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The Semantics and Pragmatics of the Possessive Determiner.

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Introduction[1]

Generally research on the possessive has either focused on its syntactic restrictions and the (re)-presentation of its pronominal origins (Godard, 1986, Gross, 1986, Zribi-Hertz, 1999, etc.), or has examined possession as a semantic category, especially in typological work where the approach has been more or less openly universalist and cognitivist (Seiler, 1983, Barker, 1995, Taylor, 1996, Heine, 1997, Baron, Herslund and Sørensen, eds, 2001, etc.). There has also been much careful description and analysis of the semantic and pragmatic relations which can hold between the 'possessor' and the 'possessed' in particular languages (Baron et Herslund, eds, 1997, Tasmowski, ed., 2000, Heinz 2003b, etc.). It seems to us however that it would be interesting to adopt a different approach, and to look at the textual properties of the possessive, in particular when it coincides with the corresponding use of an associative definite article, as in the following examples:

Il s'abrita sous un vieux tilleul. Le tronc était tout craquelé
(He sheltered under an old limetree. The trunk was full of cracks.)

Il s'abrita sous un vieux tilleul. Son tronc était tout craquelé
(He sheltered under an old limetree. Its trunk was full of cracks.)

We shall not be dealing here with the questions that are routinely asked about the possessive, namely: What is possession? Is there a general semantic relation which accounts for all cases of the possessive? or What are the basic relations created by the possessive and how do we explain their implications? These are clearly legitimate and relevant issues, and indeed they turn out to be essential in the argument developed by Baron, Herslund and Sørensen (2001), when they talk of "dimensions of possession"[2]. But unfortunately the level of generality and the terminological debate which these questions raise do not leave much room for the equally important issue of the discursive role of the possessive determiner. In fact, in the literature on textual reference the possessive determiner is hardly mentioned. It seems to us that it would be extremely fruitful therefore to take this indirect textual approach rather than attempt a frontal attack on the possessive.

The approach we are taking only seems to have taken up previously by Fradin (1984)[3]. That is, we start from the discursive context established by an associative anaphor (Kleiber, 2003a) and we examine how the possessive determiner operates on the basis of this. As we see below, this method allows us to shed new light on the semantics and pragmatics of the possessive, and perhaps even allows us to relate the definite article to our overall approach. Although this is a preliminary study, it may in fact lead us to intuitive and original observations about the definition and role of this referential marker.

The possessive adjective and the definite article can be directly compared in situations where both are markers of anaphoric reference corresponding to a predictable set of discourse criteria. These criteria correspond to two conditions:

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[1] This paper summarises, develops and complements, with appropriate modifications and corrections, previous work on this subject by Kleiber (2003 and 2004). The author wishes to thank Christopher Gledhill for translating this article.

[2] The introduction to the book by Herslund and Baron has the same title (2001 : 1-25).

[3] As well as Mitsuru Ohki in articles published in Japanese in 1991 et 1993, which unfortunately we have only been able to take account of superficially on the basis of abstracts published in French.

(I) There are two entities, the first E1, normally realised by a nominal antecedent (thus N1), and a second entity (E2), which follows E1 and is also nominal (N2) and which is considered to be an anaphoric expression. The phrases NP1 and NP2 which denote E1 and E2 cannot be coreferential, since they are two different entities (E1 ≠ E2).

(II) The entities E1 and E2 can be related by use of a preposition such as *de* in French or *of* in English as in *le N2 de NP1*or *the N2 of NP1*.[4]

These conditions allow for both an indirect associative anaphor with the definite article, or a possessive anaphor, where the possessive adjective indicates coreference with the referent E1 introduced by NP1. In our example *tilleul* / *limetree* (E1) and *tronc* / *trunk* (E2) can be linked either by the associative use of the definite article (*un tilleul —> le tronc* / *a limetree —> the trunk*) or by a possessive adjective (*un tilleul —> son tronc* / *a limetree —> its trunk*). In both cases, the referent of NP2 can be reformulated as a prepositional phrase: *le N2 de NP1* (*le tronc du tilleul*) / *the N1 of NP1 (the trunk of the limetree)*.

Not all the different E1 - E2 combinations corresponding to conditions (I) and (II) allow for the use of the associative definite article and the possessive determiner. There are three possibilities:

A) the possessive adjective can do the job, but the definite article cannot,
B) the definite article works, but the possessive does not, or
C) both can be used.

The source of this variation, as we see when we look at each case below, is the kind of entities encountered as E1 - E2. In the following sections we examine and explain each of these cases in turn. In the final section, we conclude by explaining the main differences between these two discourse markers.

1. The possessive does the job, but not the definite article.

There are a number of cases where the definite article cannot be used[5]. The first involves instances where E2 is a property of an animate or inanimate E1, as in the following two examples:

? *L'homme enleva sa casquette. La calvitie plut à tout le monde*
(? The man took off his cap. Everyone was delighted by the baldness.)

? *Paul a acheté une Clio, parce qu'il a été séduit par la sobriété*
(? Paul bought a Clio, because he was seduced by the simplicity.)

While there is nothing from a cognitive point of view to prevent us from understanding *the baldness* and *the simplicity* as in *the baldness of a man taking off his cap* and *the simplicity of the Clio*, it appears that the definite article does not allow us to make this anaphoric connection. On the other hand, the possessive[6] appears to fit the bill perfectly:

L'homme enleva sa casquette. Sa calvitie plut à tout le monde
(The man took off his cap. Everyone was delighted by his baldness.)

Paul a acheté une Clio, parce qu'il a été séduit par sa sobriété

[4] Since our main focus is on French examples, we do not dwell here on the use of the genitive in English.

[5] A detailed analysis of this problem is set out in Kleiber (1999a and 2001a).

[6] In French, the pronoun *en* can sometimes be used anaphorically: cf. ?*Ils habitent un quartier central. J'apprécie beaucoup le calme* / ?'*They live in a central neighbourhood. I like the calm*'. vs *Ils habitent un quartier central. J'en apprécie beaucoup le calme* / *'They live in a central neighbourhood. I like the calm of it*.' (Fradin, 1984).

(Paul bought a Clio, because he was seduced by its simplicity.)

A second instance involves an awkward use of the definite article when the E2 refers to a process (an event, an activity, etc.). Thus in the following examples, we cannot use the article to emphasise that the words and gestures are those of Paul:

? *Paul entra. Les paroles réveillèrent l'assemblée*
(? In came Paul. The words stirred the audience.)

? *Paul entra. Les gestes étaient brusques*
(? In came Paul. The gestures were brusque.)

There is no *a priori* cognitive reason why the relevant associative inference cannot be made. But again, the possessive allows us to make the necessary link:

Paul entra. Ses paroles réveillèrent l'assemblée
(In came Paul. His words stirred the audience.)

Paul entra. Ses gestes étaient brusques
(In came Paul. His gestures were brusque.)

Looking now at E1, a rather surprising constraint occurs when E1 is an animate entity, as has often been noted in work on part-whole relations[7]. Contrary to parts of inanimate E1's, as in:

Il s'abrita sous un vieux tilleul. Le tronc était tout craquelé
(He sheltered under an old limetree. The trunk was full of cracks.)

La voiture fit une embardée. Les freins avaient lâché
(The car swerved. The brakes had failed.)

E2s referring to parts of animate E1s do not usually allow for the definite article:

? *Une femme rêvait. Les yeux étaient fermés*
(? A woman was dreaming. The eyes were closed.)

? *Le chien eut peur. Les oreilles se dressèrent*
(? The dog became afraid. The ears pricked up.)

Although less clear-cut, this also occurs in references to the clothes of E1, as Fradin (1984) has noted:

? *Les enfants sont rentrés. Les souliers étaient pleins de boue*
(? The children came home. The walking shoes were covered in mud.)

It has also been occasionally remarked that the 'intentional' parts of an animate E1 share the same constraint:

? *Paul pouvait enfin se reposer. L'esprit était libre de tout souci*
(? Paul was finally able to rest. The mind was free of all worries.)

Once more, the possessive is needed in all these cases to repair the anaphoric link of identity between E1 and E2:

[7] For an overview, see Spanoghe (1995) and Salles (1995a) *inter alia*.

Une femme rêvait. Ses yeux étaient fermés
(A woman was dreaming. Her eyes were closed.)

Le chien eut peur. Ses oreilles se dressèrent
(The dog became afraid. His ears pricked up.

Les enfants sont rentrés. Leurs souliers étaient pleins de boue (Fradin, 1984).
(The children came home. Their walking shoes were covered in mud.)

Paul pouvait enfin se reposer. Son esprit était libre de tout souci
(Paul was finally able to rest. His mind was free of all worries.)

This distribution is rather surprising, because it is not intrinsically obvious just what is blocking the use of the article. We thus have an intriguing problem which cries out for an explanation.

One solution we have proposed (Kleiber, 1999a and 2003a) in order to prevent the associative definite article referring to NP2, is to posit a constraint that we have termed the **alienation condition**:

> "Le référent d'une anaphore associative doit être présenté ou donné comme aliéné par rapport au référent de l'antécédent " (Kleiber, 1999a and 2003a)
> [The referent of an associative anaphor must be alienable or be interpreted as such in relation to the referent of the antecedent.]

The origin of this condition is iconic. The aim is to account for the difference between an NP with an associative definite article, such as *the trunk*, and a post-modified NP with the definite article, such as *the trunk of the limetree,* which gives us the identity of the tree whose NP2 referent is *the trunk*. In contrast to the complex descriptive NP, the simple version, *the trunk*, even though it refers to the same referent as the complex descriptive NP, refers by way of a single noun without any semantic subordination to another individual. It is thus semantically independent or autonomous. Although on a pragmatic level the simple NP remains dependent on a prior mention of another individual, as far as its referential interpretation is concerned, the form *the N* gives it an iconic freedom, and thus it can be said to be 'alienated'[8]. Of course it should be pointed out that *the trunk* is not materially separated from *the limetree*: it is merely understood as an autonomous individual. To explain this, we have previously used the analogy of a camera focussing on separate things. The fact that a camera can take a picture of a whole *limetree* or a close-up of *its trunk* does not mean that *the trunk* becomes detached from the rest of *the tree* (Kleiber, 1999a and 2003a).

The alienation condition also allows us explain in a straightforward way why the definite article cannot perform an associative link between a property and a process. We have termed these entities **syncategoremic** (Kleiber, 1981: 40), because in contrast to **categoremic** entities, whose particular occurrences are autonomous, syncategoremic items are not ontologically independent, but depend on the existence of other items. A particular occurrence of a property or an event is not as autonomous as a categoremic noun. In contrast to *chimpanzee*, for example, a property such as *bald* (or *baldness*) or *simplicity*, or a process such as *speaking* / *speech* or *gesturing* presupposes an individual who is bald or simple, who speaks or uses gestures. The best test for this is still the deletion test: if you delete the individual on which they depend, these occurrences simultaneously disappear. If you do the opposite, that is you try to 'alienate' the syncategoremic item visually or in thought, it seems impossible to carry out such an operation. I cannot detach the baldness, simplicity, speech and gestures from an individual who is bald, simple, uses gestures, and so on.

[8] According to Azoulay (1978 : 29), the part is considered to be "considérée dans son existence propre" [seen from the point of view of its own existence].

This takes us back to Husserl's distinction between **independent contents** and **dependent contents**, i.e. between contents which can be represented separately and contents which cannot[9]:

> "on peut assurément se représenter une tête séparée de l'homme auquel elle appartient, on ne peut se représenter de cette manière une couleur, une forme, etc., elles ont besoin d'un substrat, dans lequel on les remarque sans doute exclusivement, mais dont elles ne pourront être séparées" (Husserl, 1962: 24).
> [one can surely imagine a head separated from a man's body, but one cannot similarly represent a colour, a shape, etc. These require a substratum in which one clearly notices them on their own, but from which they cannot be separated.]

We can now understand why anaphoric associative reference is not possible with properties and events. These do not satisfy the alienation interpretation required by the form *le N / the N*, since it is not possible to detach them from the individual on which they depend. We can also clarify the role of the possessive adjective in this case, which appears to operate at one remove from the notion of possession[10]. The possessive adjective, by an anaphoric link of coreference with an individual, helps to express anaphorically a discourse continuity between the individual E1 and a property or event by respecting the ontological relationship of inalienability which unites E2 and E1.

How does this relate to parts of animate bodies? The definite article, as we have seen, is awkward in this context. Yet as Husserl's example of *the body* and *its head* shows us, imaginary alienation is possible and thus, even if we are dealing with syncategoremic nouns, where the part depends on the whole, the alienation condition ought to be satisfied. An associative definite article is therefore possible, as we saw with parts of inanimates:

> *Il s'abrita sous un vieux tilleul. Le tronc était tout craquelé*
> (He sheltered under an old limetree. The trunk was full of cracks.)
>
> *La voiture fit une embardée. Les freins avaient lâché*
> (The car swerved. The brakes had failed.)

There must therefore be another reason for those instances where the article cannot be used. The model of perceptual alienation (whether real or imaginary) assumes that basic referential features are used to identify different entities. In order to be detached, a part must have the same features as the whole from which it is being isolated. Thus if we take a concrete object, an object with the features 'substance' and 'shape'[11], we can only visually alienate an entity with the same basic ontological features. This explains why it is impossible to alienate properties and events relating to a concrete object: they do not have the same ontological ingredients as their wholes. They have no substance or shape of their own ,and cannot as a consequence be isolated from the substance and shape of the object to which they relate.

This notion also explains how parts of animates are different from parts of inanimates. Only the latter are alienable because they possess the same ontological features as the wholes from which they have been separated. I can isolate the *trunk* from a *limetree* because, just like a *limetree*, the *trunk* possesses the same substance and shape which allow us to represent it separately from the tree. Parts of animates do not obey this principle, which we have called the **principle of ontological congruence** (Kleiber, 1999a et 2003a). This is because together with substance and shape, an animate noun also has intentionality (or the feature 'animacy'). A part only carries the features substance + shape if it is part of a concrete object, and may only have the feature 'animate' when it refers to an intentional object (see the above example *the mind of Paul /*

[9] See Salles (1995a and b) on this point.

[10] Although of course possession is still relevant!

[11] A **concrete object**, at least according to one of its meanings, is a noun whose referents have substance and shape, as we have shown elsewhere in collaboration with Michel Galmiche (Kleiber, 1994a, Ch. 3). Other dimensions can be added, such as a temporal dimension (see Kleiber, 1994a for more details).

Paul's mind), in which case it contravenes the principle of ontological congruence. Thus parts of bodies and the other components associated with the notion of animacy are not just parts of an animate referent. They are both parts of the body, which is an animate referent (and which indeed has both substance and shape) and also parts of its intentional component. We can note in support of this analysis that it is difficult to have expressions of the type ?*a part of John, ?a part of our dog,* etc.[12], whereas it is quite possible to talk about *a part of a chair*, *a part of a car* etc. This is a particular difficulty of using the article in an associative context with parts of animate bodies. The possessive adjective is on the other hand well suited to this kind of link, in that it maintains an explicit connection with the animate referent, avoiding the ontological break that would be implied by the article. Thus in contrast to the definite NP *the N*, the possessive NP *Poss Adj. + N* keeps its 'animate' character by virtue of the possessive anaphor.

This brings us to a curious feature of French, where in certain appositive contexts, the definite article can find its rightful place again, as has been noted in various studies (Vergnaud et Zubizaretta, 1992):

Une femme rêvait, les yeux fermés
(? A woman was dreaming, the eyes closed.)

Paul pouvait enfin se reposer, l'esprit libre de tout souci
(? Paul was finally able to rest, the mind free of all worry.)

The explanation for this lies in the absolute construction[13]. In French, the absolutive use of the article describes or expresses the attitude of an animate referent, functioning like a circumstantial of manner (Hanon, 1989 and Choi, 1991), and thus allowing for alienation of a part of the animate referent, either its body (substance + shape), or its 'intentionality'.

From a discourse perspective, alienation is also possible in intersentential contexts, as long as the alienation from the body is in some way justified by the context, as in the following examples mentioned by Julien (1983: 137), Fradin (1984: 362) and Salles (1995a/b):

Le malade est livide. Les yeux sont hors de leurs orbites
(? The sick man is livid. The eyes are poking out of their sockets) (Julien, 1983)

Autour de la table les joueurs s'épiaient. Les mains étaient crispées sur les revolvers
(? The players stared at each other across the table. The hands clutching the revolvers.)

Les coureurs redoublent d'effort. On voit les muscles saillir sous les maillots
(? The racers are redoubling their effort. You can see the muscles bulge under the jerseys) (Fradin, 1984)

Hughes recommençait chaque soir le même itinéraire, suivant la ligne des quais, d'une démarche indécise, un peu voûté déjà, quoiqu'il eût seulement quarante ans. Mais le veuvage avait été pour lui un automne précoce. Les tempes étaient dégarnies, les cheveux pleins de cendre grise.
(? Every night Hughes took the same route, following the quayside, unsteady and already rather stooped, although he was only forty. The widowerhood had been an early autumn for

[12] The problem is more complex than this. We would need to study the potential referents of *part* and what conditions determine how a *part* is identified. It is interesting to note that, from a very different line of argument, Tamba (1994) comes to a similar conclusion concerning the notion of *part*.

[13] Other kinds of alienation are also at work in French, as in *Il lève les yeux* (?*He raises the eyes*) or in expressions with a direct object complement (*Sylvie a les yeux bleus* / ?*Sylvie has the blue eyes*). A 'syntactic' explanation for this is given in Vergnaud and Zubizaretta (1992). In constructions such as *Il lui prend le bras* (?*He took from him the arm = He took his arm*) or *Il se pince la peau (?He pinches himself on the skin = He pinched his skin*), it is noticeable that dependency is marked by a personal or reflexive pronoun: *lui* / *se* (*to him, from him* / *himself*).

him. The temples were drawn, the hair speckled ash grey. (G. Rodenbach, Bruges-la-morte, Babel, 1989, 25)

Il la dévisagea ; elle était pâle ; la bouche était serrée, les yeux pluvieux battaient.
(? He stared at her, she was pale, the mouth tight shut, the tearful eyelids trembling) (J.-K. Huysmans, Là-Bas, Gallimard, Folio, 1991, 292)

Le Christ (...). L'aisselle éclamée craquait, les mains grandes ouvertes brandissaient des doigts hagards (...) ; les pectoraux tremblaient (...)
(? Christ…. The disjointed armpit cracked, gaunt fingers dangled from the wide open hands,… the pectorals twitched…) (J.-K. Huysmans, Là-bas, Gallimard, Folio, 1991, 33) (these last three examples cited by Salles).

In all of these referential links, a part of the body is isolated by a kind of alienation which is indicated by verbs of perception relating to vision (as in the two examples from Fradin: *s'épier / stare at each other, voir / see*). Salles analyses Rodenbach's example and Huysmans' first example thus:

"Et, quelquefois, c'est simplement le regard qu'on porte sur un personnage qui permet une énumération descriptive des parties au moyen d'une anaphore associative"
[Sometimes the portrayal of a character allows for a descriptive enumeration of its parts by way of an associative anaphor.] (Salles, 1995 b : 54).

It is worth emphasising that this perceptual alienation does not operate directly on the animate referent, but only on the body[14]. In Julien's example, this is brought to the fore by the fact that the animate referent is sick, and in the other examples by the fact that a zone of the body has been prominently placed in view, as illustrated strikingly in the following example taken from a cheap paperback novel:

Il s'assit sur le lit et la regarda. Les paupières étaient boursouflées et les poches sous les yeux étaient striées de veinules bleues
(? He sat on the bed and looked at her. The eyelids were swollen and the bags under the eyes were lined with blue veins.)

Since the ontological congruence has been respected, the definite article can be used in these examples, at least in French. Having said this, we now need to account for the fact that the possessive adjective can also be used in the same contexts. Indeed, it is obligatory in English in all of these cases, as we can see in the following possessive versions:

Le malade est livide. Ses yeux sont hors de leurs orbites
(The sick man is livid. His eyes are poking out of their sockets) (Julien, 1983)

Autour de la table les joueurs s'épiaient. Leurs mains étaient crispées sur les revolvers
(The players stared at each other across the table. Their hands clutching their revolvers.)

Les coureurs redoublent d'effort. On voit leurs muscles saillir sous les maillots
(The racers are redoubling their effort. You can see their muscles bulge under their jerseys) (Fradin, 1984)

[14] I believe this kind of explanation could also apply to 'residuals' in English cited by Ebert (1982), Vergnaud et Zubizaretta (1992): if, contrary to expectations, the definite article appears instead of the possessive, this is likely to be because the part has been removed from the body.

Hughes recommençait chaque soir le même itinéraire, suivant la ligne des quais, d'une démarche indécise, un peu voûté déjà, quoiqu'il eût seulement quarante ans. Mais le veuvage avait été pour un automne précoce. Ses tempes étaient dégarnies, ses cheveux pleins de cendre grise.
(Every night Hughes took the same route, following the quayside, unsteady and already rather stooped, although he was only forty. His widowerhood had been an early autumn for him. His temples were drawn, his hair speckled ash grey.) (G. Rodenbach, Bruges-la-morte, Babel, 1989, 25)

Il la dévisagea ; elle était pâle ; sa bouche était serrée, ses yeux pluvieux battaient
(He stared at her, she was pale, her mouth tight shut, her tearful eyelids trembling.) (J.-K. Huysmans, Là-Bas, Gallimard, Folio, 1991, 292)

Le Christ (...). Son aisselle éclamée craquait, ses mains grandes ouvertes brandissaient des doigts hagards (...) ; ses pectoraux tremblaient
(Christ … His disjointed armpit cracked, gaunt fingers dangled from his wide open hands,… his pectorals twitched…) (J.-K. Huysmans, Là-bas, Gallimard, Folio, 1991, 33) (these last three examples cited by Salles).

We set out below in the conclusion how the parallel uses of the article and possessive differ in these examples. A partial explanation here would be to suggest that the two referential markers express a difference of scope. The possessive adjective presents a part of the body in terms of individual identification, underlined by a dependency relation with the animate individual. In contrast, the definite article implies a more generic notion relating to body parts. The individual is no longer in the foreground, and instead the part is taken to be a stereotypical component of the body, detached iconically from the individual in question. The possessive contributes to the individualisation of the body part, while the article contributes to the opposite process. Even if *les yeux* are in fact *the eyes* of the sick man in the first example, they are not presented as such, a function associated with the possessive, but rather they are a generic part of the man's body, as opposed to any other part.

It should be pointed out here that that we are not dealing with a generic NP. Rather we are claiming that the isolation of a part is expressed at the generic level in terms of: *un homme a des yeux / a man has eyes*[15]. The associative link, as we have shown at length elsewhere (Kleiber, 2001a), is based on an *a priori* relation, which is part of our shared knowledge of how objects are related in reality or in terms of more stereotypical relationships. The main evidence for this is that the addition of a specifier which runs contrary to our usual lexico-stereotypical expectations, prohibits the definite article and makes the possessive a necessary part of the expression (see especially Julien, 1982):

? *Le malade est livide. Les yeux bleus sont hors de leurs orbites*
(? The sick man is livid. The blue eyes are poking out of their sockets.)

Le malade est livide. Ses yeux bleus sont hors de leurs orbites
(The man is livid. His blue eyes are poking out of their sockets.)

It should be added that as far as the enumeration of parts is concerned, as can be seen in Rodenbach and Huysmans' examples quoted above, the definite article is in theory more appropriate than the possessive determiner in French simply because it does not mark, as the possessive does, a reference back to E1 each time. It is thus more suited, at least in French, to the close determination of details about E1 than the possessive.

[15] This also explains the definite article in the attributive complement structure *Sylvie a les yeux bleus* (?*Sylvie has the blue eyes -> Sylvie has blue eyes*) (see Riegel, 1988, 1989 et 1997).

2. Cases B) and C)
We now turn to the other two possibilities, where either the possessive is not possible or where both determiners can be used.

2. 1. Cases where the article can be used, but not the possessive
There are few examples where the definite article can be used, but the possessive cannot. As can be seen in the context of **anaphoric agency** (Kleiber, 2001a and 2003a), the possessive can never be used in place of the article:

Paul s'est pendu. Sa corde s'est cassée (*sa = Paul, *sa =* that of the hanging)
(Paul hanged himself. His rope snapped.) (*his* = Paul, **its* = that of the hanging)

Paul s'est pendu. La corde s'est cassée
(Paul hanged himself. The rope snapped.)

*Il y a eu un assassinat hier soir à Souffelweyersheim. * Son assassin a pris la fuite*
(**son* = that of the murder).
(There was a murder last night in Souffelweyersheim. *Its murderer ran off.)

Il y a eu un assassinat hier soir à Souffelweyersheim. L'assassin a pris la fuite
(There was a murder last night in Souffelweyersheim. The murderer ran off.)

These examples can be partly explained by invoking our initial constraint on forming a prepositional phrase of the type *le N1 de SN2 / the N1 of* NP2. Clearly not all agentives fulfil this condition. Thus we can have a prepositional construction with *of* referring to *the rope* or *the hanging,* even if the phrase is rather awkward, such as:

La corde de la pendaison
(The rope of the hanging.)

But we cannot have in the case of *murder* a post-modified NP:

? L'assassin de l'assassinat
(? The murderer of the murder)

The same goes for **collective anaphors** (Kleiber, 2001a and 2003a), which appear to resist the possessive and do not allow for replacement by the article, even though we can use a corresponding prepositional phrase with *de / of* in the NP. A similar case involves **kinship relations**. Although we have in the case of *mother* and *family, couple* and *husband* post-modified NPs such as *the mother of the family* and *the husband of the couple*, a possessive determiner could not be used to mark such a relation:

*Dans les familles d'origine immigrée notamment, *leur mère* (= des familles) *est en porte à faux entre sa culture d'origine et sa volonté d'intégration, elle est complètement larguée au niveau scolaire et *leurs enfants* (= des familles) *en profitent.*
(In immigrant families especially, *their mother (= of the families) is caught between her original culture and her desire to integrate; she is out of her depth in the educational system and *their children (= of the families) take advantage of this.)

Dans les familles d'origine immigrée notamment, la mère est en porte à faux entre sa culture d'origine et sa volonté d'intégration, elle est complètement larguée au niveau scolaire et les enfants en profitent

(In immigrant families especially, the mother is caught between her original culture and her desire to integrate; she is out of her depth in the educational system and the children take advantage of this.)

*Un couple s'installa à la terrasse. *Son mari* (= du couple) *commanda une 1664*
(A couple sat down outside a café. *Its husband (= of the couple) ordered a glass of 1664.)

Un couple s'installa à la terrasse. Le mari commanda une 1664
(A couple sat down outside a café. The husband ordered a glass of 1664.)

2.2. Cases where both determiners can be used

In contrast, there are plenty of situations where both referential markers are allowed. In the context of a **locative anaphor** (Kleiber, 2001a), both markers can appear and are thus in competition:

Le village était situé sur une butte. Son église dominait toute la région
(The village was on top of a hillock. Its church dominated the whole area).

Le village était situé sur une butte. L'église dominait toute la région
(The village was on top of a hillock. The church dominated the whole area).

The same can be said of **meronymic anaphors** (Kleiber, 2001a), which express a part-whole relation with inanimates[16]. As we saw in our previous examples, the article can be easily substituted for the possessive:

Il s'abrita sous un vieux tilleul. Le tronc était tout craquelé
(He sheltered under an old limetree. The trunk was full of cracks.)

Il s'abrita sous un vieux tilleul. Son tronc était tout craquelé
(He sheltered under an old limetree. Its trunk was full of cracks.)

La voiture fit une embardée. Les freins avaient lâché
(The car swerved. The brakes had failed.)

La voiture fit une embardée. Ses freins avaient lâché
(The car swerved. Its brakes had failed.)

The same goes for **functional associative anaphors** (Kleiber, 2001a):

Une voiture s'est renversée hier dans le fossé. Le conducteur s'était assoupi
(Yesterday a car crashed into the ditch. The driver had fallen asleep.)

Une voiture s'est renversée hier dans le fossé. Son conducteur s'était assoupi
(Yesterday a car crashed into the ditch. Its driver had fallen asleep.)

Le village de Pfaffenheim est de plus en plus fleuri. Les habitants / Le maire raffole(nt) des géraniums
(The village of Pfaffenheim is getting more and more flowery. The villagers are / The mayor is wild about geraniums.)

Le village de Pfaffenheim est de plus en plus fleuri. Ses habitants / Son maire raffole(nt) des geraniums

[16] We do not need to recall here the specific case of parts of animates, discussed above.

(The village of Pfaffenheim is getting more and more flowery. Its villagers are / Its mayor is wild about geraniums.)

Finally, a **member-collection** relationship also allows for both referential markers, at least for a certain category of N:

Nous entrâmes dans une forêt magnifique. Les arbres resplendissaient de lumière verte
(We went into a magnificent forest. The trees were ablaze with green light.)

Nous entrâmes dans une forêt magnifique. Ses arbres resplendissaient de lumière verte
(We went into a magnificent forest. Its trees were ablaze with green light.)

Le régiment a été défait. Les soldats n'ont pas eu le temps de combattre
(The regiment was defeated. The soldiers did not have time to fight back.)

Le régiment a été défait. Ses soldats n'ont pas eu le temps de combattre
(The regiment was defeated. Its soldiers did not have time to fight back.)

Situations B) and C) thus raise two specific questions:

Q1) Why is the possessive suitable in the C) examples but not in the B) examples?
Q2) When the possessive is in competition with the definite article, is there a discourse explanation which can help us distinguish between the two types of occurrence?

2. 3. Question 1: Ontology and Lexical Relations

2.3.1. The *a priori* dependency asymmetry.

We should recall here that the second contextual condition we initially proposed (condition II) was that it should be possible to have for any two entities E1 and E2 an NP of the type *le N2 de NP1 / the N1 of NP2*. This was based on the observation, commonly noted in the literature on the possessive adjective, that there is a close relationship between the NP *Poss. Adj. + N2* and prepositional NPs of the type *le N2 du (d'un) N1 / the N2 of the (of a) N1*. The possessive determiner, as noted by Godard (1986 :102):

"…possède une propriété spécifique : il alterne avec un complément de Nom de la forme *de GN*"
[…has a specific property: it alternates with a post-modifier of the form *of + Noun Group*][17]

Whichever syntactic explanation may be adopted[18], this combination, which is not necessarily an 'assimilation'[19], can be summarised in the interpretive equation *Poss. Adj. + N1 = the N1 of NP*.

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[17] Most authors point out that the NP1 is a personal pronoun and they therefore relate the possessive phrase Poss. Det + N to the structure *Le N de + Pro / The N of + Pro*. This approach is adopted by Wilmet (1986: 108, 1997: 241), who talks about *quantifiants-caractérisants personnels* and Riegel et al. (1994: 158), who argue that "le déterminant possessif est l'équivalent de *le (...) de moi, le (...) de toi,* etc. […et] représente la synthèse de deux éléments généralement disjoints du GN : l'article défini et un complément du nom introduit par *de* (en l'occurrence un pronom personnel)" [the possessive determiner is the equivalent of *the … of me, the … of you* etc and this represents the synthesis of two elements which are generally separate in the noun group: the definite article and the noun complement introduced by *of* (in the case of a personal pronoun)].

[18] See Godard (1986).

[19] See Gross (1986) for a presentation of the two principal theoretical positions on the possessive adjective, i.e. (i) the possessive is an irreducible expression, (ii) it is the result of a transformation. We prefer option number (i). Bartning (1989: 196-197) summarises the syntactic debate of the 1970s and 80s. In Godard (1986) a generative solution is worked out according to Chomsky's modular grammar of 1981, a solution which "combines hypotheses concerning lexis, syntax and interpretative semantics" (Godard, 1986: 103). Zribi-Hertz (1999) proposes a generative analysis in terms of Chomsky's *Principes and Paramters* adopting an 'autonomist' conception of inflectional morphology which

This implies that an NP such as *his book* can be interpreted as more or less the same as *the book of Paul* (see Bartning, 1989 et 1996). However, whether it is possible to have the possessive in cases B) or C) does not depend on this, since condition II has already been satisfied. However it does contribute greatly to the interpretation of N1 and N2. So how does it operate?

In the first instance, for E1 a 'human' or 'animate' feature is generally considered to be relevant in the motivation of a possessive NP. The 'human' or 'animate' feature also figures, as pointed out by Bartning (1996), at the top of Hawkins' **possessive hierarchy** (1981), whereas inanimates are placed at the bottom (see also Seiler, 1983: 81). However, as all the grammarians who have commented on this have pointed out, this feature cannot be treated as a formal constraint since the possessive determiner can be easily used with inanimate antecedents, or even inanimate N1s in the structure *le N2 du (d'un) N1 / the N2 of a (of the) N1*, as the following example from Bartning (1996) shows:

La gravité de la situation. Sa gravité
(The seriousness of the situation. Its seriousness.)

We have already seen this in the following examples:

Le tronc du tilleul / son tronc (The trunk of the limetree / its trunk.)
Les freins de la voiture / ses freins (The brakes of the car / its brakes.)
L'église du village / son église (The church of the village / its church.)
Les arbres de la forêt / ses arbres (The trees of the forest / its trees.)

We cannot ignore the characteristics 'animate' or 'human' and the more general ontological dimension in our explanation. But these features nevertheless need to be associated with two further factors, namely the lexico-semantic relations between N1 and N2 and the discourse context.

To start with, it has often been noted that the entity E1, which is referred to by the possessive determiner, is itself used to determine, localise or identify entity E2, which is the referent of a possessive description belonging to the category N2 representing the N in a possessive NP. E2 and E1 can be termed respectively the **target** and the **site,** or using Culioli's terms **repère** (marker) and **repéré** (marked) or Langacker's (1993, 1995 and 2004) **target** and **domain**. The main point, as shown by the complementarity of a prepositional NP and the possessive, is that an NP of the type *Poss. Det + N* marks a referential dependency, an asymmetry between the two entities involved in the NP[20].

This asymmetry has a consequence that is often acknowledged, but rarely followed up. It is required that E1 identify or localise entity E2 as part of the class N2 in which, as we have pointed out, E2 has been categorised. In other words, the referential dependency of E2 on E1 and the categorisation of E2 as an N2 both lead to a specific distinctiveness condition: entity E1 must be such that it can be distinguished or isolated from E2 within the class N2, i.e. by particularising it in terms of other N2 entities.

A second, less acknowledged, feature can be added to the notion of referential asymmetry and to its corollary, the distinctiveness between N2 entities. This relates to the anaphoric pronominal character of the possessive determiner. We have already noted that several authors draw a parallel

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also goes by the name of *Distributional Morphology*.

[20] For Zribi-Hertz (1999), this is explained by predication: the predicative character of the relation YP-XP is a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for the use of the possessive. For her, (1999: 15), "l'équation Possession = Prédication éclaire les commentaires souvent confus ou *ad hoc* faits par les grammairiens sur la relation qu'ils nomment 'possessive'. En réalité, la Possession est une relation juridique et la Prédication une relation grammaticale indépendante de la première."
[…the equation Possession = Predication sheds light on the often confused or *ad hoc* comments made by grammarians on the relationship they call 'the possessive'. In reality, Possession is a legal relationship, and Predication is a grammatical one independent of the former.]

between the demonstrative possessive and a prepositional structure involving an article and personal pronoun (*my N = the N of me*, *his N = the N of him*). And we have pointed out, we are not obliged to assimilate these structures, since the possessive determiner can be considered irreducible even though it can at the same time be reformulated as a definite article structure with a preposition and personal pronoun. The more important point is that the possessive determiner still has a personal pronoun function, which is partly obscured by the term 'possessive adjective'. Thus by relating the pronominal features of the possessive determiner with the distinctiveness condition, which is a consequence of the referential asymmetry between E1 and E2-N2, and which is fulfilled by the possessive determiner denoting entity E1, the implication is that E1 can be understood as one of a group of entities of the same type. If we take *my / your / her hat*, the possessive determiner only has a specifying function if it assumes that other entities of the type that it refers to could also identify or localise the E1 entity, *hat*. If such a paradigm were not available, the possessive would not be able to distinguish the specific E1 entity from within the class of *hats*. That this comes from the pronominal nature of the possessive determiner can be easily understood for 1st or 2nd person possessives which retain referential identity because of their marked roles in the speech context. But for 3rd person possessives, things are less clear-cut, because like the 3rd person pronoun they can be applied to virtually any named or pre-classified entity (Kleiber, 1994b), and thus to a group of entities which have little in common. However, this difficulty is less real than it seems, since this heterogeneity vanishes in actual usage, where only one specific category can be understood. Incidentally, the plural pronoun *ils / they* cannot be applied to a group of different entities precisely because of this well-known requirement for prior naming or classification.

It could be objected that the same argument applies to the prepositional NP in *de* or *of* as in *le chapeau de Jean / the hat of Jean*. This is certainly valid, but the explanation is down to the properties of the Ns in the phrase: *Jean, chapeau*, *hat*, as argued below, and not to the properties of the prepositions *de / of*, and consequently not to the intrinsic properties of the post-modified NP itself. This is possible even if the entity E1 is not understood as a natural localiser of E2, as is the case with the possessive determiner in a variety of structures. We only need to examine Bartning's examples (1996, 1998 et 2001), which he terms 'discursive' to distinguish them from 'prototypical'[21] occurrences of the type *le chapeau de Jean*. We can very well have an NP of the type *le chapeau de la voiture / the hat of the car* where the E1 entity *la voiture* localises entity E2 *le chapeau* without assuming that the distinction implies the possibility that cars can localise these types of E2 entities. We can indeed create a context which could justify this post-modified NP, as the following sequence shows:

> *Sur la banquette arrière de la voiture, le commissaire remarqua un curieux chapeau vert, orné d'une fleur rouge. Ce n'est qu'au bout d'un moment qu'il fit le rapprochement : <u>le chapeau de la voiture</u> était celui de l'avocate assassinée il y a trois mois.*
> (On the back seat of the car, the officer noticed a curious green hat, decorated with a red flower. It took a while for him to make the connection: <u>the hat of the car</u> was that of the lawyer murdered three months ago.)

The possessive determiner is prohibited in this context, since we cannot have the NP *son chapeau / its hat* as a replacement of the post-modified NP:

> *Sur la banquette arrière de la voiture, le commissaire remarqua un curieux chapeau vert, orné d'une fleur rouge. Ce n'est qu'au bout d'un moment qu'il fit le rapprochement : *<u>son</u> chapeau était celui de l'avocate assassinée il y a trois mois.*
> (On the back seat of the car, the officer noticed a curious green hat, decorated with a red flower. It took a while for him to make the connection: *<u>its</u> hat was that of the lawyer murdered three months ago.)

[21] In the case of 'prototypical' interpretation, the meaning of the determinant relation is given by the micro-structure of the phrase, in the case of 'discursive' interpretations, the meaning follows from the information provided in the discourse context.

The constraint on paradigm or on prior category for E1 that we have just set out, means that referential dependency cannot be established between the specific or particular entity E1 and the entity E2 expressed by N2, but must already exist in the homogenous class in which E1 and the class of N2s to which E2 belongs can be recognised. We express this relation by saying that the possessive determiner requires an ***a priori* dependent asymmetry**.

2.3.2. The three motivations for the possessive[22]

This *a priori* asymmetry is motivated by three criteria, of which two correspond to an intrinsic subordination related to the Ns in context. The third corresponds to the subordination of an E2 class to an E1 class established by context:

(1) the ontological status of the entities involved,
(2) a lexico-semantic relation between the Ns of the entities involved indicating an *a priori* dependent asymmetry,
(3) a relation which is not lexico-semantic as such but rather discursive, between two specific groups or classes of N1 and N2 established by the linguistic or situational context.

Criterion (1) posits that if general categories or ontological types to which the different entities belong are in a dependency relation, a possessive connection is possible with most prominent entity as antecedent of the possessive, i.e. the entity which serves as determiner. The scale of ontological dependency on which these categories can be placed is more or less as follows:[23]

Humans > Animals > Concrete objects > Events > Properties

The second and third categories account for uses of the possessive which appear to contravene the first category. If we have two entities of the same type, or two entities of which the lower one in the hierarchy appears as the antecedent of a higher entity, there is either a lexical relation between the Ns involved which can provide a necessary *a priori* determinative asymmetry, or a discursive situation exists which makes possible a dependency relation similar to that of the second criterion, but at a contextual level, and which is thus necessarily construed before the use of a possessive NP.

This approach posits that the absence of a prior intrinsic referential asymmetry[24] is ontological or lexico-semantic, and would indicate which of the two Ns present is dependent on the other and thus blocking a possessive connection. Thus to give a basic example, if we have two concrete objects which are at the same ontological level and whose nominal expressions do not have any *a priori* semantic relation between them, the possessive determiner is impossible, even if the discourse context permits a contingent and entirely specific link between the two entities which can be expressed by a post-modified NP with *de* / *of*. We have already seen this in the example *le chapeau de la voiture* / *the hat of the car* which cannot allow a possessive NP in the context set out above. Criterion (2) cannot be applied here in order to obtain a possessive, since there is no lexico-semantic relation between *voiture* / *car* and *chapeau* / *hat* which would establish the necessary *a priori* referential asymmetry for a possessive determiner.

But criterion (3) is available, even though it appears rather contrived. For this we just need to create a context in which a series of cars each have a hat inside, allowing us to justify the possessive expression *son chapeau* / *its hat*. Imagine an antique car exhibition where each car has

[22] In Kleiber (2003a and 2004), we only emphasise the first two criteria.

[23] This hierarchy may require more refined analysis. It is perhaps just worth pointing out here that it corresponds approximately to the one which is often used for referential salience.

[24] See Strawson (1973) for this. Zribi-Hertz (1999: 23) comes to the same conclusion positing that "l'acceptabilité du syntagme possessivisé semble (...) solidaire de l'interprétation prédicative de la relation YP-XP dans *le XP de YP*". ["the acceptability of the possessive phrase seems …to support the predicative interpretation of the YP-XP relation in *the XP of YP*."]

a hat on the bonnet with the make of the car written on it. We would then be able to freely accept sequences of the type:

> *Lorsqu'il arriva au niveau de la deuxième voiture, Paul ne put savoir quelle était sa marque. Son chapeau (= le chapeau de la voiture) avait été volé par un visiteur collectionneur.*
> (When he got to the second car, Paul couldn't work out what make it was. Its hat (= the car's hat) had been stolen by a marauding visitor).

The possibility that the possessive determiner can localise or distinguish the *hat* by reference to the category E1 (*car*) is due to the fact that *its hat* can be contrasted with the hats of other cars. Here we have a construction involving a class which is entirely contingent (the class of cars with hats on) in a part-whole relation (the hats in this particular reading become honorary parts of cars[25]).

The situation changes when we have entities of a different ontological order. Let us examine two cases. First, a concrete object with a property, such as a *car* with a *colour*. Here we have an *a priori* referential dependency, i.e. criterion (1), since the occurrence of *colour* depends, by its ontological nature as a property, on an occurrence such as *car*. The reverse is not true: the occurrence *car* is not subordinate to *colour*, because its properties (including that of *colour*) depend ontologically on the object whose property they are, and objects do not depend on their properties. We mentioned this above in terms of the alienation condition and syncategoremic entities. So, the possessive determiner is possible in this case since there is an *a priori* referential dependency which is not limited to the two particular entities at stake:

> *sa couleur* (its colour = the colour of the car)
> **sa voiture* (*its car = ? the car of the colour)

Now let us take a second example, in which we have a human being and a concrete object, as in *Jean* and *book*. The feature 'human' means that there is a prior asymmetry between the two entities, i.e. criterion (2), an asymmetry which is a permanent difference between these entities and not just contingent. Clearly, the animate or human controls the concrete object rather than the other way round. In Strawsonian terms of **subject-object asymmetry**, it is clear that only one order is allowed: the concrete object can be predicated on the animate human being, but the animate or human being cannot be predicated on the inanimate[26]. The consequence is that we can freely form NPs of the type *son livre / his book* for *le livre de Jean / the book of Jean*, whereas the converse **son Jean / *its Jean*[27] is not possible. However, it is possible to dream up contexts which might temporarily justify the reverse, and may for example allow for such constructions as the post-modified NP *le Jean du livre / the Jean of the book*. There is in fact one example of this in Alexandre Dumas, quoted by Bartning (2001: 148, following Eriksson 1980: 399), which illustrates a discursive construction using the preposition *de*:

> *Debout devant la cheminée était un homme de moyenne taille, à la mine haute et fière ; (…). De temps en temps, l'homme de la cheminée levait les yeux de dessus les écritures.* (A. Dumas, *Les Mousquetaires*, 183-184)
> (Standing in front of the fireplace was a man of medium build, his face held high and haughty; … From time to time, the man of the chimney looked up from the writings.)

It is clearly not possible to have a possessive determiner in this example. But even though it may appear somewhat contrived, perhaps even more so than in our first example, criterion (3) in which

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[25] In other words, we can refer to a prior statement such as *the cars have a hat*. It happens that we can also say: *chaque voiture a son chapeau / every car has its hat*.

[26] As pointed out before, this position has also been argued by Zribi-Hertz (1999)

[27] This obviously does not mean that we can never have a possessive NP of the type *son Jean / its Jean*. Such NPs are in fact quite common (cf. *ton Zidane / your Zidane..., ma chère Françoise / my dear Françoise* , etc.). But the possessive is not referring in these instances to a concrete object.

the prior establishment of a context in which two entities E1-E2 share referential dependency, can once again allow the possessive determiner to reappear. We can justify this by relying again to the relational mode introduced by the second criterion. In the example *le Jean du livre / the Jean of the book*, if we can imagine that several books are talking about *Jean*, we can talk about a particular book in a series as *son Jean / its Jean* in order to talk about each individual instance of *Jean*.

2.3.3. How the three criteria apply to situations B) et C)

Our criteria (1) and (2) are enough to deal with situations B) et C), as discussed above, because the associative anaphor, which is our basic starting point, is 'fuelled' by a stereotype relation. This is not a contingent relation since it is intrinsically linked to the content of the Ns present (Kleiber, 2001a). On the other hand, our 'third way', criterion (3) involving the prior contextual construction of dependency relations, is hardly relevant to situations B) and C).

The conjunction of criteria (1) and (2) allows us therefore to explain the presence of the possessive in the context of meronymic and locative metaphors, as in our previous examples:

Il s'abrita sous un vieux tilleul. Son tronc était tout craquelé
(He sheltered under an old limetree. Its trunk was full of cracks.)

Le village était situé sur une butte. Son église dominait toute la région
(The village was on top of a hillock. Its church dominated the whole area).

The appearance of the possessive here can not be explained by ontological factors (the two entities are at the same ontological level), but by the lexical relationship between N1 and N2, which creates a necessary asymmetry or dependency hierarchy. There is thus a meronymic relationship between *tilleul - tronc / limetree - trunk* (Kleiber, 2001a) and a stereotypical locative relationship between *village - église / village - church* (Kleiber, 2001 a). The point here is that this relation is asymmetrical, i.e. one N is defined by the other N. In the case of a meronymic relation, the part $N_{(i)}$ is defined in terms of the whole expression, and not the reverse.

It is interesting to note that if a noun in the anaphoric expression is in fact intrinsically marked as being a part, the antecedent noun which represents the whole does not qualify as a 'holonym', as Tamba has argued (1994). The antecedent cannot possess the equivalent semantic trait of wholeness which a meronym would imply when used to express 'a part of'. Thus although *trunk* and *wheel* are defined semantically as parts of a tree or a car, *tree* and *car* are not intrinsically defined as being 'wholes' (Tamba, 1994 and Kleiber, 2001a). In the case of our locative relation then, whereas a *village* is a place where we can usually find a church, a *church* is not defined in terms of a *village*. The locative noun[28] *village* - $N_{(j)}$ - is thus defined as an entity where the entity *church* - $N_{(i)}$ - can be found and not the reverse. In support of this observation, we can note that the possessive is not allowed in the converse expressions: *son N2 / its N2* even though we could have a prepositional phrase of the type *le N2 de NP1 / the N2 of the NP2*. Thus we could not have *its car* (where *its = of the steering wheel*) or *its village* (where *its = of the church*), but we could have instances such as the following (although this may be more awkward in the English version):

La voiture du volant qu'on a ramassé dans le fossé n'a jamais été retrouvée
(?The car of the steering wheel that was recovered from the ditch has never been found.)

It is noticeable that the meronymic and locative contexts share a common characteristic in that they represent a general form of inclusion, the meronym possibly being considered as a particular case of internal localisation. In both cases, at an intrinsic level the included item is E2 and the inclusive item is E1.

[28] Bartning (1998) refers to 'locative nouns' and categorises them as N2s whose lexical meaning contributes to the relational meanings associated with complex NPs post-modified by *de / of*.

A second point is that the possessive determiner can also be explained in what we have termed **functional** contexts:

Une voiture s'est renversée hier dans le fossé. Son conducteur s'était assoupi.
(A car crashed into a ditch yesterday. Its driver had fallen asleep.)

Le village de Pfaffenheim est de plus en plus fleuri. Ses habitants / Son maire raffole(nt) des géraniums
(The village of Pfaffenheim is getting more and more flowery. Its villagers are / Its mayor is wild about geraniums.)

While the ontological hierarchy implies that the E1 antecedent is less prominent than E2, since it is a non-human, the existence of a functional semantic relation such as *X is N2 of Y* in fact allows us to invert this relation. But now there is no longer a relationship between a human and the E1 (*car, village*), but between a non-human *car* or *village* and a facet of a human corresponding to a functional predicate noun such as, *driver, mayor, villager* etc. Evidence for this comes from the impossibility of relating the N1 *voiture / car*, to the possessive *son N2 / its N2* when we have an N2 such as *automobiliste / car user*. This is because these are not functional Ns. On the other hand there is no problem with a predicate N such as *conducteur / driver* (Kleiber, 2001c):

son conducteur (its driver) = *le conducteur de la voiture* (the driver of the car)
**son automobiliste* (*its car user) = *? l'automobiliste de la voiture* (? the car user of the car)

Thirdly, the impossibility of having a possessive determiner in an agentive context can also be explained by the ontological hierarchy, since the concrete object *corde / rope* is much higher up on the scale that the event *pendaison / hanging*[29]:

*Paul s'est pendu, mais *sa corde (= la corde de la pendaison) s'est cassée*
(Paul hanged himself, but *its rope (= the rope of the hanging) snapped.)

Our final case involves collective expressions, where the situation is less clear, since as we have seen the possessive is possible in certain cases:

Nous entrâmes dans une forêt magnifique. Ses arbres resplendissaient de lumière verte
(We went into a magnificent forest. Its trees were ablaze with green light.)

Le régiment a été défait. Ses soldats n'ont pas eu le temps de combattre
(The regiment was defeated. Its soldiers did not have time to fight back.)

though not in others:

*Un couple s'installa à la terrasse. *Son mari (= du couple) commanda une 1664*
(A couple sat down outside a café. *Its husband (= of the couple) ordered a glass of 1664.)

This is rather intriguing, since it is difficult to see why the member – collection lexical relation, which can be used to explain the use of the possessive in the case of *forest – tree* and *regiment - soldiers*[30], cannot be used in the same way when dealing with kinship relations. Presumably, if the NP **son mari* / **its husband* is not possible, this is because the kinship items do not functionally refer to a collective term (i.e. *mari / husband* to *couple* or *mère / mother* to *famille / family*) but

[29] The reverse is not possible either (cf. ? *sa pendaison / its hanging*), but here things are already awkward because of the level of dependency of the prepositional phrase (**La pendaison de la corde / *The hanging of the rope*) (cf. above).
[30] A *forest* has *trees*, a *regiment* has *soldiers*, but not the reverse.

instead to their complementary kinship terms: *mari* / *husband* to *femme* / *wife* and *mère* / *mother* to *enfants* / *children* (Kleiber, 1999b et 2003b).

Conclusion: Two Markers in Competition.

We now have to address the issue of 'discourse' which we raised at the beginning. If the associative definite article and the possessive can at times occur in the same contexts, what is the difference between the two items in such contexts? We have already sketched out a reply to this in our discussion above about parts of animate bodies. In this section we develop this point again and apply it to the wider set of contexts where both items are possible. Since the identity of the referent is the same for both the article and the possessive in these cases, the distinction can only come from the way in which both markers view the identical referent from differing semantic perspectives. This semantic contribution is entirely down to a distinction of scope and topical continuity. The associative definite article, as we pointed out above, downplays the role of the antecedent, while the possessive determiner actively underlines a topical link with the antecedent by creating a coreferential anaphor.

In the first instance, a referent is identified as part of an antecedent whole by means of an associative anaphor (Kleiber, 2001a) which functions as a kind of referential space containing entities which can also be potentially part of this associative anaphor. The associative referent is thus understood in virtual opposition to these other entities which could equally have been taken up associatively. The referent of *le tronc* (*du tilleul*) / *the trunk* (*of the limetree*), as in:

Il s'abrita sous un vieux tilleul. Le tronc était tout craquelé
(He sheltered under an old limetree. The trunk was full of cracks.)

is considered to be the unique object of the antecedent whole *tilleul* / *limetree* and is understood in terms of the paradigm of other entities (or Ns) which also have an associative link with the antecedent whole (*leaves, branches,* etc.). The particular or specific relation which links *le tronc* / *the trunk* and *le vieux tilleul* / *the old limetree* is based, as we have argued above, on a generic relation between limetrees and trunks (*un tilleul a un tronc* / *a limetree has a trunk*). This leads us to express the referent, albeit particular and specific, in terms of a generic part-whole relation, thus making explicit its generic identity with other trunks.

In contrast, the possessive creates a different topical chain in which the antecedent remains salient at the level of the new referent of a possessive expression. The identification of this referent is not based on a whole unit containing other entities at the same level, but instead comes from a direct link with the antecedent. This has two consequences. First, whereas the associative article implies an internal contrast between the antecedent and different Ns capable of being in the same associative relation, the possessive implies a contrast with different antecedents. The possessive *son tronc* / *its trunk* opens up the paradigm of trunks belonging to other individuals: *the trunk of tree X, Y, or Z*. As we have also pointed out above, the referent is thus oriented towards the identification of an individual rather than of a stereotypical or generic relation, as is the case with the definite article.

Secondly, the pronominal nature of the possessive adjective requires the antecedent to be in a position of semantic salience (Kleiber, 1994b) and to have an individualising function (De Mulder et Tasmowski, 2000). This feature is not shared by the antecedent of the associative article and, while it leads to an interpretation of particularity, also builds on a rather transitional kind of discourse continuity. The possessive NP maintains a thematic link with its antecedent and at the same time creates a new topic capable of being the subject itself of a new continuity.

It comes as a no surprise to see that in the following examples both determiners can be used with a referent which is identical but open to different readings:

Si tout se passe comme prévu, l'arbre sera enlevé le lundi 12 ; d'après le scénario, le / son tronc devrait être ébranché, coupé en trois morceaux et évacué avant midi (DNA, 27/12/97)
(Provided everything happens on time, the tree will be removed on Monday 12th. According to the schedule the / its trunk should be lopped, cut into three pieces and taken away by midday.)

La ville, à sept heures du matin, n'avait pas perdu cet air de vieille maison que lui donne la nuit. Les / Ses rues étaient comme de grands vestibules, les / ses places comme des cours (J.L. Borgès, *Fictions*)
(At seven in the morning the town had not lost the look of an old house at night time. The / Its streets were like great hallways, the / its squares like courtyards.)

Dessiné par Gérard Ecklé, le grand bâtiment comprendra un rez-de-chaussée et 6 étages, les deux niveaux se trouvant en retrait. Les / Ses façades seront rythmées par des terrasses et des loggias (DNA, 05/06/96)
(Designed by Gérard Ecklé, the tall building will comprise a ground and 6 floors, with two levels being set in relief. The / Its façades will be broken by terraces and loggias.)

Cette entreprise mène une action intéressante à signaler : les / ses salariés fabriquent bénévolement des fenêtres — 750 jusqu'à nos jours — au profit de la fondation. (DNA, 30/1/1998)
(This firm is making a very significant gesture: the / its employees have been making windows free of charge – 750 of them up to now - as a gift to the foundation.)

The discourse context lends itself here to both a possessive interpretation, individualising a particular referent in relation to the antecedent, as well as an interpretation based on the generic definite article linking the class of N1 antecedents to the class N2. Just taking the last example, with the article *les salariés* / *the employees,* the referent is understood by means of the functional relation *X is an employee of (firm) Y* or *a firm has employees*. Here no comment is made whatsoever about the particularity of the firm and its employees. Such an interpretation creates the possibility of making a virtual contrast with other entities in the same relationship, such as *le patron* / *the boss*. The employees are only particular occurrences of employees (working for the firm), when we consider the generic relationship which unites *salariés* / *employees* to *entreprise* / *firm*. On the other hand, the possessive (*ses salariés* / *its employees*) has the same referent, which is understood immediately as a particular one with specific employees (the employees of this firm). This individualisation is marked by a pronominal anaphor and reinforced by the fact that we are dealing with a particular firm whose employees are specifically working for charity.

Our analysis predicts that if the context does not include elements which motivate an individualising specification of this kind, then the possessive becomes superfluous as we see in the following:

Le jour déclinait lorsqu'il arriva, avec son troupeau, devant une vieille église abandonnée. Le / ?Son toit s'était écroulé depuis longtemps, et un énorme sycomore avait grandi à l'emplacement où se trouvait autrefois la / ?sa sacristie (Paolo Coelo, *L'alchimiste*)
(The day was waning when he arrived with his flock in front of an old abandoned church. The / ?Its roof had collapsed long ago, and an enormous sycamore tree had grown at the spot where before there had been the / ?its sacristy.)

Fleischmann arriva enfin dans la rue de banlieue où il habitait chez ses parents dans une petite villa entourée d'un jardin. Il ouvrit la / ?sa grille, sans aller jusqu'à la / ?sa porte d'entrée (J.L. Borgès, *Fictions*)
(Fleischmann arrived at last in the suburban street where he had lived with his parents in a little detached house with a garden. He opened the / ?its gate, without going up to the / ?its door.)

La voiture dérapa et alla s'écraser contre un platane. Le / ?Son chauffeur avait été pris d'un malaise (DNA, 15/02/92)
(The car skidded and went on to crash into a plane tree. The / ?Its driver had been taken ill.)

Let us look at the last example, since the first two are straightforward enough. If *son chauffeur / its driver* seems less natural than *le chauffeur / the driver*, this is because the possessive focuses on a singularity and not a virtual opposition between other drivers which the context does not justify. The context, given that it deals with an accident, foregrounds the functional relation *X is driver of Y* and a coherent reading requires the associative definite article rather than the possessive. We would need to place more emphasis on the individuality of the antecedent than is required by the higher level pronominal definition implied by the possessive, and we would require more detail about how and at what level the different ingredients of this context fit together before justifying it. Such a task is clearly beyond the objectives of this paper. But at least we may have begun to set out a clearer path for future analysis!

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