

Reconsidering inalienable possession in French

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Abstract

In this paper, I show that ‘inalienable possession’ with definite DPs in French is not inalienable and does not involve possession. The relevant cases are best captured in terms of an analysis that combines a syntactic configuration for locative prepositions (RP in den Dikken’s 1995, 2006 sense) with the semantics of weak definites in the sense of Aguilar-Guevara (2014). I also show that the relevant ‘inalienably possessed’ weak definites are not restricted to body parts, but include a broader set of nouns with a stereotypical function that are located in or on the body of an animate possessor/ location: mental or physical faculties, facial expressions, as well as articles of clothing, protection, and adornment. This set of nouns displays a number of peculiar restrictions on the verbs that select them. I argue that all of these restrictions derive from the requirement that the semantic properties of weak definites and the syntactic configuration of the RP need to be compositionally respected. Finally, I speculate how this analysis can be extended to crosslinguistic variation in German and English.

Keywords: inalienable, possession, weak definite, location, stereotypical

1. Introduction*

Inalienable possession is a term with multiple meanings. In the typological literature, it refers to *obligatory possession*: it refers to nouns that cannot occur without a morphological expression for the possessor (Bickel & Nichols 2013). In other linguistic traditions going back to Bally (1926), inalienable possession is used more loosely as a semantic relation of possession in which possessor and possessum are presented as inseparable, and in which the possessum cannot be transferred to someone else. Under this view, what counts as inalienable varies from language to language. In Romance languages, for instance, inalienably possessed nouns are assumed to at least include body parts and, by extension, some items of clothing (see e.g. Guéron 2006); but kinship terms are not grammatically treated as inalienable. Nichols (1988:573) already showed that the semantic definition of inalienable possession as “inborn, inherent, not conferred by purchase” is not consistent with the facts of language: Nichols notes that in a language such as Nanai, domestic animals are part of the ‘inalienable’ pattern, but kinship terms, which are clearly inseparable and untransferable, are not. Such cases can be multiplied: across languages, the class of nouns that are said to be semantically inalienable is almost never restricted to nouns indicating an untransferable or inseparable possessive relation (see Karvovskaya 2017:Ch1 for a more extensive discussion).

In this article, I would like to drive a final nail in the coffin of inalienability as a linguistically relevant cover term. I will do so by examining French. As in many varieties of Romance and

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Germanic, the definite article in French can express possession for nouns indicating body parts such as *main* ‘hand’, but not for nouns such as *livre* ‘book’. This is illustrated in (1). Indices on the possessor and the definite article indicate a possessive interpretation:

- (1) Marie_i a ouvert la_i bouche/ *le_i livre.
 Marie opened the mouth/ the book
 ‘Marie opened her mouth/ her book.’

It has sometimes been noted that the set of ‘inalienable’ or body part nouns for which possession can be indicated by the definite article marginally extends to articles of clothing and the like (Bally 1926, Diffloth 1974, Guéron 2006), as in (2):¹

- (2) Les policiers m’_iont fouillé les_i poches.
 The policemen to-me have searched the pockets
 ‘The policemen searched my pockets’

The implicit assumption for these ‘marginal’ cases seems to have been that articles of clothing can be somehow assimilated to body parts, and viewed as ‘inalienable’ items by association. Nevertheless, articles of clothing and adornment are clearly transferable and separable from their owners. Without a clear understanding of the mechanism that assimilates articles of clothing to body parts, such cases should in fact be taken to undermine the category of inalienability as a useful linguistic notion.

A detailed look at such ‘marginal’ cases in Section 2 shows that possession via the definite article not only extends to articles of clothing and adornment, but also to mental and physical states (good spirits, life, and health). More importantly, these cases show a number of curious interpretive restrictions that to my knowledge have never been observed before. The relevant generalization that covers all ‘definitely possessed’ nouns in French turns out to involve nouns whose referent can be *located* in or on the body. ‘Inalienable possession’ in French therefore is neither inalienable, nor does it involve possession: it represents a particularly restricted location relation.

In Section 3, following up on a suggestion by Le Bruyn (2014), I argue that the definite determiner in inalienable possession should be viewed as a specific instantiation of a weak definite in the sense of Aguilar-Guevara (2014). I show that the combination of the analysis of the ‘possessed’ noun as a weak definite with a syntactic analysis of location can account for the particular interpretive restrictions noted in Section 2. In the conclusion, I speculate on how this analysis can be extended to crosslinguistic differences with e.g. German and English.

2. The data

2.1. Four syntactic contexts

As already mentioned above, inalienable possession is expressed in French by a definite article introducing the possessed noun (Hatcher 1944, Kayne 1975, Guéron 1983, 1985, 2006 Vergnaud & Zubizarreta 1992, Nakamoto 2010, Le Bruyn 2014). There are four syntactic contexts that allow for this relation to be established.

¹ For Bally (1926), the relevant set of nouns involved “the personal domain”.

The first context is that of direct construal: when the possessed ‘inalienable’ noun occurs as a direct or indirect object, the combination of the verb and the direct object must express a ‘natural bodily gesture’, as first observed by Hatcher (1944). The sentence in (3)a expresses the ‘natural gesture’ of lifting one’s hands: it involves a movement of the body. By contrast, the sentence in (3)b is ungrammatical because washing one’s hands is not a natural movement of the body in this sense: it is an action performed on one’s hands, not a movement of the body. The sentence in (3)c is out because it does not involve a noun that can be inalienably possessed.

- (3) a. Oriane_i a levé les_i mains
 ‘Oriane lifted her hands’
 b. Oriane_i a lavé ses/ *les_i mains
 ‘Oriane washed her hands’
 c. Oriane_i a levé le_j/*_i stylo
 ‘Oriane lifted the pen’ (NOT: Oriane lifted her own pen)

On the model of (3)a, there are various expressions as in (4), some of them collocations:

- (4) a. froncer les sourcils/le nez b. cligner des yeux
 frown the eyebrows/the nose blink of.the eyes
 ‘to raise one’s eyebrows/to sniff’ ‘to wink’
 c. claquer des dents/doigts d. dodeliner de la tête
 clap of.the teeth/fingers rock of.the head
 ‘to shiver/to snap’ ‘to nod’
 e. balancer/rouler les hanches /tortiller des hanches
 rock/roll the hips/twist of.the hips
 ‘to sway/wiggle one’s hips’
 f. ouvrir les yeux/ les oreilles g. croiser les doigts
 open the eyes/ ears cross the fingers
 ‘to open one’s eyes/ ears’ ‘cross one’s fingers’

A second syntactic context involves nonreflexive (5) and reflexive (6) dative possessors:

- (5) a. Oriane lui_i a lavé les_i mains.
 Oriane to-him/her washed the hands
 ‘Oriane washed his/her hands.’
 b. La_i tête lui_i tourne
 the head to-him/her turns
 ‘She/ he is dizzy’
- (6) a. Oriane_i s_i’est lavé les_i mains.
 Oriane_i to-SELF washed the hands
 ‘Oriane washed her own hands.’
 b. Théophile_i s’_iest musclé les_i bras
 Théophile to-SELF is muscled the arms
 ‘Théophile muscled his arms’

Inalienably possessed construal with a dative possessor is not limited to natural gestures.

In a third syntactic context, the possessed noun occurs in a PP adjunct:

- (7) a. Oriane a frappé Jean_i [PP sur l_i'épaule]
 'Oriane hit Jean on the shoulder'
 b. Théophile_i a marqué un but [PP de la_i tête]
 Théophile marked a goal of the head
 'Théophile scored with his head'
 c. Oriane a pris Théophile_i [PP par la_i main]
 'Oriane took Théophile by the hand'

Finally, in a fourth syntactic context, the possessed noun is the subject of a small clause:

- (8) a. Anne_i a [SC les_i yeux bleus]
 'Anne has blue eyes'
 b. Oriane_i a [SC la_i tête dans les nuages]
 'Oriane has her head in the clouds'
 c. Théophile_i est parti [SC la_i tête haute]
 Théophile is left the head high
 'Théophile left with his head held high'

In all contexts, further modification of the inalienably possessed noun is not possible, unless the modifier expresses an 'inherent' or 'restrictive' property of the possessed noun (Kayne 1975, Vergnaud & Zubizarreta 1992):

- (9) a. Oriane_i a levé la_i main (droite/ *charmante)
 'Oriane lifted her (right/ charming) hand'
 b. Oriane lui_i a lavé la_i main (droite/ *charmante).
 Oriane to-him/her washed the (right/ charming) hands
 'Oriane washed his/her (right/ charming) hands.'
 c. Oriane a pris Théophile_i par la_i main (droite/ *charmante)
 'Oriane took Théophile by the (right/ charming) hand'
 d. Oriane_i a la_i (*belle) tête dans les nuages
 'Oriane has her (beautiful) head in the clouds'

All of these cases involve body parts, and they represent data that are well known in the literature.

2.2. Beyond body parts

However, other types of nouns can also figure in these contexts. They include mental and physical states such as good spirits, facial expressions, life, and health:

- (10) a. Pierre_i a gardé/ perdu le_i moral/ le_i sourire.
 Pierre has kept/ lost the mood/ the smile
 'Pierre kept up/ lost his good spirits/ his smile.'
 b. Anne s_i'est bousillé la_i santé.
 Anne to-SELF damaged the health
 'Anne damaged her health.'
 c. Cet accident lui_i a ôté la_i vie
 that accident to-him/her took-away the life
 That accident cost him/her his/her life'

In addition, articles of clothing, personal protection, or adornment can express possession when introduced by the definite determiner. In (11) and (12), I provide examples for dative possessors, direct construal, and PP adjuncts.

- (11) a. Pierre_i s_i'est sali la_i chemise
 Pierre to-SELF dirtied the shirt
 'Pierre made his shirt dirty.'
- b. Anne s_i'est troué/ déchiré le_i pantalon.
 Anne to-SELF made-hole/ torn the pants
 'Anne made a hole in/ tore her pants.'
- c. En tombant, le motard_i s'est cassé le_i casque/ la_i montre.
 in falling the biker to-SELF is broken the helmet/ the watch
 'When he fell, the biker broke his helmet/ his watch'
- (12) a. Ils_i ont enlevé les_i chaussures/ les_i chaussettes/ les_i sandales avant d'entrer
 They have taken-off the shoes/ the socks/ the sandals before of enter
 'They took off their shoes/ socks/ sandals before coming in.'
- b. Je l_i'ai attrapé par la_i ceinture/ la_i cravate
 I him/her have grabbed by the belt/ the tie
 'I grabbed him by the belt/ the tie.'

The cases that involve articles of clothing and adornment show an additional restriction that was first briefly noted by Guéron (2006): the sentences in (13) are only felicitous if there is bodily contact between the possessor and the possessed item.

- (13) a. Pierre_i lui_j a ouvert la_j chemise.
 Pierre to-him/her has opened the shirt
 'Pierre_i opened his_j/*_i shirt.'
- b. On lui_i a volé le_i sac à main
 One to-him/her has stolen the bag at hand
 'They stole her handbag.'

In other words, (13)a is not felicitous in a context where the shirt belonging to the dative possessor is located on a hanger, and Pierre is opening the shirt on the hanger for the possessor. Although this context is perfectly imaginable, the sentence in (13)a cannot be used to describe it. Similarly, (13)b is only felicitous if the owner of the bag was in close proximity to it. The sentence in (13)b is not felicitous in a context where the bag was stolen during a burglary when the owner was not at home, for example. This requirement of bodily contact or close proximity accounts for the infelicity (bordering on ungrammaticality) of the sentences in (14):

- (14) a. #/* Pierre_i s_i'est lavé la_i chemise
 Pierre to-SELF washed the shirt
 'Pierre washed his shirt.'
- b. #/* Anne s_i'est repassé le_i pantalon.
 Anne to-SELF ironed the pants
 'Anne ironed her pants.'

The sentences in (14) are infelicitous because it is hard to imagine a context in which one washes one's shirt or irons one's pants while wearing these items at the same time. In the next section, I will further refine the observations on so-called 'inalienable' possession involving items of clothing and mental and physical states.

2.3. Further observations

2.3.1. Direct construal

In section 2.1. above, I observed, in line with Hatcher (1944), that possessed body part nouns in direct construal context must express a 'natural body gesture' in combination with the verb that selects them. This interpretive limitation does not extend to articles of clothing:

- (15) a. Ils_i ont enlevé les_i chaussures/ les_i chaussettes/ les_i sandales avant d'entrer
They have taken-off the shoes/ the socks/ the sandals before of enter
'They took off their shoes/ socks/ sandals before coming in.'
- b. Il_i a gardé la_i veste malgré le soleil.
He has kept the jacket inspite-of the sun
'He kept on his jacket despite the sun.'

These cases however show a different set of limitations on the verbs selecting the definitely possessed noun. Interestingly, sentences where clothing is taken off or kept on are fine, while cases where clothing is put on cannot be construed as possessive, even when verbs are used that typically cooccur with specific articles of clothing:

- (16) a. Pierre_i a enfilé son_i/*le_i pantalon.
Pierre has slipped-on his/ the pants
'Pierre slipped into his pants.'
- b. Anne_i a endossé sa_i/*la_i veste.
Anne has put-on-back her/ the jacket
'Anne put on het jacket.'

The same applies to body parts and faculties. Loss of limbs, hair, and eyesight results in felicitous sentences, as in (17), while improvements to the body or wounds as in (18) do not:

- (17) Blaise_i a perdu la_i main droite/ les_i cheveux/ la_i vue
'Blaise lost his right hand/ hair/ eyesight'
- (18) a. Théophile_i a musclé ses_i/*les_i bras
'Théophile muscled his arms'
- b. Jean a amélioré sa_i/*la_i cheville
'Jean improved his ankle.'
- c. Jean_i a blessé son_i/*le_i dos
'Jean hurt/ improved his back.'

By contrast, maintaining or returning to a previously existing state yields felicitous sentences:

- (19) a. Anne_i a regagné la_i santé
'Anne regained her health'
- b. Pierre_i a gardé/ retrouvé le_i moral/ le_i sourire
'Pierre kept up/ again found his good spirits/ his smile'

Many expressions and collocations involving loss of limb and taking off clothing make use of direct construal, while there are no corresponding cases where such items are improved or acquired:

- | | | | | |
|------|----|---|----|---|
| (20) | a. | perdre la main
lose the hand
'to lose one's touch' | b. | perdre la face
lose the face
'to lose face' |
| | c. | perdre la tête
lose the head
'to lose one's head (fig.)' | d. | perdre les pédales
lose the pedals
'lose control' |
| (21) | a. | tomber la veste/ la chemise
fall the jacket/ the shirt
'take off one's jacket/ shirt' | b. | mettre sa/ *la veste
put-on his/ the jacket
'put on one's jacket' |

2.3.2. PP adjuncts

PP adjuncts reveal another semantic restriction that is not immediately obvious. 'Inalienable' possession is only possible in PPs that express a locative relation between the possessed noun and the possessor. This should not be taken to mean that possession is restricted to strictly locative prepositions. In (7)b, for instance, the preposition *de* 'of' in *de la tête* 'with the head' has an instrumental interpretation. However, the instrumental interpretation entails locative proximity between the possessor and the possessed noun, and this is enough to license the requisite locative relation.

- (7)
- | | |
|----|---|
| a. | Oriane a frappé Jean _i sur l _i 'épaule
'Oriane hit Jean on the shoulder' |
| b. | Théophile _i a marqué un but de la _i tête
Théophile marked a goal of the head
'Théophile scored with his head' |
| c. | Oriane a pris Théophile _i par la _i main
'Oriane took Théophile by the hand' |

The same is true for *avec* 'with' and *par* 'by' in (22): these prepositions specify a locative relation between the possessor and the possessed noun.

- (22)
- | | |
|----|---|
| a. | Elle _i mange avec la _i main droite
She eats with the hand right
'She eats with her right hand.' |
| b. | Je l _i 'ai attrapé par la _i cravate
'I grabbed him by the tie.' |

By contrast, if the PP containing the possessed noun is not headed by a preposition that specifies a locative relation between the possessor and the possessed noun, it is not possible to express 'inalienable' possession with a definite article. This is illustrated in (23): the preposition *pour* 'for' and the prepositional expression *à propos* 'on the topic of' do not allow for the possessive construal of the definite article. Note the contrast with the possessive article *sa* 'his/her', which shows that possessive interpretations are perfectly possible in this context, just not with the definite article.

- (23) a. Je l_i'ai complimenté pour sa_i/*la_i cravate
I him have complimented for his tie
'I complimented him on his tie'
b. Je lui_i ai parlé à propos de sa_i/*la_i cravate
I to-him have talked on subject of his tie
'I talked to him about his tie'

The sentences in (24) present a particularly nice minimal pair to illustrate this restriction. The verb *compter sur* 'count on' has two meanings, a literal and a figurative one, just like its English counterpart. When the possessive article *ses* 'his/ her' is used, as in (24)a, both the literal and figurative meanings are available. However, with the definite article, as in (24)b, only the literal meaning is available. Obviously, the literal meaning requires a strictly locative interpretation, unlike the figurative meaning.

- (24) a. La pianiste_i compte sur ses_i doigts
'The pianist is counting on her fingers'
= She is using her fingers for counting (literal meaning)
= She depends on her fingers (figurative meaning)
b. La pianiste_i compte sur les_i doigts
'The pianist is counting on her fingers'
= She is using her fingers for counting (literal meaning)
≠ She depends on her fingers (figurative meaning)

This minimal pair therefore confirms the observation that possession expressed by the definite article is only possible in PPs that express a locative relation between the possessed noun and the possessor.

2.4. Summing up: restrictions and generalizations

The findings of this section can be recapitulated as follows:

- (25) a. 'Inalienable' possession indicated by a definite determiner in French can occur in contexts of direct construal, indirect construal, PP adjuncts, and small clauses ((3) - (6)).
b. In all contexts, possession indicated by the definite determiner is not restricted to body parts, but extends to mental or physical faculties; facial expressions; and articles of clothing, protection, and adornment ((10) - (13)).
c. The definite determiner can only indicate possession of articles of clothing, protection, and adornment if these are in direct contact or close proximity with the possessor ((11) - (14)).
d. Restrictions on the verb: direct construal is restricted to 'natural gestures' with body parts, but it can also include reference to loss of limbs, clothing, mental/physical faculties, or the maintenance thereof ((15) - (21)).
e. Possession indicated by the definite determiner is only possible in adjunct PPs that specify a locative relation between possessor and possessum ((22)-(24)).

The discussion above has shown that the notion of ‘inalienability’ does not correctly characterize the nouns that can express a possessive relation by means of the definite determiner. On the one hand, as shown above, items of clothing, protection, and adornment also qualify. These nouns are clearly transferable and separable from their owners.² On the other hand, kinship terms imply an untransferable, inherent relation, and should qualify as inalienable. Nevertheless, they cannot be introduced by a definite determiner to express possession, as shown by the minimal contrast between (26)a and b.

- (26) a. Elle_i mange avec la_i main droite
 She eats with the hand right
 ‘She eats with her right hand.’
 b. Elle_i mange avec sa_i/ *la_i tante
 She eats with her/ the aunt
 ‘She eats with her aunt.’

The only property that all ‘definitely possessed’ nouns seem to have in common is that their referent can be located in or on the body of the animate DP that is interpreted as their possessor. This characterization applies to body parts, mental and physical states, facial expressions, as well as items of clothing, protection, and adornment. I will call this generalization the Body-as-Location Generalization:

- (27) *The Body as Location Generalization (BaLG)*
 Only nouns whose referent can be located on or in the body of an animate DP possessor can be interpreted as definite possessed DPs.

3. Towards an analysis

I will refrain from providing a full discussion of the various analyses of inalienable possession that have gone before. For this purpose, I refer the reader to Guéron (2006). Suffice it to say that most analyses derive ‘inalienable’ possession by postulating an anaphoric element inside the possessed phrase as a way of capturing that they are relational in the sense of Barker (1995). For instance, Guéron (1985) has a PRO determiner inside the possessed noun phrase for this purpose, while Vergnaud and Zubizarreta (1992) and Hole (2012) assume that inalienable nouns have an unsaturated argument variable bound by the possessor. As will become clear in the remainder of this section, I will not assume that the possessed noun has any anaphoric element that is bound by the possessor, nor will I argue, as e.g. Le Bruyn (2014), that the possessed noun is relational in any way. Rather, I will propose that there is nothing possessive about inalienable possession, and that the relevant interpretations completely derive from the syntax of locative expressions, in combination with a semantic analysis of the definitely possessed noun as a weak definite in the sense of Aguilar-Guevara (2014).

² It is in principle possible to analyze nouns referring to items of clothing, protection, and adornment in the same way as body part nouns by making them relational via an operation of type-shifting. Such an analysis would basically create two lexical entries for each of these nouns, one that is relational and one that is not. I do not think any additional insight would be gained by such an analysis, and therefore will not pursue it: systematic and arbitrary homonymy would result. More in general, I do not think that the relational nature of nouns has anything to do with possession expressed by the definite determiner, as will become clear below (also see Karvovskaya 2018:Ch1).

3.1. The definite determiner as a weak definite

In this section, I will argue that the definite determiner in ‘inalienable’ possession is a weak definite in the sense of Aguilar-Guevara (2014).³ This analysis was first suggested by Le Bruyn (2014), and discussed for Dutch dialects by Scholten (2018). I will provide a fuller discussion, and review 8 properties that Aguilar-Guevara (2014) ascribes to weak definites in general. I will show that these characteristics specifically apply to inalienably possessed nouns as well.

3.1.1. *Non-unique reference* (see also Le Bruyn 2014, Scholten 2018)

First of all, weak definites do not refer to uniquely identifiable individuals: they may refer to more than one entity, and exactly which entity is referred to is left unspecified.

- (28) *Context.* Sabina is standing in front of three elevators waiting for any of them to come.
Sentence. Sabina is waiting for the elevator. (Aguilar-Guevara 2014:15(11))

The same observation applies to ‘inalienably’ possessed nouns: in (7)a, it is left unspecified which of Jean’s shoulders was hit.

- (7) a. Oriane a frappé Jean_i sur l_i’épaule
 ‘Oriane hit Jean on the shoulder’

3.1.2. *“Sloppy” identity in elliptical contexts* (also see Scholten 2018 for Dutch dialects)

Weak definites also show ‘sloppy’ identity, as in (29):

- (29) Mateo called the doctor and Sabina did too.
 (Mateo and Sabina could have called different doctors)
 (Aguilar-Guevara 2014:16(15)b)

The same property can be observed for definite ‘inalienably’ possessed nouns: Oriane and Maeve have each lifted their own hands (see also Rooryck & Vanden Wyngaerd 2011).

- (30) Oriane_i a levé les_i mains, et Maeve aussi
 ‘Oriane lifted her hands, and so did Maeve’

3.1.3. *“Narrow scope” interpretation*

Weak definites also have narrow scope interpretations, as in (31)a. The sentence in (31)b, with a definite ‘inalienably’ possessed noun, shows the same restriction.

- (31) a. Every soldier hit the target.
 (Each soldier hit their own target)
 (Aguilar-Guevara 2014:17)
 b. Chaque étudiant_i s_i’est lavé les_i mains
 Every student to-SELF washed the hands
 ‘Every student washed her own hands.’

³ On weak definites, see also Löbner (1985), Ojeda (1993), Birner & Ward (1994), Poesio (1994), Abbott (2000), Barker (2004), Carlson & Sussman (2005), Epstein (2002), Aguilar-Guevara & Zwarts (2010), Aguilar-Guevara, Le Bruyn & Zwarts (2014).

3.1.4. Lexical restrictions

Aguilar-Guevara (2014) shows that there is a limited set of nouns with a stereotypical interpretation that can occur as weak definites. The best way to test this is in ellipsis contexts with an intended reading of sloppy identity. The contrast between the (a) and (b) sentences in (32) and (33) show that the relevant noun cannot be easily replaced by a different one, even if it has a closely related reference:

- (32) a. Martha is in the hospital, and Alice is too
 b. Martha is in # the hotel and Alice is too
- (33) a. Martha went to the beach and Alice did too.
 b. Martha went to # the lake and Alice did too.

The same observation can be made for definite ‘inalienably’ possessed nouns: a closely related, but slightly more specific body part noun, cannot simply replace the ‘inalienably’ possessed noun in (34) and (35). I have chosen these more specific nouns to illustrate the contrast because they lack the stereotypical interpretations that are the hallmark of weak definites.

- (34) a. I looked Martha in the eyes, and Alice did too
 b. I looked Martha in #the irises, and Alice did too
- (35) a. I kicked John in the teeth, and Alice did too
 b. I kicked John in #the incisors, and Alice did too

This is also the case for articles of clothing, as in (36): shoes, socks, and sandals can occur in as definitely possessed nouns, but their slightly more specific counterparts (booties, Birkenstocks, or espadrilles) cannot.

- (36) a. Les_i visiteurs ont enlevé les_i chaussures/ les_i chaussettes/ les_i sandales
 ‘The visitors have taken off their shoes/ socks/ sandals’
 b. Les_i visiteurs ont enlevé # les_i bottines/ les_i Birkenstocks/ les_i espadrilles
 ‘The visitors have taken off their booties/ Birkenstocks/ espadrilles’

3.1.5. Restrictions on modification

Aguilar-Guevara (2014:19) observes that weak definites can only be modified by adjectives that establish subclasses of objects, as shown by the contrast in (37):

- (37) a. Lola went to #the old hospital and Alice did too.
 b. Lola went to the psychiatric hospital and Alice did too.
 (cf. Aguilar-Guevara (2014:18(36-38)))

As I already noted in (9) above (repeated here), this has been a long-standing observation for ‘inalienably’ possessed nouns (Kayne 1975, Vergnaud & Zubizarreta 1992):

- (9) a. Oriane_i a levé la_i main (droite/ *charmante)
 ‘Oriane lifted her (right/ charming) hand’
 b. Oriane lui_i a lavé la_i main (droite/ *charmante).
 Oriane to-him/her washed the (right/ charming) hands

- ‘Oriane washed his/her (right/ charming) hands.’
- c. Oriane a pris Théophile_i par la_i main (droite/ *charmante)
‘Oriane took Théophile by the (right/ charming) hand’
- d. Oriane_i a la_i (*belle) tête dans les nuages
‘Oriane has her (beautiful) head in the clouds’

3.1.6 Number restrictions

Aguilar-Guevara (2014) notes that weak definites display restrictions on number. For instance, there are only a few plural examples:

- (38) a. Alice went to the mountains.
b. Alice watered the plants. (Aguilar-Guevara 2014:19(40))

However, it appears that it is not so much that plural examples are rare, they often acquire a different meaning. An expression like *go to the mountains* is stereotypically used as a collocation to indicate a mountain vacation, while *go to the mountain* can have the stereotypical interpretation of ‘go to a sacred mountain on a pilgrimage’. Similar observations hold for ‘inalienably’ possessed nouns: in the sentences in (39), the plural is definitely better than the singular. This can no doubt be ascribed to the collocational nature of these expressions, but that is also the case for the stereotypical uses of the weak definite in (38).

- (39) a. I kicked John in the teeth/ # the tooth, and Alice did too
b. John was rapped on the fingers/ *the finger, and Alice was too

Distinct meanings between the singular and the plural, as English *go to the mountain(s)*, also exist for ‘inalienably’ possessed nouns in French. In both (40)a and b, the singular and the plural object combine with the verb to yield the literal interpretation of waking up. However, the figurative meaning of both sentences is slightly different. The sentence in (40)a means ‘to finally understand’, while (40)b has the meaning of keeping one’s eyes peeled.

- (40) a. Cela lui_i a ouvert les_i yeux
That to-him/her has opened the eyes
‘That opened his/her eyes’
(literal: ‘wake up’/ figurative: ‘to finally understand’)
- b. Cela lui_i a ouvert l_i’oeil
That to-him/her opened the eyes
‘That made him/her wake up/ keep his eyes peeled’
(literal: ‘wake up’/ figurative: ‘to pay attention, check out’)

Similar considerations apply to the difference between the singular and the plural in English *look someone in the eye(s)*. *Look someone in the eye* means ‘to talk to someone in an honest way that shows no doubts, without fear or shame’, while *look someone in the eyes* is more appropriate for romantic or intimate contexts.

3.1.7. Meaning enrichment (stereotypical meanings)

Aguilar-Guevara (2014) notes that sentences containing weak definites have richer meanings than those denoted by their mere composition with a selecting verb. These sentences carry both a literal meaning and an enriched, stereotypical meaning, as in (41):

- (41) Lola went to the hospital.
Literal meaning: Lola went to a hospital.
Enriched meaning: Lola went to get some medical services.
 (Aguilar-Guevara 2014:20(43))

The enriched meaning corresponds to a weak definite reading. Aguilar-Guevara (2014) notes that *hospital* receives a stereotypical meaning in this context: ‘the place where you get medical help’.

Once again, similar cases can be found for ‘inalienably’ possessed nouns. Recall from our earlier discussion that the sentence in (42)a is only felicitous if the shirt is opened while it is worn by its owner. This could be seen as the consequence of a stereotypical reading of *shirt* as ‘an item of clothing that is worn on the body’. A similar analysis applies to (42)b: the literal meaning of this sentence does not make any mention of good or bad health, but it is clear that the stereotypical meaning of *health* implies good health.

- (42) a. Pierre lui_i a ouvert la_i chemise.
 Pierre to-him/her has opened the shirt
 ‘Pierre opened his shirt.’
 Stereotypical meaning of *shirt*: ‘an item of clothing that is worn on the body’
 b. Pierre_i garde la_i santé
 Pierre keeps the health
 ‘Pierre keeps his good health’
 Stereotypical meaning of *health*: ‘good health’

The sentence in (43) requires a slightly more complex argument. In the context that is set up, Alice has both her own hands and wears a pendant in the shape of a hand. Despite this context, the sentence *Lola took Alice by the hand* can only refer to Alice’s ‘real’ hand, referring to the stereotypical meaning of *hand* as ‘one of two body parts’.

- (43) *Context:* Alice is wearing a pendant with a small silver hand hanging from it.
Sentence: Lola took Alice_i by # the_i hand.
 (OK if body part, # if silver jewelry hand)
 Stereotypical meaning of *hand*: ‘one of two body parts’

It should not come as a surprise that stereotypical meanings are a rich source of collocational meanings and fixed expressions, as in (44):

- (44) Lola took John to the cleaners
Literal meaning: Lola took John to the people whose job it is to clean.
Metaphorical meaning: Lola took advantage of John or beat him up.

The same extension can be observed for ‘inalienably’ possessed nouns, as in (45):

- (45) John_i got a tap on the_i shoulder
 Literal meaning = John was tapped on the shoulder.
 Metaphorical meaning = John was chosen for a special task/ laid off.

Similarly, French and Dutch have a number of expressions that involve ‘inalienably’ possessed nouns that have lost their original meaning:

‘I have a book.’

den Dikken (1995, 2006) convincingly argues that the position of Possessor and Possessum in the Kaynian D/PP should be reversed. In Den Dikken’s (2006:238) analysis, the Possessum is the subject of a R(elator)P, while the Possessor is contained in a dative PP predicate, as in (50).

- (50) a. _____ T BE [RP POSSESSUM REL [PP P_{dative} POSSESSOR]]
 b. Possessor T have_{BE+R+P} [RP Possessum R+P [PP P_{dative} Possessor]]

Rooryck & Vanden Wyngaerd (2011) extend this analysis to Dutch simplex reflexives like *zich*, which they argue should be analyzed unaccusatively on a par with possessive constructions, as in (51):

- (51) a. Jan_i bezeert zich_i/zijn_i voet
 Jan hurts REFL/his foot.
 ‘Jan hurts himself/his foot.’
 b. _____ T [VP bezeer [RP [DP zich/zijn voet] R [PP P [DP Jan]]]]
 c. Jan bezeert+R+P+T [VP bezeer+R+P [RP [DP zich/zijn voet] R+P [PP P [DP Jan]]]]

I will now further extend this analysis to weak definite DPs in the 4 contexts detailed in Section 1. For direct construal, I directly transpose the configuration in (51) to (52):

- (52) a. Oriane_i lève la_i main
 ‘Oriane lifts her hand’
 b. _____ T [VP lève [RP [DP la main] R [PP P [DP Oriane]]]]
 c. Oriane lève +R+P+T [VP lève+R+P [RP [DP la main] R+P [PP P [DP Oriane]]]]

In (52), as in (51), the possessive configuration is generated in the complement of the verb *lever* ‘lift’. I propose the same analysis for indirect construal as in (53) and (54), with the indirect object generated as the possessor PP in the RP complement of the verb.

- (53) a. Oriane lui_i lave les_i mains
 Oriane to-him/her washed the hands
 ‘Oriane washed his/her hands.’
 b. [TP [DP Oriane] lui_{DAT} lave-T [VP [DP Ø_i] lave [RP [DP les mains] R [PP P [DP lui_{DAT}}]]]]]
 (54) a. La_i tête lui_i tourne
 the head to-him/her turns
 ‘She/ he is dizzy’
 b. [TP [DP la tête]_{NOM} lui_{DAT} tourne [RP [DP la tête] R [PP P [DP lui_{DAT}}]]]]

The only difference between (53) and (54) is that in (53), the transitive verb *laver* projects an external argument *Oriane* that subsequently moves to SpecTP; while in (54), it is the possessed internal argument *la tête* ‘the head’ of unaccusative *tourner* ‘turn’ that moves to SpecTP.

For PP adjuncts as in (55), I propose an analysis in terms of adjunction of the PP to the maximal projection that it modifies. In both cases, the adjoined PP specifies a position on the body of the most local animate DP in its domain: the direct object *Jean* in (55)a, and the external argument *Théophile* in (55)b.

- (55) a. Oriane a frappé Jean_i sur l_i’épaule
 ‘Oriane hit Jean on the shoulder’
 ...[_{vP} [_{DP} Oriane] _v [_{VP} [_{VP} frapp- [_{DP} Jean_i]] [_{PP-LOC} sur l_i’épaule]]]]
- b. Théophile_i a marqué un but de la_i tête
 Théophile marked a goal of the head
 ‘Théophile scored with his head’
 ...[_{vP} [_{vP} [_{DP} Théophile_i] _v [_{VP} marqu- [_{DP} un but]] [_{PP-INSTR} de la_i tête]]]]

Nothing hinges on this particular analysis: the point is to make sure that the PP is in a syntactic position that allows its complement DP to be analyzed in terms of a locative relation with respect to the animate DP in its domain.

Finally, the fourth and last syntactic contexts in which ‘inalienably’ possessed nouns occur are small clauses as in (56). In a sentence with *have*, as in (56)a, the subject can be generated as the Possessor in an RP that has the small clause as the Possessum in its specifier. In (56), where the small clause is an adjunct to the main clause, I propose an analysis in terms of a silent PRO possessor that is controlled by the subject of the main clause. Again, nothing hinges on this particular syntactic analysis: I just want to express the idea that the small clause adjunct has a possessor inside the adjunct that is coindexed with the main clause subject, in order to provide a uniform analysis of ‘inalienably’ possessed nouns.

- (56) a. Anne_i a les_i yeux bleus
 ‘Anne has blue eyes’
 [_{TP} Anne a_{BE+R+P+T} [_{RP} [_{SC} [_{DP} les yeux] [_{AP} bleus]]] R+P [_{PP} P [_{DP} Anne]]]]
- b. Jean_i est parti la_i tête haute
 Jean is left the head high
 Jean left holding his head high
 [_{TP} Jean_i est [_{VP} parti][_{RP} [_{SC} [_{DP} la tête][_{AP} haute]]] R+P [_{PP} P [_{DP} PRO_i]]]]

Summarizing, the analysis of the 4 syntactic contexts with ‘inalienably’ possessed nouns shows that essentially two configurations are involved. These are presented in (57). In direct and indirect construal and in small clauses, the configuration contains a dative PP with the Possessor, as in (57)a. By contrast, in the case of PP adjuncts, the PP must contain a preposition that specifies the location of the Possessum on the Possessor, as in (57)b:

- (57) a. [[_{DP} POSSESSUM (...)] [_{P-DAT} [_{DP} POSSESSOR]]] ((in)direct construal, SCs)
 b. [[_{DP} POSSESSOR (...)] [_{P-LOC} [_{DP} POSSESSUM]]] (PP-adjuncts)

In light of the observation that the preposition in PP adjuncts must always specify a location on the Possessor, I would like to redefine the Kaynian analysis of possession more broadly in terms of location, as in (58):

- (58) a. [[_{DP} LOCATUM (...)] [_{P-DAT} [_{DP} LOCATION]]] ((in)direct construal, SCs)
 b. [[_{DP} LOCATION (...)] [_{P-LOC} [_{DP} LOCATUM]]] (PP-adjuncts)

This broader definition allows for a generalization over both configurations. If the Possessor is viewed as an animate location for the possessum, that possessum simply further specifies a location on the possessor in both cases. This is so both when the Locatum is located on the animate Location (*the hand on John*), as in (58)a; and when the animate Location is further specified locatively by the Locatum (*John, more precisely on/with the hand*), as in (58)b.

3.2.2. Combining the syntax of location with the semantics of weak definites

I will now show how this syntactic analysis can be combined with the semantic analysis of the definite ‘inalienable’ DP as a weak definite. In (58), the ‘weak definite’ Locatum requires a strictly stereotypical interpretation. For hands, this is their interpretation as body parts rather than jewelry (cf. the discussion of (43) above), while the stereotypical meaning of clothes and items of adornment is that they are meant for wearing rather than for hanging in the closet, in the same way that the hospital is the stereotypical place for medical treatment rather than a building with interesting architectural features.

Aguilar-Guevara (2014:98) notes that the stereotypical interpretation of the weak definite extends beyond the weak definite itself. She observes that weak definites are often combined with ‘weak verbs’, formulated in terms of her generalization 2:

- (59) “Generalization 2. Weak verbs designate activities compatible with the characteristic function of objects designated by weak nouns combining with these verbs.” (Aguilar-Guevara 2014:98)

Light verbs that combine with weak definites have a particular role and provide a particular stereotypical or collocational semantics: *take the bus* does not refer to literally taking it, but is interpreted as ‘ride the bus’. Similarly, *leave the hospital* means to ‘be discharged’, while *go to the shop* means ‘do the shopping’.

I argue that exactly the same phenomenon is at work in contexts of ‘inalienable possession. More in particular, I propose that the same mechanism that provides ‘light’ verbs with a weak, stereotypical or collocational interpretation, also provides the dative P in (58)a with a strictly locative interpretation. I therefore propose that there are ‘weak prepositions’ alongside ‘weak verbs’ in the context of weak definites: the meaning of the dative is narrowed in a way that is compatible with the characteristic function of objects designated by weak nouns.

Note that the dative in French has many other meanings apart from Location: dative can function as Experiencers as in (60)a, or as Goals as in (60)b.

- (60) a. Ce livre lui plaît
 That book to-him/her pleases
 ‘She/ he likes that book’
 b. Jean lui a donné un livre

Jean to-him/her has given a book
 ‘Jean gave him/her a book’

A particularly revealing contrast is presented in (61). In (61)a, the direct object is a possessive, ‘alienable’ DP, and the (applicative) dative has an interpretation of Beneficiary. In (61)b, the direct object is a weak definite ‘inalienable’ DP, and the resulting interpretation is one of possession, or, as I would propose, Location.

- (61) a. Je lui_i ai lavé sa_j voiture (dative as Beneficiary)
 I to-him/her washed his/her car
 ‘I washed his/her car for him/her’
 b. Je lui_i ai lavé les_j mains (dative as Location of hands)
 I to-him/her washed the hands
 ‘I washed his/her hands’

This process of meaning reduction from applicative dative to locative dative is not restricted to the dative. It also applies to prepositions in the context of configuration (58)b. In (62), the PP adjunct contains the preposition *by*. In this context, *by* has a very particular locative interpretation. Although *by* can have various interpretations, including ‘beside, instrument/cause, past, during, via, degree/ amount, from’, in (62) it is reduced to its locative/ endpoint interpretation, similar to temporal *by* in *by now*, *by five o’clock*.⁴

- (62) a. She took him_i by the_i hand
 b. Pick up the bucket_i by the_i handle

I would therefore like to conclude that the interpretation of dative P as location in ‘inalienable’ contexts derives the BaLG formulated in (27) above, as well as the observation in (25)b and c that possession indicated by the definite determiner is not restricted to body parts, and that possession of articles of clothing, protection, and adornment requires direct contact or close proximity with the possessor.

3.3. Deriving the restrictions on the verbs

The analysis developed above shows that the context of ‘inalienable’ possession puts very narrow syntactic and semantic restrictions on relation between the weak definite DP and the animate DP. In this section, I will show that the restrictions on verbs combining with such a relation noted in (25)d derive from the fact the lexical semantics of such verbs must respect all the properties of (i) the location relation (ii) the weak definite. This requirement severely narrows down the set of verbs that yield acceptable sentences in this configuration.

I will first focus on the restriction originally noted by Hatcher (1944) that ‘inalienably’ possessed body part nouns in direct construal are limited to ‘natural gestures’, as shown by the contrast in (63)ab. Note as well that indirect construal with a dative reflexive, as in (63)c, does not have this restriction:

⁴ Similar considerations apply to the interpretation of *par* ‘by’ in French, in the example (22)b above.

- (63) a. Oriane_i a levé les_j mains
 ‘Oriane lifted her hands’
 b. Oriane_i a lavé ses_j/ *les_j mains
 ‘Oriane washed her hands’
 c. Oriane_i s’_iest lavé les_j mains.
 Oriane to-SELF washed the hands
 ‘Oriane washed her own hands.’

The reason that direct construal as in (63)a is restricted to ‘natural gestures’, while indirect construal as in (63)c is not has to do with the more general ban on modification of weak definites. I already observed above in (9) that weak definites resist adjectival modification (*Oriane lève les (*belles) mains*). I would like to suggest that weak definites not only resist modification by adjectives, but also modification by the verbs selecting the weak definite as a direct object.

The difference between verbs like *lever* ‘lift’ in (63)a and *laver* ‘wash’ in (63)b lies in the way the verb semantically interacts with the direct object. Verbs like *wash* in (63)b entail an incremental modification of their direct object: the hands become incrementally cleaner through the process of washing (see e.g. Dowty 1991, Rothstein 2008 for the notion of ‘incremental theme’). By contrast, verbs like *lever* ‘lift’ in (63)a do not entail an incremental modification of their direct object: the direct object in (63)a is not incrementally modified by the movement expressed by the verb. It may be manipulated and moved, but it is left intact and unchanged by the verbal action.

Verbs like *laver* ‘wash’ in (63)b that select an ‘incremental theme’ direct object therefore necessarily modify that direct object. Such modification is not compatible with the nature of ‘weak definites’, which require a prototypical interpretation that does not admit modification by either an adjective or a selecting verb. In other words, there is a clash between the unmodifiability of the weak definite on the one hand, and the inherent modification brought about by ‘incremental theme’ verbs. As a result, ‘direct construal’ with body part weak definite nouns is restricted to verbs that express a ‘natural gesture’, i.e. verbs that do not modify the weak definite direct object, like *lever* ‘lift’ in (63)a.

This analysis can now be extended to those cases that involve loss of limbs, clothing, mental/physical faculties, or their maintenance documented in (15) to (21) above. In none of the cases that involve the loss and maintenance of mental and physical attributes do the verbs incrementally change the direct object: they are either punctual achievements (*perdre* ‘lose’, *regagner* ‘regain’, *retrouver* ‘find again’) or stative verbs (*garder* ‘keep’):

- (64) Blaise_i a perdu la_j main droite/ les_j cheveux/ la_j vue
 ‘Blaise lost his right hand/ hair/ eyesight’
 (65) a. Anne_i a regagné la_j santé
 ‘Anne regained her health’
 b. Pierre_i a gardé/ retrouvé le_j moral/ le_j sourire
 ‘Pierre kept up/ again found his good spirits/ his smile’

The same is true for verbs that refer to undressing or keeping clothes on as in (66):

- (66) a. Ils_i ont enlevé les_i chaussures/ les_i chaussettes/ les_i sandales avant d'entrer
They have taken-off the shoes/ the socks/ the sandals before of enter
'They took off their shoes/ socks/ sandals before coming in.'
- b. Il_i a gardé la_i veste malgré le soleil.
He has kept the jacket inspite-of the sun
'He kept on his jacket despite the sun.'

However, this explanation does not extend to the sentences with weak definites in (67). Verbs that refer to utting on clothes do not incrementally modify their direct object. However, in these cases the sentences are ungrammatical for a different reason. Recall that under the analysis advocated here, the weak definite starts out in a syntactic RP configuration that stipulates a (dative) location relation with the animate location/ possessor. This location relation clashes with the additional location relation that the verb seeks to initiate via dressing.

- (67) a. Pierre_i a enfilé son_i/*le_i pantalon.
Pierre has slipped-on his/ the pants
'Pierre slipped into his pants.'
- b. Anne_i a endossé sa_i/*la_i veste.
Anne has put-on-back her/ the jacket
'Anne put on het jacket.'

In other words, the analysis adopted here actually predicts that you cannot put on clothes if they are already supposed to be on. The discussion of these at first sight unusual restrictions on 'inalienable' weak definites shows that they can be naturally accounted for under the assumptions adopted by the analysis proposed here.

4. Conclusion

4.1. A summary of results

The results of this analysis show that 'inalienable possession' with definite DPs in French is not inalienable and does not involve possession. The relevant cases are best captured in terms of an analysis that combines a syntactic configuration for locative prepositions (RP in den Dikken's 1995, 2006 sense) with the semantics of weak definites. These locative prepositions are 'narrowed down' to their stereotypical interpretation, just like 'light verbs' selecting weak definites are more generally (Aguilar-Guevara 2014:Ch5). The relevant 'inalienable' weak definites are not restricted to body parts, but include a broader set of nouns with a stereotypical function that are located in or on the body of an animate possessor/ location: mental or physical faculties, facial expressions, as well as articles of clothing, protection, and adornment (see the BaLG in (27)). Further restrictions on the verbs that combine with the RP containing the location relation between possessor and possessed derive from the requirement that the properties of weak definites and those of the RP need to be compositionally respected.

4.2. Some speculations on crosslinguistic variation

Finally, I would like to consider possible extensions of the analysis proposed here. First of all, there seems to be crosslinguistic variation with respect to the kind of noun that can be used as a ‘weak definite’ with a ‘possessive’ interpretation. Hole (2012) discusses the German cases in (68) to (70), where the definite determiner in the locative PP complement introduces a noun that cannot in any way be viewed as ‘inalienable’ or even located on the body of the possessor. Needless to say, their French counterparts are completely ungrammatical.

- (68) Paul hat Paula_i in die_i Suppe gespuckt.
Paul has Paula.DAT in the soup spat
‘Paul spat in Paula’s soup.’ (Hole 2012)
- (69) Paula tritt Ede_i in die Sonne_i.
Paula steps Ede.DAT in the sun
‘Ede is affected by Paula stepping in the sun, and the sun is related to Ede in some specific way. (Hole 2005)
- (70) Klara, die Veganerin, guckte jedem_i streng [auf die_i Wurst]. (Hole 2015)
Klara the vegan looked everyone strictly on the sausage
‘Klara, the vegan, was looking at everybody’s sausage in a strict way.’

I cannot do justice to these cases in the scope of this article, but I would like to offer a speculation as to why German ‘possessive’ weak definites have a broader range of application than their French counterparts. Note that in all these cases, the possessor has dative case in German. Now recall that I have assumed that the French dative is ‘narrowed down’ in the context of weak definites to its stereotypical meaning of location. Outside of inalienable possession, the French dative can function as Beneficiary, Goal, or Experiencer. I believe it is possible that the locus of variation between French and German lies in a difference in stereotypical meaning in the context of weak definites. The stereotypical meaning of the dative in German may be somewhat broader and include locative vicinity: in all the cases discussed by Hole (2012), the soup, the sausage and the sun have to stand in some vicinity relation to the animate possessor. This notion of locative vicinity for the German dative is not as strange as it may seem at first sight, since many of the German prepositions that require a dative complement (*bei* ‘with’ *gegenüber* ‘across from’ *aus* ‘from’ *nach, zu* ‘towards’) express a meaning of approximate locative vicinity rather than that of a precise location. I will leave this consideration for further research.

I would also like to make a final observation about English. As shown in (71)b, English at first sight seems to lack cases of ‘inalienable’ possession in direct construal when compared to French (71)a:

- (71) a. Oriane_i a levé les_i mains
‘Oriane lifted her hands’
b. Oriane_i lifted her_i/ *the_i hands

However, this is only partly true (see also Le Bruyn 2014). There are a number of attested cases that do allow for direct construal in English. I cite some of these in (72):

- (72) a. “Exercisers lift the right knee to the front.”
Exercise and Wellness for Older Adults, Kay Van Norman
- b. “...since everyone turned the back on us.”
<http://www.lovecbd.org/hemp-cbd-oil-vs-charlottes-web-whats-difference/>
- c. “...showing that these players flexed the wrist to increase racket head velocity over this period.”
<http://journals.humankinetics.com/AcuCustom/Sitename/Documents/DocumentItem/10535.pdf>
- d. “both age groups tilted the head less, with the effect being strongest in the younger group” Anne Shumway-Cook, Marjorie Woollacott, *Motor Control: Translating Research Into Clinical Practice* (2007).

Note however that all attested sentences in (72) describe a generic situation, an obligation, or a generalisation. I would like to speculate that there is a relation between the notion of ‘stereotypical’ interpretation and ‘generic’ reading in that in both cases, the ‘default’ applies. A first approximation of these cases suggest that in English, the requirement on stereotypicality applies to the entire sentence rather than just to the RP as in French. This distinction may well derive the difference between French and English. Again, it would take me too far afield to fully implement this idea, but I believe these remarks open interesting avenues for future research into the relation between so-called ‘inalienable’ possession and weak definites.

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