GRADIENCE, DETERMINERS AND NULL POSSESSORS: REVISITING FRENCH INALIENABLE SYNTAX

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ABSTRACT

While syntax is a crucial part of understanding inalienable possession, it must be seen as interacting with lexical semantics and pragmatics. A case in point is the French double dont construction (DDC), which differs from regular genitive relatives in having two NPs which are linked to the antecedent of the complementizer dont. Tellier (1991) claims that the second NP must be either deverbal or inalienable. This paper will examine 3 aspects of Tellier's work that call for further study. First is the argument/adjunct dichotomy which she proposes as a means of distinguishing relational from alienable nouns in the lexicon. It is argued here, on both empirical and theoretical grounds, that such a dichotomy presents too many problems to be adopted for the lexicon in a simple, binary fashion. Secondly, the special status of the definite determiner, which Tellier treats as a flag of inalienability for the 2nd possessum of DDCs, is questioned. The existence of other determiners in that position, as well as the possibility of a generic (i.e., non-possessive) reading for Ns occurring with le, suggest a less automatic link between inalienability and le. Finally, constraints on possessor construal are examined, an issue going beyond DDCs. Tellier, among others, contends that a relational noun can have a null possessor only in generic contexts, a claim that applies, as she admits, exclusively to isolated Ss, i.e., independently of any discourse or pragmatic context. We can avoid such an extreme requirement by viewing counter-examples to this constraint as pragmatically marked, invariably linked to special contexts such as a medical scenario. Such markedness alleviates the need for explicit local mention of a possessor. These three issues pose significant but not insurmountable obstacles for handling inalienable possession within a G-B framework.

1. INTRODUCTION[1]

This paper will deal with semantic and pragmatic aspects of French inalienable possession (IPOSS) that raise problems for a purely syntactic

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approach. French IPOSS, like its counterpart in other Romance languages, lacks bi-uniqueness. The 'classical' struc tures associated with it:

- dative / definite article + inalienable:
  Je *lui* ai pansé *le genou.*
  'I to-him bandaged the knee.'
- definite article + inalienable:
  Thomas a baissé *les yeux.*
  'T. lowered the eyes.'
- accusative / preposition + article + inalienable:
  Je *l'*ai caressé *sur les tempes.*
  'I him caressed on the temple.'

are available for alienable nouns as well. For example, the first structure also occurs when the referent of the dative is affected:

(1)   Quelqu'un lui a multilé la sculpture que je venais d'acheter.
       'Someone to-him mutilated the sculpture I had just bought.'

The dative clitic *lui* could refer to an art dealer who is affected by the vandalism, even though he no longer owns the sculpture. The clitic is therefore simply a dative of interest, even though it could inferentially convey possession too if the relative clause were not present. That is, the same structure that has a high correlation with inalienability can, if pragmatic factors allow, indicate possession of a separable noun. The converse also holds: the canonic marker of alienable possession, the possessive determiner, is also found with inalienables, as in

(2)   Elle essuie ses lèvres du dos de sa main.
       'She wipes her lips with the back of her hand.'[2]

Can one therefore talk of a syntax of inalienable possession, since there is no one structure that unequivocally signals it? Generative linguists have

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[2] For the semantic differences between inalienables with the possessive adjective and those with the definite article, see Hatcher (1944b) and Kliffer (1984). It is not, as is commonly thought, just a matter of associating the article with verbs that imply contact. The following pair show that it is possible to have the contrast solely with a non–contact verb:

(i)   Ne regarde pas mes pieds comme ça.
        'Don't look at my feet like that.'   vs
(ii)   Ne me regarde pas les pieds comme ça.
        'Don't to-me look at the feet like that.'

Briefly, the dative + article option arises when the focus is on how the event affects the possessor: this is a true part-whole structure. With the possessive adjective, the inalienable stands out for its own sake, just as any [-inalienable] noun would.

assumed we can, and I shall do likewise in this paper, although with some reservations that will become apparent in the course of argumentation.

Related to the chameleon nature of French IPOSS is the question of semantic boundaries. We have so far equated inalienables with body parts, and this is indeed the most frequent inalienable category in French to have distinct (albeit not bi-unique) syntax, i.e., to occur with the definite determiner even for first discourse mention, and to have an affected possessor signaled with a dative clitic. However, other semantic groups at times show identical syntactic behaviour, notably 'personal sphere' nouns, to use a term introduced in Bally (1926). For instance, (3) is structurally parallel to (4):

(3)   Il est sorti, les cheveux en désordre.
       'He left, the hair a mess.'

(4)   Il est sorti, le col taché.
       'He left, the collar stained.'

The personal sphere includes clothing and personal characteristics (e.g., life, weight, attitude). The main difference between body parts and personal sphere is that the former normally require another argument, the possessor, in their lexical representation, while personal sphere terms often but not necessarily assume a possessor. The one category not well represented among the 'classical' IPOSS French structures is kinship. It has long been recognized that many non Indo-European languages treat this category as morpho-syntactically inalienable to the same or to a greater extent than body parts (cf. Nichols 1988 and Chappell/McGregor 1993). Tellier (1991) has detected a French structure, the double *dont* construction (DDC), in which all these categories of relational nouns regularly occur and from which non-relational nouns are excluded. This is in contradistinction to the above three 'classical' structures, which, as was mentioned, are not limited to relational nouns.

Tellier proposes an essentially syntactic analysis to handle DDCs, which would be accounted for as a by-product of her Universal Licensing Principle. This paper will question certain assumptions underlying this analysis and argue that non-syntactic modules need to be invoked for a full account of French IPOSS.[3]

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[3] A paper which has been a methodological and epistemological inspiration for this one is Ruwet (1991), which brings out semantic and pragmatic objections to the Unaccusativity Hypothesis, but without rejecting an ultimately syntactic solution.

2. DOUBLE *DONT* CONSTRUCTIONS

Double *Dont* Constructions (DDCs) are genitive relative clauses in which the relative head is linked to two or more implicit complements within distinct NPs, as illustrated in (5-7):

(5) Nous examinons une société dont *les écrits* ne reflètent que vague-ment *les angoisses*.
'We are examining a society of-which the writings reflect but vaguely the anxieties.'

(6) Voilà un homme dont *la franchise* se voit dans *les yeux*.
'There is a man of-whom the frankness can be seen in the eyes.'

(7) Il s'agit d'un évêque dont *les exploits* s'harmonisent parfaitement avec *la mort*.
'It's about a bishop of-whom the exploits are in perfect accord with the death.'

In single *dont* constructions, the relativized NP may not be in a preposi-tional phrase, and therefore not accessible to movement, which is why (8)

(8) *Voilà la femme$_i$ dont$_i$ nous devons compter sur le mari e_i.
'There is the women of-whom we must count on the husband.'

is ungrammatical. As (6-7) show, in DDCs the second NP often does occur as PP-internal, and is therefore not amenable to extraction. The second gap is thus parasitic in that it often arises in adjunct positions, which do not al-low extraction.

2.1 Tellier's definition and analysis

Tellier's aim is to show how the syntactic behaviour of DDCs can be ex-plained via Universal Licensing Theory, which requires all maximal pro-jections (including null operators) to be licensed and identified at every level of representation. She claims that DDCs manifest all the properties of parasitic gaps (henceforth PGs), in that:

- They require an S-structure variable, a trace of movement to an A'-position. This is [SPEC· DP] for DDCs.
- The antecedent binder of the variable must C-command the PG.
- The licensing variable must not C-command the PG and it must be 'close enough' to the PG.
- A locality condition—subjacency—applies to the distance between the variable and the PG. (Tellier 1991: 132)

The DDC in (9) is thus parallel to the English PG in (10):

(9) Voilà un prof dont les écrits en disent long sur les tourments.

'There is a prof of-whom the writings say reams about the torments.'

S-structure:

Voilà un prof$_i$ dont$_j$ [[les écrits t$_j$] en disent long [sur [$_{DP}$Op$_i$les tourments e$_i$]]]

(10) Which books did you file without having reviewed?

S-structure:

Which books$_i$ did you file t$_i$ [without [$_{CP}$Op$_i$[$_{IP}$ having reviewed e$_i$]]]

Following Chomsky (1986), Tellier analyzes these PG structures as a double chain: the first chain links the antecedent binder with its trace. The second chain links the null operator with the PG, the one difference being that the English landing site for the null operator is the SPEC of CP, while in the DDC the null operator occupies the SPEC of a DP, since the PG here is an adnominal gap. DDCs and 'classical' inalienable constructions like *Je lui ai coupé les cheveux* 'I to-him cut the hair' share this property of null operator in the [SPEC· DP] of the inalienable.

For DDCs, the nature of the antecedent binder and trace of the first gap seem straightforward. Less clear is the semantic nature of the DDC's head noun governing the PG. Tellier claims that the second gap is restricted to relational nouns, exemplified already in (5-7), or process deverbal nouns, as in

(11) C'est une idée dont, espérons-le, la nature barbare empêchera pour toujours *l'exécution*.
'It's an idea of-which, let us hope, the barbaric nature will always prevent the realization.'

Other categories which DDCs admit are picture Ns, kin / social relations, personal characteristics, part-whole expressions (body parts, parts of inanimate or abstract wholes, e.g., book's jacket, journey's end). These correspond to the relational noun classes outlined in Stockwell et al. (1973). For Tellier, what allows relational nouns to head PGs in DDCs is the provision their lexical structure makes for an adnominal argument. Alienables, on the other hand, allow a possessor only in an adjunct position and hence cannot occur as the second antecedent of a DDC.

3. PROBLEMS

3.1   Argument/adjunct dichotomy

Tellier's proposal to handle the [± inalienable] distinction through an argument / adjunct dichotomy is not without difficulties. As pointed out, DDCS are interesting because they allow a much greater range of inalien-

able types than we observe in classical inalienable structures like dative + definite article. Heading the PG we find not only the expected body parts, but social relations, personal characteristics, and objects typically but not obligatorily possessed. In this section, I will examine the latter two categories, subsumed under 'personal sphere'.

The peculiarity of this category is its cross-linguistic fence-sitting status: in numerous languages, both typologically akin to and distant from French, it is morphosyntactically indistinguishable from 'true' inalienability, while other languages treat it in identical fashion to alienables. Articles of clothing, for instance, are notorious fence-sitters. In standard French, their status is structure-dependent. The dative + article excludes them:

(12) *Je me suis sali le pantalon.
        'I to-me dirtied the pants.'[4]

whereas adjunct prepositional phrases and absolute constructions allow them just as readily as body parts:

(13) On m'a secoué par la ceinture.
        'They shook me by the belt.'

is as grammatical as

(14) On m'a secoué par le bras.

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[4] For many speakers, (12) is grammatical, as would be its equivalents in most other Romance varieties. With pseudo–transitives like

(i)   Paul a fermé les yeux.
          'P. closed the eyes.'

there is a more consistent difference between body parts and personal sphere Ns. Replacing *les yeux* in (i) with *la valise* would allow a possessive construal in only the loosest pragmatic terms, much like English 'I put away the suitcase' → *my* suitcase, provided the context doesn't cancel this inference. A radical pragmatist could object that we also interpret the eyes of (i) as possessed by the subject only via inference, albeit a highly conventional inference. Such a position, however, overlooks certain syntactic diagnostics that set body parts aside, such as the impossibility of passivizing (i) under the reading of possessor construal (Herschensohn 1975, Kayne 1975). The French situation recalls Grice (1975), which points out the generalized conversational implicature seen in contrasting (ii) *I broke a finger* with (iii) *I painted a roof*, where, despite the same indefinite article, opposite inferences arise: probably my finger in (ii) but *not* my roof in (iii). This is presumably due to the difference in [± inalienable] values of 'finger' and 'roof'. Although cancellable, these inferences are highly stable from speaker to speaker and thus likely reflect some regularity in lexical structure.

'They shook me by the arm.'

In DDCs, articles of clothing appear as readily as prototypically relational nouns, e.g.:

(15) On m'a présenté à un père furieux dont les enfants se plaisaient à mélanger *les chaussettes*.
'They introduced me to a furious father of-whom the children were having fun mixing up the socks.'

(16) C'est une mère martyre dont les enfants cachent toujours *les chaussures, les clés et même les lunettes*.
'She is a martyr of a mother of-whom the children are always hiding the shoes, the keys and even the glasses.'

Of course, in (15-16), the possessor construal between the clothing and the antecedent of *dont* is context-dependent: if the clothing were in a store, no such link would have to arise.

With character traits too, there is optionality of possessor construal. In (17-18), the nouns commanding the second gap, *paresse* and *maîtrise de soi* respectively, are coindexed with the antecedent of *dont*:

(17) Il s'agit d'un collègue dont les bonnes intentions cèdent souvent la place à la *paresse*.
'It's about a colleague of-whom the good intentions often yield to the laziness.'

(18) Le romancier, dont la vie coïncide avec la plus parfaite *maîtrise de soi*, ... s'est senti troublé devant la caméra.
'The novelist, of-whom the life coincides with the most perfect self-control, felt uneasy before the camera.' (Tellier 1991: 100, from Anne Andreu, 'Le dernier été à Tanger: magnifique!', *L'événement du jeudi*, Nov. 22-28, 1990: 124)

but in (19-20), the laziness and self-control must be construed as generic because of *rechercher / recherche*, which rule out a possessive relation at the time of utterance:

(19) C'est un vaurien qui voit le travail comme un outil du diable et dont les amis recherchent eux aussi la *paresse*.
'He's a good-for-nothing who regards work as a tool of the devil and of-whom the friends also seek out idleness.'

(20) C'est un névrosé dont la vie consiste en une recherche interminable de la *maîtrise de soi*.
'He's a neurotic of-whom the life consists of an endless quest for the self-control.'

The vacillating status of tokens commonly but not inevitably possessed is apparent in discrepancies between some of Tellier's grammaticality

The argument-adjunct dichtomy, then, needs to reflect a semantic reality which is far from being a dichtomy. I am arguing for elimination not of the argument-adjunct binarism, but of the assumption that it correlates directly with inalienability. In the case of DDCs, I think we do have binarism: either the second NP of the relative clause is linked to the antecedent of *dont*, via a PG and null operator, or it is not, as seen with generic construals like (19-20).

Further evidence of this coexistence of gradience and binarism arises in a correlation between inalienable construal in DDCs and the degrees of inalienability just noted (e.g., kinship terms vs personal sphere terms). Nouns denoting social relations and body parts generally force a possessive interpretation:

(27) C'est un gamin dont la mère est moins compréhensive que le *père*.
      'He's a kid of-whom the mother is less understanding than the father.'

(28) C'est un misanthrope dont l'argent compte plus que les *amis*.
      'He's a misanthrope of-whom the money counts more than the friends.'

To change to a generic (non-possessive) sense requires us to replace *dont* in such comparisons with a non-genitival relative, as in

(29) C'est un vendeur pour qui les pères sont plus faciles à rouler que les *mères*.
      'He's a salesman for whom the fathers are easier to fleece than the mothers.'

Personal sphere nouns, as we have seen in (19-20), lend themselves to a generic construal, even within a clause headed by *dont*.

Tellier herself (1991: 171, note 15) notes that comparatives in DDCs provide another apparent exception to the obligatoriness of relational nouns in the head node:

(30) Il y aurait des hommes dont la voiture coûte plus cher que la *maison*.
      'There are apparently some men of-whom the car costs more than the house.'

(31) C'est un PDG dont les enfants sont moins bien soignés que le *yacht*.
      'He's a CEO of-whom the children are less well cared for than the yacht.'

(32) Voilà un politicien dont les discours sont aussi suspects que les *rapports financiers* et aussi taillés que les *maisons*.
      'There's a politician of-whom the speeches are as suspect as the financial reports and as well-tailored as the houses.' (Examples mine)

These would cease to be counter-examples if we treated the PG heads as personal sphere tokens.

Another question bearing on the adjunct/argument distinction is the possibility of a pragmatically determined possessor construal. Tellier notes

that a pragmatic interpretation is always possible for virtually any possessor occurring with the definite determiner, e.g.,

(33)   un compositeur dont les oeuvres se trouvent toutes dans le *coffre*.
       'a composer of-whom the works are all to be found in the trunk.'

This inferential possibility goes beyond DDCs. It is observable even in English, where the definite article is rarely linked to possession:

They just sold the house. (→ probably their own house)

But how can we decide, in the case of a non-prototypical inalienable like a personal sphere noun, whether the possessor link is pragmatic or syntactic, i.e., due to a PG? In fact there are three theoretical possibilities for a personal sphere noun:

(i)   Inalienable status, so that possessor is construed via a PG just like body parts and kin terms. (e.g., with *maison* 'house' or abstract Ns like *poids* 'weight')

(ii) Alienable status, i.e., lack of an argument precludes a possessor construal. (e.g., with generic interpretation.)

(iii) Alienable status, but with a pragmatically determined possessor. This is Tellier's analysis for several instances of personal sphere nouns.

In fact, though, we face a dichotomy, since both the first and the last of these possibilities are theoretical choices for essentially the same possessor interpretation. That is, in (31), repeated here:

C'est un PDG dont les enfants sont moins bien soignés que le *yacht*.
'He's a CEO of-whom the children are less well cared for than the yacht.'

whether the PDG is construed syntactically (i) or pragmatically (iii) as the yacht's owner is impossible to determine on purely semantic grounds.

Out of expediency, one could simply handle all cases of such interpretation as pragmatic if the possessum is a personal sphere N, thus treating such nouns no differently from alienables. This solution would, however, ignore the cross-linguistic status of personal sphere Ns as a category straddling the [±inalienable] opposition. An alternative better reflecting this status would be to assume that personal sphere nouns would be distinguished from alienables and inalienables by selecting an *optional* adnominal argument, thus reflecting the dual possibility of possessor or generic construal for the personal sphere class.

Even assuming that all other structural requirements are met (see summary in section 2.1), argument-endowment of the PG head is not suffi-

cient to ensure grammaticality of the DDC. Tellier (1991: 172, note 17) provides the example

(34) *Voilà un homme dont les livres parlent de l'innocence.
      'There's a man of-whom the books tell of the innocence.'

where the asterisk persists in spite of the relational status of *innocence*. She attributes the ungrammaticality of (34) to a lack of parallelism between the θ-role of the real and parasitic gaps, i.e., alienable possessor (for *livres*) vs possessor of a personal trait (for *innocence*). Yet, as Tellier herself remarks, different kinds of possession in the two gaps don't necessarily block grammaticality, as seen in

(35) On m'a présenté à une infirmière dont un malade venait de déchirer l'uniforme.
      'They introduced me to a nurse of-whom a patient had just torn the uniform.' (My example)

where the real gap manifests an association between nurse and patient, while the PG implies ownership of the uniform by the nurse. Instead, anomalies like (34) may be unacceptable for lexical reasons. In this case, if we replace *parlent* with *témoignent de* 'reveal', the result is fine. Native speaker reaction to (34) attributes its failure as a DDC to the overly general nature of *parler*. Further study is needed to pinpoint the verb's role.

   In this section, I have attempted to show that the argument/adjunct dichotomy proposed to account for the relational status of the PG head in DDCs must coexist with the scalar nature of inalienability, as seen with the under-determined class of personal sphere Ns.

3.2. The definite determiner: problems inside and outside of DDCs

   The French IPOSS structures which generative linguists have focused on contain a body part with the definite determiner (DD). For Kayne (1975), Guéron (1985), Herschensohn (1989), Authier (1988), Tellier (1991) and others, the DD is a syntactic correlate for inalienability.[9] This section will look at problems which arise if we assume a special syntactic status for *le* in inalienable contexts.

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[9] Nadasdi (1993) is the one generative work brought to my attention that does not assume an automatic link between the DD and inalienability. Nadasdi shows that in non–standard varieties, the dative clitic can co–occur instead with the possessive adjective, as in the Bruxellois *Elle me frotte mon dos* 'She to–me rubs my back.'

Tellier implies that the DD is a marker for DDCs, i.e., as long as the head of the second gap is relational and accompanied by a DD, a DDC is possible. Her analysis follows from the longstanding assumption among generativists that an inalienable occurring with DD is not an R(eferential)-expression. Government and Binding theory defines R-expressions via three criteria:

- They are inherently referential, i.e., they select a referent from the universe of discourse.
- They don't need an antecedent (unlike anaphors).
- They reject binding from another element (unlike pronouns and anaphors).[10]

Only the first criterion dovetails with the traditional Ogden & Richards (1923) semantic definition of referentiality: relation with an object of an extra-linguistic world, real or imagined.[11]

Kayne (1975: 169) was the first to propose a special referential status for inalienables. He suggested that the DD + inalienable structure is analogous to generic Ss like

(36) The eyes are an important part of the human body.

Kayne notes two syntactic constraints in support of this hypothesis. First, only with dative / DD do we find an obligatory distributive singular with a plural possessor:

(37) La mère *leur* a maquillé *le visage/*les visages*.
      'The mother to-them made up the face/*faces.'   vs

(38) La mère *leur* a maquillé *leur(s) beau(x) visage(s) glacial/glaciaux*.
      'The mother to-them made up their beautiful expressionless faces.'   and

(39) La mère a maquillé les visages de tous ses petits.
      'The mother made up the faces of all her youngsters.'

Secondly, the DD excludes adjectives, which freely occur with possessive determiners:

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[10] The summary is from Haegeman (1991: 214).

[11] cf. the Ogden & Richards (1923) triangle *signfier/signified/referent*. There is undoubtedly a terminological divergence between the generativists' and the 'traditional' senses of referentiality: a noun can be an R–expression (by the generativists' definition) yet non–referential (by the semantic definition), e.g.:

(i)   On n'a pas encore inventé *la machine* qui résolve nos problèmes conjugaux.
       'They haven't yet invented the machine that will solve our marital problems.'

(40) *Comment tu t'es cassé le petit poignet mignon?
      'How did you to-you break the cute little wrist?'   vs

(41) Comment tu as cassé ton petit poignet mignon?
      'How did you break your cute little wrist?'

The genericness of the inalienable would account for these two syntactic constraints: the distributive singular would be a type representation for the multiplicity of referents, while the adjective would entail a specificness incompatible with the generic.

Tellier (1991: 159) assumes that relational nouns are not R-expressions because their reference must be determined with respect to some possessor. Incorporating analyses by Williams (1981) and Higginbotham (1985), she proposes that they select a possessor argument, but no external R(eferential)-argument. Non-relational Ns do select this R-argument, licensed by the DD, which closes the Determiner Phrase, the result being a referential expression. With relational Ns, it is via the discharge of the possessor θ-role that the expression is saturated.[12] The determiner would function like an expletive (dummy) element, 'consistent with interpretations of expressions like *le frère de Marie*: *le* does not pick a specific referent from the class of brothers that Mary has.' (Tellier 1991: 159) In other words, *de Marie*, rather than *le*, is what definitizes *frère*. In *le téléphone de Marie*, on the other hand, the head noun's referentiality would be given by *le*, which saturates the external argument and closes the Determiner Phrase, making it a referential expression.

This 'dummy' status pertains, crucially, only to the DD. Other determiners would saturate an inalienable in identical fashion to saturation of non-relational Ns, because the inalienable with another determiner is no longer inherently relational, as seen in

(42) Une main était coincée dans la porte.
      'A hand was caught in the door.' (cf. Tellier 1991:158)

Here the hand is construed as an alienable object. The indefinite determiner *une* would saturate the R-argument of *main*, referentially indistinguishable from any alienable N.

Those are the essentials of the generativist position. I will now look at counter-evidence to the special status of the DD with inalienables.

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[12] The existence of a possessor θ-role is by no means certain. See Massam (1990) for a discussion of the theoretical and empirical difficulties which it would give rise to.

- *The distributive singular*. Sometimes the singular occurs in a distributive reading with other determiners, e.g.:

(43) Quand j'étais en 6ᵉ, nous aimions l'institutrice de toute notre âme/*toutes nos âmes.
      'When I was in grade 6, we loved the teacher with all our soul/*souls.'

The converse—the article with a collective plural—is nearly impossible to find. I have detected it only in the quasi-lexicalized expression

(44) Haut les coeurs!
      'High the hearts!' = 'Courage!'[13]

The rarity of (44) and the comparative frequency of (43) suggest a markedness relation—the possessive adjective would be uncommitted with respect to the distributive singular, while the DD would require it. In any case, it is not a matter of just complementary distribution between *le* and other determiners.

- *Adjective constraint*. As noted in Burston (1981), Julien (1983) and Roegiest & Spanoghe (1991), rather than a total ban on adjectives, the DD + inalienable structure rejects only adjectives that merely describe. If the adjective distinguishes, for example, one body part from another, the S is well-formed. Compare:

(45) *Elle a levé les bras argentés.
      'She lifted the silvery arms.' (My example)   vs

(46) Elle a levé le bras contusionné.
      'She lifted the bruised arm.' (My example)

However, we must still account for the constraint on descriptive adjectives. Here is a sketch of how to exclude them on semantic grounds. The DD normally presents the inalienable as inextricable from a part/whole relation; it confirms the noun's intrinsically relational nature by giving it definite status even if it is the N's first discourse mention. Adding an ad-

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13 (44) is termed 'quasi–lexicalized' because of its low productivity; the only analogues I have detected are
   (i)   Haut les mains! 'Hands up!' and
   (ii)   Bas les pattes! 'Paws off!' (e.g. someone repelling another's advances)
   These, of course, are not relevant here because the objects are distributively plural.

jective would give the inalienable a salience incompatible with its 'self-effacing' link to the whole.[14]

With the possessive determiner, on the other hand, the inalienable is presented as salient (Hatcher 1944 a,b): the possession is explicitly marked, as with alienables, and so the inalienable can be modified as an entity in its own right, like any other noun. Distinguishing adjectives like *droit* and *supérieur* also involve modification of the inalienable, but only to set it apart from other body parts, i.e., they clarify the identity of the inalienable but always as part of a whole. Support for this semantic explanation comes from body part predications with *avoir*, e.g.:

(47)   Il a les yeux hypnotisants.
       'He has the hypnotizing eyes.'

This structure admits descriptive adjectives because its *raison d'être* is to assert the quality given by the adjective. If the adjective denotes something taken for granted, it does not normally occur after *avoir*, e.g.:

(48)   ?Elle a l'oreille droite.
       'She has the right ear.'

Through embedding (Julien 1983: 142), the *avoir* structure permits co-existence of a descriptive adjective and the part-whole structure signaled by the DD:

(49)   Elle a levé les bras qu'elle avait tout rouges.
       'She lifted the arms that she had all red.'

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[14] A constraint which may cast doubt on this explanation is the ungrammatical result when an appositive relative clause is added to a body part which does not cover the entire set (Julien 1983:144):

(i)   ?*Il a levé la main, qui était bandée.
         'He raised the hand, which was bandaged.'   vs

(ii)   Il s'est rasé les cheveux, qui commençaient à tomber.
         'He to-himself shaved off the hair, which was starting to fall out.'

The grammaticality of (ii) is surprising if our hypothesis holds, because the relative is descriptive rather than distinguishing. However, if the parallel between adjective phrases and relatives really exists, we would expect that descriptive adjective phrases should be acceptable with a body part whose DD is taken as a universal quantifier, e.g.

(iii)   Il s'est finalement rasé les beaux cheveux.
         'He to-himself finally shaved off the beautiful hair.'

Since my informants consistently rejected (iii), I conclude that appositive relatives as in (ii) present modification of a different nature from that of adjective phrases.

(50)   On lui a littéralement sculpté le nez qu'il avait très gros.
'They to-him literally carved the nose that he had very big.'

Thus, what Kayne (1975) perceived as a syntactic constraint indicating non-referential status for inalienables can be explained as a semantic repercussion of the part-whole relation which defines inalienability.

• *The DD is not the only determiner involved with inalienables.* Contra Authier (1988: 238), other determiners (demonstrative, indefinite) also occur in S's where the possessor construal applies to a dative clitic:

(51)   Comment *t*'es-tu cassé *un/ce* doigt?
'How did you to-you break a/that finger?'

or to a subject:

(52)   *L'enfant* a baissé *des/ces* yeux si tendres...
'The child lowered such tender eyes/those eyes so tender...'

These examples manifest exactly the same possessor construal for the dative in (51) and subject in (52) as when the inalienable occurs with the DD, even though the body parts are unequivocally referential, at least with the demonstrative.

In this respect, DDCs are no different from classical inalienable structures. With *un*, Tellier claims any implicit possessor is an adjunct and therefore impossible:

(53)   *Marie, dont les amis ne parlent plus à *un* fils.
'Marie, of-whom the friends no longer speak to a son.'

Here *un* would absorb the possessor θ-role, leaving the unexpressed possessor *de Marie* with adjunct status, as opposed to the grammatical ...*à un des fils*, where *de Marie* receives the possessor θ-role of the lexically realized *fils*. Unfortunately for this analysis, *un* often arises with the expected possessor construal in DDCs, especially with abstract Ns. Many of Tellier's examples remain grammatical when the DD is replaced by the indefinite determiner, e.g.:

(54)   Cette sombre histoire$_i$, dont$_i$ les images t_i s'accordent parfaitement à *un* rythme e_i et à *un* ton e_i demi-mondains.
That dark story, of-which the images perfectly correspond to a rhythm and tone of the demi-monde.'

(55)   Le romancier$_i$, dont$_i$ la vie t_i coïncide avec *une* impressionnante maîtrise de soi e_i, s'est senti troublé devant la caméra.
'The novelist, of-whom the life coincides with an impressive self-control, felt troubled in front of the camera.'

(56) Voilà un candidat$_i$ à la présidence dont$_i$ les attitudes t_i antisémites
transparaissent dans d'innombrables discours e_i.
'There's a candidate for the presidency of-whom the anti-semitic attitudes slip
out in countless speeches.'

Since the DDCs in (54-56) have a VP structure identical to that of (53), we
may exclude the preposition from the determinants of grammaticality. I
suspect that (53) is bad for the same reason that my informants judged *Je
ne parle plus à un fils de Marie* to be stylistically awkward and better ex-
pressed with the overt partitive ...*à un des fils de Marie*.

• *Relative clauses*. Just as other determiners allow the same possessor
construal with subject, dative or direct object (e.g., *Je l'ai frappé sur les
joues* 'I struck him on the cheeks'), a restrictive relative clause added to
particularize an inalienable preceded by *le* has no effect on the inferred
possessor link:

(57) J'ai dû d'abord me nettoyer le doigt que j'avais couvert d'onguent.
'I first had to to-me clean the finger that I had covered with ointment.'

For Julien (1983: 147), since restrictive relatives allow us to dispense
with the possessor-clitic, *le* in such cases has a cataphoric function. In the
absence of a definitizing relative clause, *le* would be anaphoric to the pos-
sessor, in a classical inalienable structure. It is not obvious that (57) would
exclude such anaphora, i.e., one perceives the *me-le* link all the same, just
as if there were no relative. Extending our semantic arguments from those
raised under *adjective constraint*, if *le* co-occurs with both a construed
possessor and a relative, the latter has the same function as a distinguish-
ing adjective. Without the clitic, the finger would be salient and treated as
any alienable, just as it would likely be in the English gloss.

• *The DD does not unequivocably signal a DDC, even if all the other
structural requirements for the latter are met.* A given relational N may be
co-indexable (i.e., allow possessor construal) with either the *dont* an-
tecedent or the noun heading the true gap, as the following ambiguities
indicate:

(58) Un argument dont les défenseurs ont perdu *la raison*
'An argument of-which the proponents have lost the reason.', i.e., have lost
their power of reason, or have lost the reasoning for the argument.

(59) C'est une société dont les jeunes ne respectent plus *l'esprit de liberté*.
'It's a society of-which the young no longer respect the spirit of freedom.', i.e.,
their own spirit of freedom, or their society's.

As pointed out, Tellier claims that DDCs result when the second gap is
co-indexed with a null operator in the Specifier of the relational noun's

Determiner Phrase. She proposes essentially the same analysis for classical inalienable structures like *Marie-Eve a bougé la tête* 'Marie-Eve moved the head' (Tellier 1991: 162), except that the agreement chain in this case involves the clausal subject. It is not clear what determines co-reference when a classical structure is embedded in a *dont* clause, as in:

(60)   ...une mère dont les enfants n'ouvrent pas la bouche.
        '...a mother of-whom the children don't open the mouth.'   vs

(61)   ...une victime dont le médecin n'a pas réussi à refermer les blessures.
        '...a victim of-whom the doctor didn't manage to close up the wounds.'

Pragmatics and perhaps lexical factors ensure that in (60), *bouche* is linked to *enfants* rather than *mère*, while in (61), the *blessures* are those of the victim rather than doctor. Whatever underlies the choice of co-reference, the parallel DDCs of (60-61) suggest that there is no syntactic determinism to force a possessive link with the antecedent of *dont*.

•   *Referentiality*: *le frère de Marie* vs *le téléphone de Marie*. It is not clear how *le frère de Marie* is any different as regards referentiality (in the sense of Ogden & Richards 1923) from *le téléphone de Marie*. In both cases the pinpointing of the referent appears to be done through the adnominal phrase rather than the determiner, even though the relational *frère*—but not *téléphone*—would supposedly have built into its lexical structure the provision for an adnominal complement, which Tellier proposes to handle theoretically as an argument.

In short, I submit that *le* is by far the most frequent determiner to occur with inalienables because it is less precise than its alternatives: it fits the unmarked scenario, where the inalienable is part of a whole. The DD can be used for a first mention of an inalienable because the relation to a possessor is taken for granted, presumably thanks to the argument provision in the inalienable's lexical structure:

(62)   X: Pourquoi tu fais cette tête?
             'Why are you making such a face?'

       Y: Je me suis coupé *le* doigt quand je peignais le plafond.
             'I to-me cut the finger when I was painting the ceiling.'

This instance of *doigt* is referentially non definite (cf. Hawkins 1978: 131). It could refer to any of my fingers, parallel to English *He broke his arm*, where the singular doesn't imply that the subject has only one arm, but simply leaves open the question of which arm. Replacing *le* with *un* is possible, with the possessor construal unchanged, but the indefinite de-

terminer gives a particularized interpretation to the body part, as it can to any noun.

I have argued in this section that the DD has no consistent syntactic link with inalienables. The constraints noted by Kayne (1975) which would mark such a link—adjective blocking and obligatory distributive singular—have been shown to be either incomplete and due to semantic-pragmatic factors or not exclusive to the DD.

3.3   Null possessors

In general, an inalienable imposes a locality condition on its possessor, in that the latter or a pronominal representative of it must occur in the same S, and normally C-commands the inalienable. The possessive determiner is needed for the specifier of *mains* in (63) because the body part is not in the same S as its possessor:[15]

(63)   Je suis fâché contre Michel parce que ses/*les mains n'étaient pas propres.
'I'm angry at Michel because his/*the hands weren't clean.'

As a further locality requirement, Tellier (1991: 161) states that possessors of relational nouns may be syntactically 'unrealized only if a non-definite determiner is present to absorb the θ-role otherwise assigned to them', e.g.:

(64)   Dans cette peinture cubiste, un/*le genou ressortait parmi des poignées de porte.
'In that cubist painting, a/*the knee stuck out among some doorknobs.' (Example mine)

This is a ramification of the special status accorded by generativists to the DD with the 'normal' determiner *le*, the possessor must be nearby, purportedly to ensure the referentiality of the inalienable, as discussed in the previous section. With other determiners, the inalienable is treated as any ordinary R-expression, i.e., as alienable. It is not clear how this analysis would distinguish (64) from

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[15] Where the possessum is not C-commanded by the possessor at S–structure, e.g.:

   La tête lui tourne.
   'The head to-him turns.'

Guéron (1985) and Herschensohn (1989) propose that the verb in such cases is unaccusative, i.e., it would sub–categorize for a VP-internal theme, which would then move to subject position. See Ruwet (1991) for semantic and pragmatic problems which the unaccusativity hypothesis raises.

(65) Je me suis cassé un bras.
      'I to-me broke an arm.'

where the clitic *me* rather than the indefinite determiner is the obvious candidate to absorb the θ-role of *bras*.

Following Rizzi (1986) and Authier (1988), Tellier concludes that possessor-less relational nouns with the DD are permissible provided that two conditions are satisfied: (a) the referent is arbitrary *pro*, and (b) the context has generic time reference, e.g.:

(66) En Angleterre on coupe les cheveux sans d'abord les mouiller.
      'In England they cut the hair without first wetting it.'   vs

(67) *Hier on a coupé les cheveux sans les mouiller.[16]
      'Yesterday they cut the hair without wetting it.'

This correlation between generic context and arbitrary possessor, however, is not absolute, as the following show:

(68) Ben oui, *la popularité* vient de chuter.
      'Yes indeed, the popularity has just plummeted.' (Talking about a politician)

(69) Il s'est coupé les poils qui dépassaient *des oreilles*.
      'He cut the hair that stuck out of the ears.'

(70) *La main gauche* était enflée et *l'avant-bras droit* était meurtri.
      'The left hand was swollen and the right forearm was bruised.' (Medical report)

All three Ss exhibit inalienables lacking a local possessor, yet in none is the verb generic nor is the possessor arbitrary.[17] No satisfactory syntactic

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[16] The genericness stipulation parallels that which Rizzi (1986) claimed for arbitrary PRO subjects. This contention needs closer examination, since it is not difficult to find arbitrary subjects coexisting with punctual verbs, e.g.:

(i)   Air Canada a interdit de fumer il y a trois ans.
      'Air Canada prohibited smoking three years ago.'

[17] The following literary example is an interesting case of a null possessor (a) in a non-generic event and (b) ambiguous as to whether its reference is specific or arbitrary:

(i)   Oses–tu dire que tu ne l'aimes pas? dit–il d'une voix qui entrait dans *le coeur* comme un poignard.
      'Do you dare to say that you don't love him? he asked in a voice that entered the heart like a dagger.' (Balzac, *Séraphîta*, 745).

This occurrence of *coeur* without an explicit possessor leaves the reader free to supply one: the most immediate candidate is Minna, the addressee who is smitten with the speaker Séraphîta, and for whom the question *Oses–tu...* is devastating evidence that the androgynous Séraphîta is not in love with her.

analysis has been yet proposed to handle such counter-examples. Tellier herself seems aware of such counter-evidence, as when she cautions that the null-subject constraint pertains to data that must be 'independent of any discourse or pragmatic context' (Tellier 1991: 273, note 20). This stipulation is untenable: after all, virtually every utterance, even a linguist's example, occurs in some discourse and some context, however minimal or metalinguistic.

Rather than independence from context, the key is markedness of context: the common feature of (68-70) is that the situation breaks with the norm of part-whole relations, in that the inalienable is mentioned for its own sake rather than as an appendage of the whole. This factor of salience underlies co-occurrence with a possessive adjective rather than the definite article (Hatcher 1944 a, & b), but (68-70) show that the possessive is not required for the inalienable to stand out on its own. The challenge for grammatical theory is to integrate this pragmatic markedness into a presumably still autonomous syntax.[18] Thus, locality constraints may be suspended in certain scenarios like medical contexts, or, as Nadasdi (1993) proposes, instructional contexts, which highlight the body part for its own sake.[19]

However, this does not exclude other hearts: that of the narrator, or perhaps even of the reader. My informants see this as a deliberate attempt on Balzac's part to allow for ambiguous reference, and, more crucially, they do not discern any syntactic anomaly in this example.

[18] Thanks to Diane Massam (personal communication) for suggesting pragmatic markedness as an explanation for what appear at first to be disparate counter-examples. Massam & Roberge (1989), in a similar vein, propose that some null objects in English can be dependent on a certain scenario, such as recipe contexts.

[19] The salience of an inalienable whose possessor is straightforwardly construable but not local is, in principle, distinct from cases where a body part, for example, is reinterpreted as alienable. When comparing

(i)   Les épaules me séduisaient.
        'The shoulders captivated me.'
with

(ii)   La poitrine (de poulet) se vend plus cher que les cuisses.
        'Breast (of chicken) is more expensive than thighs.'
we plausibly understand (i) as involving a locally unspecified but recoverable possessor, whom the line extols. The animal possessor of (ii) is inconsequential, i.e., the body parts are totally objectified and thereby devoid of inalienable status. The syntactician's problem is the lack of any palpable

4 CONCLUSION

This paper has examined three areas where further refinements are necessary for a complete account of French IPOSS, especially as regards the double *dont* construction. First, we looked at personal sphere inalienables, which bring out the indeterminacy of boundaries for relational nouns. Secondly, we presented counter-evidence to special syntactic status for the definite determiner as a marker of inalienability. Finally, we suggested a principle of pragmatic markedness to handle violations of the locality constraint for possessors of inalienables.

In spite of our questioning of syntactic factors, we still favour explaining the bulk of French inalienable construal phenomena via syntax: most inalienable tokens do obey constraints like locality of possessor. The solution will undoubtedly involve some kind of interface between modules, perhaps analogous to the Lexicon-Syntax Interface proposed in Cummins & Roberge (1994) to account for morpho-syntactic properties of Romance clitics. Since syntax alone cannot account for all the intricacies of French IPOSS, lexical semantics (cf. the prototype differences between body parts / kin terms vs personal sphere items) and pragmatics (e.g., the nature of the discourse context in determining violations of locality) can undoubtedly help to explain what are anomalies from a purely syntactic viewpoint.[20]

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phenomena in French on which to hang this nuance, which some languages can express overtly, e.g., the Uto–Aztecan group, which lexically distinguish inalienable and separable senses like 'husband' vs 'old man' (Saxton 1982). We are likely faced with a scalar phenomenon. Midway between the minimal possessor effacement of (i) and the maximum of (ii), we find occurrences like

(iii)   Le cerveau est le centre érotique du corps.
         'The brain is the erotic centre of the body.'

where the arbitrariness of the possessor renders it more effaced than in (i), but the *cerveau* and *corps* are nonetheless exempt from the objectification seen in (ii).

[20] The discourse context may not be such a thorny problem after all if one takes the position that locality violations are systematically attributable to *salience* of the inalienable, a factor which is of course discourse–dependent, but which, like other deictic phenomena, could be partially accounted for in the semantics module.

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