Questions regarding a minimalist theory of islands

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In the good old days the theory of unbounded movement, in particular A′-dependencies, was the crowning achievement of syntactic theory. Building on Ross's thesis work, Chomsky proposed Subjacency Theory (ST) as a way of unifying various of the islands Ross had discovered. Along the way, it was discovered that additional theory was required to explain some asymmetries (subject vs. object, argument vs. adjunct). These empirical exigencies called forth another layer of theory, the ECP. ST and ECP concerns largely evaporated as syntacticians turned their attentions away from A′-dependencies and their finicky restrictions in the Minimalist Program (MP). Parts of the pre-MP theory appeared conceptually incompatible with MP leading ideas. As regards the last point, the ECP was hit particularly hard. The reason is that its leading idea fits poorly with MP's swapping of copies for traces: the intuition behind the ECP is that traces are grammatically toxic. Derivations are made safe from toxic traces by relating them to relevant licensers. The MP problem is that if traces are understood as nothing more than copies then it is unclear what their toxicity can consist in. No traces, no MP rationale for anything analogous to the ECP and if no ECP, then what of its close kissing cousin ST? I will address five more specific questions:
(i) Why do islands exist at all? Is their source UG or the more generic aspects of FL? **(ii)** Why do find the specific islands and the phases/bounding nodes we do? Are they parametric? **(iii)** What aspects of FL/UG do these effects reflect? **(iv)** Should island effects be understood as restricted to movement chains? If MP unifies movement and binding, then what should we expect wrt. island and ECP effects? **(v)** Why do we have both subjacency and ECP effects? Their domains of application are very close to one another, so having two theories is redundant.

The form of the answer I will explore treats ST and ECP as effectively the same kind of condition arising from concerns about computational efficiency. It further expects that we will find island like effects in all antecedent-anaphor relations, not only those with gaps. This position has challenges. I will discuss these as well, all the while trying to convince you that the best possible theory is not as empirically hopeless as we generally assume.