked syntactic confound of prior Relative Clause (RC) attachment studies (Cuetos & Mitchell 1988, Fernandez 2003 et al.): the asymmetric availability of Pseudo Relatives (PR, 1a) across languages (e.g., Spanish but not English). PRs, a type of Small Clauses (SC, 1c) are string identical to, but structurally and interpretatively different from RCs (1b):

(1) a. He visto [PR [al hijo_1 del medico_2] [que corria_1/*2]]
   b. I saw the son_1 of the doctor_2 that ran_1/2
   c. I saw [SC [the son_1 of the doctor_2] [running_1/*2]]

G&C claim that PR availability explains attachment asymmetries across languages (PRs require NP1 as subject). This is supported by offline studies in Italian, Spanish, European Portuguese (EP) and English (Grillo, Santi, Fernandez & Costa 2013). Across-the-board, results show Low Attachment (LA) with unambiguous RCs (e.g., introduced by stative predicates) and High Attachment (HA) when PRs are available (e.g., perceptual predicates).

G&C further defend a parsing preference for PR/SC over NP+RC. As we will discuss, this preference combined with locality principles predict comparable processing costs for HA in PRs and LA in RCs and distinct (e.g., longer Response Times) for HA in RCs. We present RT data from three experiments to test these predictions.

In two attachment questionnaires in EP and English (n=24) we manipulated PR/SC availability contrasting PR-type (hear) with nonPR-type verbs (live with). Condition A (2) was ambiguous between PR/SC and RC interpretation; B only allowed RCs. An additional experiment in EP (n=24, same
stimuli) required judging the compatibility of LA/HA with preceding sentence. Response latencies were recorded in all studies.

(2) A. O Eduardo ouviou o irmão do jovem que estava a cantar (PR/RC)

Edward heard the brother of the man singing (SC/RC)

B. A Bárbara vive com o irmão do jovem que estava a cantar (RConly)

Barbara lives with the brother of the man singing (RConly)

Mixed effect logistic regression revealed more HA in PR than RC condition in both questionnaires (p<.0001). Mixed model analysis over log-transformed RTs revealed an effect of Vtype with shorter (533ms EP, 235ms English) RTs in PR than RC condition (t=-2.13, t=2.04). The compatibility experiment showed same RT effect of Vtype (t=2.08) and significant attachment*Vtype interaction, with longer RTs for HA-RCs than HA-PRs (260ms) and LA-RC (164ms) (t=2.49).

The findings support G&C claim that the parser prefers PRs over NP+RC. A self-paced reading study is being conducted to identify the time-course of this preference.