Roots, *re*-, and affected agents: can roots pull the agent under little *v*?

In previous work, I argued that evidence from *re-* prefixation supports a syntactic structure for verb phrases such as "paint the wall" or "build a house" in which the direct object stands alone as the sole syntactic constituent in the expression of the resultant state subevent. With *re-* attaching to the direct object and introducing the presupposition that the direct object was previously in the resultant state, the canonical properties associated with *re-* prefixation follow, including in particular the fact the subject stands outside the scope of the presupposition introduced by *re-* (so, if I repaint the wall, I needn't have been involved in getting the paint on the wall the first time).

In this talk I will explore some of the prominent counterexamples to the generalization that the subject stands outside the scope of *re-*, in particular verbs like "submit," reflexive verbs like "shave," and affected agent verbs like "read." In all such cases one can argue that the external argument of the vP is not just the agent of the higher event in a bi-eventive structure but also a participant affected by the event. While it might be appealing to suppose that the external argument for affected agent verbs makes an appearance within the vP, I will argue instead that the proper account of the facts involves acknowledging that event semantics are computed at the level of the vP, before the introduction of the external argument. If the event that brings about a change of state implicates an affected argument, the identity of this argument is tied to the identity of the state, and the presupposition introduced by *re-* involves the same affected argument as the assertion of the vP (so, if NP re-reads the book, the state of the book having been read before, affecting x, will need to be the same state and the same x as in the assertion, NP reads the book). An agent of a causing event, however, is not tied to the causing event and is not part of the presupposition of *re-* (so, if NP re-paints the wall, the wall was before in the state of having been painted, but there's no "by x" involved in the presupposition). The analysis of affected agent verbs fills in some of the gaps of my previous work on *re-* and reinforces the conclusion that roots in general do not occupy the same syntactic positions as non-root constituents in the syntax.