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UNDERIVED NOMINALS AND THE PROJECTION PRINCIPLE:  
INHERENT POSSESSORS<sup>1</sup>

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0. Introduction

It has customarily been assumed in the literature that arguments of verbs are, with few exceptions, obligatory, whereas arguments of nominals are completely optional. The notion of optional argument is problematic within Government-Binding Theory, and recent attempts have been made at characterizing the notion in a way which is consistent with the Projection Principle. Rizzi (1986), for instance, has suggested that a process of  $\theta$ -role saturation is operative in the lexicon, thus accounting for the fact that the theme argument of verbs like eat, drink, though semantically implicit, need not be syntactically realized. As is typical of lexical processes, such saturation is limited to certain verbs, the  $\theta$ -role of which may only be saturated by a certain type of argument, a canonical object or constant in the sense of Gruber (1965). Clearly, this proposal cannot extend to nominals, since the optionality of arguments of nominals is independent of the lexical

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properties of the head Ns: indeed, the theme argument of destruction is just as optional as that of examination or expression.

In recent work, however, Grimshaw (1986,1989) - see also Milner (1982) - has argued that the theme argument of deverbal nominals is not optional at all. Rather, there are two types of nominals: result nominals, which have no argument structure, and process nominals, which take theme arguments. Deverbal nominals are ambiguous between these two interpretations; but once the process reading is forced, Grimshaw argues, the theme argument is obligatory, and thus subject to the Projection Principle. This is a welcome result since the problem raised for the Projection Principle by optional arguments is eliminated for a large class of nominals.

In this paper, I claim that a sub-class of underived nouns, referred to as "inherently relational" Ns, also take arguments subject to the Projection Principle. Drawing on data from French, I show that the genitive constituent construed as the possessor must be linked to a position in the syntax; this is consistent with the Projection Principle if relational Ns assign a possessor  $\theta$ -role. Relational Ns are shown to contrast with non-relational Ns, in that the latter do not assign a  $\theta$ -role; hence the genitive possessor of non-relational Ns is an adjunct, and is truly optional.

I show that this division between the two types of underived nouns correlates with a distinct behaviour with respect to French "double dont" constructions (DDCs). I analyze DDCs as null operator-derived parasitic gap constructions. Assuming that null operators can correspond to arguments, but not to adjuncts, DDCs support the claim that the possessors of relational and non-relational nouns differ along the argument/adjunct axis. Finally, I explore some consequences with respect to the representation of French inalienable possession constructions (IACs), which involve a sub-class of those nouns defined as relational. I suggest that the possessor argument is syntactically realized within the body-part noun phrase, and more particularly that null operator movement is involved in these constructions as well.

### 1. Underived Ns: Alienable vs. Inherent Possession

Taking into account only those genitives which correspond to possessors in French, I distinguish between two classes of underived nouns: those where the relation between head noun and possessor expresses a transitory, or "external" possession relation, and those where the possession relation is intrinsic, or "internal". Nouns of the first class are concrete Ns such as those in (1) - I refer to the head nouns as "non-relational" and to the genitive possessor as the "alienable" possessor:

## (1) Class 1: Alienable possession (Non-relational Ns)

<u>table</u>	la table (de l'architecte)	"the architect's table"
<u>livre</u>	le livre (de Pierre)	"Pierre's book"
<u>vélo</u>	le vélo (de Suzanne)	"Suzanne's bicycle"
<u>bureau</u>	le bureau (de la présidente)	"the president's desk"

Nouns of the second class are relational Ns, in the sense that they acquire their full reference in relation to a given possessor. The possession relation here is an inherent part of this class of Ns, which includes kinship terms, body-part Ns, and Ns expressing properties or intrinsic characteristics; cf. (2):

## (2) Class 2: Inherent possession (Relational Ns)

## a. Kinship terms

<u>soeur</u>	la soeur de Paul	"Paul's sister"
<u>mari</u>	le mari de la propriétaire	"the landlady's husband"
<u>cousin</u>	le cousin de Françoise	"Françoise's cousin"

## b. Body-part Ns

<u>main</u>	la main (du pianiste)	"the pianist's hand"
<u>tête</u>	la tête (de Jean-Baptiste)	"John the Baptist's head"
<u>yeux</u>	les yeux (de Marie-Eve)	"the eyes of Marie-Eve"

c. Intrinsic Characteristics<sup>2</sup>

<u>talent</u>	le talent (de cette jeune violoniste)	"the talent (of this young violinist)"
<u>intelligence</u>	l'intelligence (de Julie)	"Julie's intelligence"
<u>teinte</u>	la teinte (du vase)	"the color (of the vase)"
<u>crédibilité</u>	la crédibilité (du gouvernement)	"the credibility (of the government)"

The claim I wish to make is the following: while alienable possessors are truly optional, inherent possessors must obligatorily be linked to a position in the syntax. Why then are they apparently optional? I will show that the possibility of omitting an inherent possessor is syntactically determined. There are two contexts where the inherent possessor need not be lexically realized: 1) when the

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<sup>2</sup> Some of the Ns in this class may, but need not, be derived from adjectives.

propositional context expresses nomic (or generic) time reference, and 2) when the noun phrase headed by the relational N is non-definite. I now turn to a more precise characterization of the correlation between these contexts and the realization of possessor arguments.

## 2. Inherent Possessors Must Be Lexically Realized

### 2.1. Time Reference: Generic vs. Specific

In French, generic time reference may be encoded through tense; typically, the present tense is used to express general truths, proverbs, etc. ("atemporal present"), or habitual actions ("habitual present"). Temporal genericity may also be expressed through adverbs such as en général "generally", souvent "often", rarement "rarely", etc. Conversely, temporal reference can be made specific through the use of tense ("passé composé" in French has a specific flavour) or through the use of adverbs which refer to punctual time units (e.g. tout de suite, "right away", immédiatement "immediately", etc.). Now, unless the time reference is generic, the inherent possessor of a relational N must be lexically represented. It should be stressed that this holds true for sentences pronounced in isolation, that is outside of any discursive or pragmatic context. That inherent possessors are obligatory in sentences with specific time reference is shown for body-part Ns in (3), and property/intrinsic characteristics Ns in (4)-(5).

Body-part Ns:

- (3) a. Au soccer, ni les bras ni les mains ne doivent entrer en contact avec le ballon  
 "In soccer, neither the arms nor the hands must come into contact with the ball"
- b. La main \*(du passager) s'est retrouvée coincée dans la portière  
 "The hand (of the passenger) got stuck in the car door"

Intrinsic characteristics:

- (4) a. On a rarement du mal à reconnaître le talent/l'intelligence  
 "One rarely has problems recognizing talent/intelligence"
- b. On a tout de suite reconnu le talent/l'intelligence \*(de cet enfant)  
 "One recognized right away the talent/the intelligence (of this child)"
- (5) a. Ce type de scandale peut nuire sérieusement à la crédibilité  
 "This sort of scandal can seriously endanger credibility"

- b. Tous ces scandales ont amoindri la crédibilité \*(du parti de droite)  
 "All these scandals have endangered the credibility (of the right-winged party)"

By contrast, concrete Ns of class 1, where the genitive possessor is alienable, are insensitive to the specific/generic properties of the propositional context. Even in the presence of specific time reference, no genitive possessor need be lexically realized, as shown in (6b):

- (6) a. L'avion n'est pas plus dangereux que la voiture  
 "Planes are not more dangerous than cars"
- b. L'avion (de la PanAm) vient tout juste de se poser sur la piste  
 "The plane (of PanAm) just landed on the runway"

These contrasts raise the following question: how can we structurally represent the difference between the two classes of Ns? In particular, why is the possibility of omitting the possessor dependent on the time reference for Ns of Class 2, but independent of the propositional context for Ns of Class 1?

In fact, the contextual restriction illustrated in (3)-(5) is strongly reminiscent of a similar constraint imposed on arbitrary null objects of verbs in Italian, which are analyzed by Rizzi (1986) as instances of arbitrary *pro*.<sup>3</sup> Rizzi points out that these null objects are possible only in contexts which express generic time reference. This is illustrated for French in (7) and (8):

- (7) a. Ce genre d'attitude force *pro*<sub>arb</sub> à [*PRO*<sub>arb</sub> mentir]  
 "This kind of attitude forces to lie"
- b. La bonne musique réconcilie *pro*<sub>arb</sub> avec soi-même  
 "Good music reconciles with oneself"
- (8) a. \* Cette attitude vient de forcer à mentir  
 "This attitude just forced to lie"
- b. \* Le concert d'hier a réconcilié avec soi-même  
 "Yesterday's concert reconciled with oneself"

These data suggest that arbitrary *pro* (at least in object position) is licensed via some generic features on the INFL node of the clause. This explanation readily extends to handle the contrasts in (3)-(5): assuming that the inaudible inherent possessor in (3)-(5) is arbitrary *pro*, the fact that a lexically realized possessor is

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<sup>3</sup> Roberge (to appear) extends Rizzi's analysis to French arbitrary null objects. For a different view, see Bouchard (1989).

obligatory in specific time reference contexts follows, since these are the contexts where arbitrary pro is unlicensed.<sup>4,5</sup>

The difference between Ns of class 2 and Ns of class 1 is thus the following: in generic contexts, Ns of class 2 are represented as in (9b), i.e. with a linked - though silent - possessor. By contrast, Ns of class 1 are truly intransitive, since the occurrence of a phonologically unrealized possessor is unconstrained:<sup>6</sup>

- (9) a. [..N.. ]                      Non-relational Ns (Class 1)  
       b. [..N.. pro<sub>arb</sub>]            Relational Ns (Class 2)

## 2.2. Determiners: Definite vs. Others

The second context which correlates with the possibility of omitting an inherent genitive possessor is a matter of the type of determiner involved. If a relational N is used with a definite determiner, its possessor must be lexically realized. The examples below show that in specific time-reference contexts, inherent possessors may be omitted as long as the determiner is other than the definite, i.e. indefinite, demonstrative, or quantificational. Compare (10) with the ungrammatical (b) examples in (3)-(5).

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<sup>4</sup> Authier (1988) argues that in sentences akin to (3a), the possessor of the body-part N is realized as pro<sub>arb</sub>. Here, this claim is generalized to the wider class of relational Ns.

<sup>5</sup> Following Chomsky (1986a), I assume that Ns assign inherent Case, and that de in French is the realization of genitive Case (extending Milner's 1982 analysis to all de-complements within NP; see also Vergnaud 1974). The occurrence of pro in adnominal position is thus consistent with Rizzi's (1986) formal licensing requirement.

<sup>6</sup> Relational Ns expressing kinship display a particular behaviour: they cannot take arbitrary pro as their possessor when used in the singular form, though they may in the plural form:

- (i) \*La mère/\*le père/les mères/les pères sait/savent souvent trouver les mots qu'il faut  
       "The mother/the father/mothers/fathers can often find the right words"

This peculiarity can be ascribed to the semantic properties of these nouns. In its relational use, a term like "mother" cannot be defined with respect to some arbitrary person, since as an individual, a mother is necessarily the mother of someone specific. In the plural form, however, these terms can be used relationally with respect to a collective set of unspecified sons and daughters.

- (10) a. De dehors, nous avons aperçu une/quelque/cette main coincée dans la portière  
 "From the outside, we noticed a/some/this hand stuck in the car door"
- b. Aucun(e) talent/intelligence n'a été négligé(e) lors de la distribution des tâches  
 "No talent/intelligence was neglected during the distribution of the tasks"
- c. Toute crédibilité aura nécessairement été amoindrie par cette succession de scandales  
 "Any credibility will necessarily have been lessened by this succession of scandals"

As we saw, Ns of Class 1 (non-relational) do not require their possessor to be syntactically realized in specific time-reference contexts, even in the presence of a definite determiner. Thus, as expected, the presence or absence of the possessor with these nouns is independent of the type of determiner involved:

- (11) a. La/une/cette/quelque voiture vient de passer à toute vitesse  
 "The/a/this/some car just passed at full speed"
- b. Paul a visité les/certaines/plusieurs maisons de son quartier  
 "Paul visited the/certain/many houses of his neighbourhood"

Returning to relational Ns, the facts in (10) suggest that when a determiner other than the definite is present, the inherent possessor is not syntactically realized; recall that arbitrary pro is possible only in the presence of generic time-reference, and that the time reference in (10) is specific. The question to be answered now is the following: how can we represent the correlation between the determiner type and the syntactic realization of inherent possessor arguments?

Intuitively, the idea to be captured is that there is an interpretive difference between la main ("the hand") and une/cette/quelque main ("a/this/some hand"). Such Ns, when used with a definite determiner, are not fully referential; rather, their reference is computed with respect to some possessor. This is the sense in which they are relational. On the other hand, they acquire full referential properties when used with other determiners. One way in which this correlation can be implemented is as follows. Suppose that definite determiners in French differ structurally from indefinites and demonstratives: in particular, the former are a spell-out of AGR features under D, while the latter occupy the



Though a similar result could be achieved in other ways, I will assume for concreteness the device just presented, since it adequately captures the relevant fact, i.e. that there exists a relationship between determiner type and argument realization in the case of relational Ns.<sup>8</sup>

To sum up this sub-section, it has been shown that alienable possessors are completely optional, a fact that is compatible with their being adjuncts. I thus conclude that Ns of Class 1 do not assign a possessor  $\theta$ -role; rather, alienable possessors receive the default possessor interpretation. Relational Ns of class 2, on the other hand, assign an inherent possessor  $\theta$ -role: that is, genitive inherent possessors are arguments of these nouns. I now turn to evidence of a different sort which supports this division between the two classes of underived Ns.

### 3. Double dont Constructions

French displays a particular type of construction (which I will refer to as the double dont construction (DDC)), where the genitive relative marker dont corresponds to two unexpressed adnominal complements. Consider the examples in (14):

- (14) a. Ceux dont<sub>i</sub> les péchés t<sub>i</sub> pèsent sur la conscience e<sub>i</sub>  
 "Those of whom the sins lie heavy on the soul"
- b. Quelqu'un dont<sub>i</sub> les frasques t<sub>i</sub> ont nui à la réputation e<sub>i</sub>  
 "Someone of whom the pranks have detracted from the reputation"
- c. Ce garçon, dont<sub>i</sub> l'énergie t<sub>i</sub> se lisait dans les yeux bleus e<sub>i</sub>  
 "This boy, of whom the energy could be read in the blue eyes" (J. & J. Tharaud, Le passant d'Ethiopie, cited in Grevisse 1975:531)).
- d. La fille dont<sub>i</sub> le père t<sub>i</sub> ne parle plus avec la mère e<sub>i</sub>  
 "The girl of whom the father no longer speaks with the mother" (Kayne 1975:112, fn.57)

The relevant properties of this construction are as follows. First, as the use of t and e indicates, relativization is from within the subject position; the second adnominal complement is in a site inaccessible to movement (extraction is impossible from within a PP). Secondly, the inaudible possessor within the second NP is

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<sup>8</sup> Everett (1989) expresses a similar intuition regarding the relationship between  $\theta$ -role assignment and determiner type in inalienable possession constructions. He proposes that, unless they are preceded by an indefinite determiner, body-part Ns always assign a (possessor)  $\theta$ -role.

obligatorily interpreted as coreferent with the first one. Independently of the claim made earlier, we know that the second possessor is realized syntactically as an empty category (as opposed to being unlinked): this is because the coreferent interpretation is subject to structural constraints, among which the presence of an A'-movement relation. This is of course reminiscent of the constraints on parasitic gap constructions; I argue that in fact DDCs display all the properties of PGCs, and must be analyzed accordingly. Some of the relevant properties are given below:<sup>9</sup>

(15) Dependence on syntactic A'-movement:

- a. \* Les péchés [de ces bandits]<sub>i</sub> pèsent sur la conscience e<sub>i</sub>  
"The sins of these bandits lie heavy on the soul"
- b. \* Les péchés de quels bandits pèsent sur la conscience e<sub>i</sub>?  
"The sins of which bandits lie heavy on the soul?"

(16) C-command by the real binder:

- a. Un enfant dont<sub>i</sub> [[les parents t<sub>i</sub>]<sub>j</sub> ont promis de [PRO<sub>j</sub> confier la garde e<sub>i</sub> à l'Etat]]  
"A child of whom the parents have promised to entrust the guardianship to the State"
- b. \* L'assistante sociale<sub>k</sub> a promis [à l'enfant dont<sub>i</sub> les parents t<sub>i</sub> sont morts] de PRO<sub>k</sub> confier la garde e<sub>i</sub> à l'Etat  
"The social worker promised the child of whom the parents died to entrust the guardianship to the State"

(17) Locality

- a.?? This is the man John interviewed t<sub>i</sub> before announcing the plan to speak to e<sub>i</sub> (Chomsky 1986b:62)
- b.?\* Un argument dont<sub>i</sub> vous attribuez l'intérêt t<sub>i</sub> au fait qu'on ait soigné l'exposition e<sub>i</sub>  
"An argument of which you attribute the interest to the fact that one has polished the exposition"
- cf. c. Un argument dont<sub>i</sub> vous attribuez l'intérêt t<sub>i</sub> à la clarté de l'exposition e<sub>i</sub>  
"An argument of which you attribute the interest to the clarity of the exposition"

Concerning (17a), it has been argued (Contreras 1984, Chomsky 1986a) that the locality effect is to be attributed to Subjacency, on the assumption that parasitic gaps are derived by movement of a

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<sup>9</sup> A more detailed study of the properties and distribution of double dont constructions can be found in Tellier (1988).

null operator to the [Spec,CP] position of the adjunct clause. Following this line of reasoning, I propose that DDCs are similarly derived, with the null operator landing in the [Spec,DP] position of the noun phrase containing the adnominal gap. This yields a representation as in (18):

(18)  $\text{dont}_i \dots t_i \dots [\text{DP Op}_i [\text{NP N} \dots e_i]]$

Now, an interesting property of PG constructions in general is that a parasitic gap must correspond to an argument; an NP adjunct may never be interpreted as a parasitic gap. In fact, as Stowell (1985) has pointed out, this is part of a more general condition precluding adjunct gaps in null operator constructions. This is shown for PG constructions in (19) and easy/tough constructions in (20):<sup>10</sup>

(19) a. This is the house<sub>i</sub> you bought t<sub>i</sub> without [Op<sub>i</sub> having seen e<sub>i</sub>]

b. \* This is the way<sub>i</sub> you presented it t<sub>i</sub> without [Op<sub>i</sub> having read it e<sub>i</sub>]

(20) a. This book<sub>i</sub> is easy [Op<sub>i</sub> to read e<sub>i</sub>]

b. \* This way<sub>i</sub> is easy [Op<sub>i</sub> to do your homework e<sub>i</sub>]

Irrelevantly, (19b) is grammatical if the manner adjunct is construed solely with the matrix clause; but it cannot be interpreted as a PG construction. That is, (19b) does not have the reading where something was presented in a way X without having been read in that same way X. Thus, there can be no parasitic gap corresponding to the bare NP adjunct.

Whichever principle ultimately subsumes this constraint on null operators (the ECP as in Stowell 1985, or D-Structure licensing conditions on adjuncts, as in Tellier 1988), the relevant fact is that null operators either cannot be generated in adjunct positions, or else cannot bind adjunct traces.

Returning now to our main topic, this condition, along with an analysis of DDCs as in (18), is relevant to the adjunct vs. argument status of possessors in the following way. Recall that I have divided possessors into two classes: alienable possessors, which are adjuncts, and inherent possessors, which are arguments. If this is correct, we are now in a position to make a prediction with respect to their occurrence as adnominal gaps in DDCs: namely, we expect that only those possessors which are arguments can be interpreted as adnominal parasitic gaps. Recall that in the DDC examples given in (14), the second adnominal gap must be interpreted as coreferent with the "real" gap; indeed, this is a

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<sup>10</sup> On the assumption that this way is a bare NP (cf. Larson 1985), the ungrammaticality of (19b)-(20b) is independent of another condition holding of null operators, namely that they cannot be of the category PP.

property of parasitic gap constructions, and more generally a consequence of the fact that null operators must be identified through coindexing with a structurally suitable antecedent. The prediction we make is the following: though non-relational Ns can appear in structures resembling DDCs, their alienable possessors are not interpreted as parasitic gaps, as they cannot be traces of null operators. Therefore, an unexpressed alienable possessor in a DDC is not necessarily interpreted as coreferent with the real gap. This is borne out: in (21), the Ns table, piano and secrétaire are not interpreted as possessed by the heads of the relatives, but instead remain unspecified as to their possessor:

- (21) a. \* Un collectionneur dont<sub>i</sub> les objets rares t<sub>i</sub> sont disposés sur la table e<sub>i</sub>  
 "A collector of whom the rare objects are displayed on the table"
- b. \* Un espion dont<sub>i</sub> les microfilms t<sub>i</sub> sont caché dans le piano e<sub>i</sub>  
 "A spy of whom the microfilms are hidden in the piano"
- c. \* Une employée dont<sub>i</sub> la patronne t<sub>i</sub> ne parle plus avec la secrétaire e<sub>i</sub>  
 "An employee of whom the boss no longer speaks with the secretary"

#### 4. Inalienable Possession Constructions

I have argued that relational Ns take an obligatory possessor argument. Since relational Ns include body-part Ns, this claim has consequences for the the representation of the Inalienable Possession Construction (IAC) in French, illustrated in (22):<sup>11</sup>

- (22) a. Elle a levé le doigt  
 "She raised the finger"
- b. Je lui ai lavé les cheveux  
 "I washed him the hair"
- c. Julie l'a frappé dans le ventre  
 "Julie hit him in the stomach"

According to the claim made here, the possessor of a body-part N must be linked to a position in the syntax. This suggests that a

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<sup>11</sup> On the properties of IACs in French and other languages, see e.g. Kayne (1975), Guéron (1983, 1985), Cheng & Ritter (1987), Authier (1988), Yoon (1989), Herschensohn (1989), Everett (1989); on English part-whole constructions, see Massam (1989).

construction like (22a) has the following representation, with an empty category interpreted as coreferent with the matrix subject:

(23) Elle<sub>i</sub> a levé [le doigt e<sub>i</sub>]

I would like to suggest, somewhat speculatively, that by analogy with the DDCs, the empty category in (23) is a variable, i.e. the trace of null operator movement to [Spec,DP]:

(24) Elle<sub>i</sub> a levé [DP Op<sub>i</sub> le doigt e<sub>i</sub>]

A movement analysis is supported by the fact that locality restrictions obtain within the domain of the noun phrase: (25b) shows that the body-part N cannot be embedded within a relative. Such a constraint falls under Subjacency if movement is involved ((25c)).

- (25) a. Elle lui a touché le bout du pied  
 "She touched him the tip of the foot"
- b. \* Elle lui a touché le bout qui restait du pied  
 "She touched him the part that was left of the foot"
- c. [DP Op<sub>i</sub> [NP le bout [CP Wh<sub>j</sub> qui t<sub>j</sub> restait du pied t<sub>i</sub>]]]

Under this view, IACs constitute the nominal counterpart of easy-constructions, where the identifier of the null operator may be in an A-position. Now usually, such identification arises through a rule of predication: otherwise, nothing would rule out, alongside the licit (26a), a derivation like that of (26b):

- (26) a. John<sub>i</sub> is easy [Op<sub>i</sub> to please t<sub>i</sub>]  
 b. John<sub>i</sub> thinks [Op<sub>i</sub> that Bill saw t<sub>i</sub>]

But (26b) is ruled out by virtue of the fact that the CP is an argument of the verb; hence no predication relation is involved, which would coindex CP and the subject. If the DP in (24) were an argument, then predication would not be involved, and the operator could not be coindexed with the subject. However, it is generally agreed upon that the noun phrase expressing the body-part in IACs is not a referential expression, as it cannot take adjectival modifiers (cf. 27b)); since it is not referential, it cannot be an argument. Guéron (1983) has suggested that the body-part noun phrase forms a complex predicate with the verb; this is plausible in view of the lexical restrictions involved (cf. (27a)).

- (27) a. Elle a levé/\*lavé le doigt  
 "She raised/washed the finger"
- b. Il a baissé les (\*beaux) yeux  
 "He lowered the (beautiful) eyes"

Thus the possibility a null operator identified through predication indexing is rendered possible by the fact that in French, body-part noun phrases are reanalyzed as part of a complex predicate. We might explain the difference between English and French along these lines. English does not allow reanalysis of body-part noun phrases, plausibly due to differences in the determiner systems: we may suppose that in English, body-part noun phrases are referential even with a definite determiner. Hence, a null operator cannot be identified as it is in French. This accounts for the ungrammaticality of the English counterparts to (22a) and (22b). Moreover, the fact that English does have the equivalent of (22c) is expected: in structures like (22c), the null operator is contained within a PP, which may function as a predicate independently of any reanalysis mechanism.

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