Inalienable Possession and Locative Aspect

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1. Introduction[1]

In the "inalienable possession" (IP) structures (1) through (4), an NP denoting a body part is obligatorily associated with a [+animate] NP somewhere else in the clause:

(1) Jean lève la main
(2) Je lui prends la main
(3) La tête lui tourne
(4) Jean le frappe sur la tête

In my opinion, an adequate explanation of these structures must solve three problems simultaneously.

I. The syntactic structure: is it possible to generate (1) through (4) within the framework of Chomsky's (1981) modular system without referring to the semantics of inalienable possession?

II. The parameters: why do sentences (1) through (3) have no direct correspondance in English?

(1') *John raises the hand
(2') *I take her the hand
(3') *The head turns to her

By identifying *lui* in (2) and (3) with the benefactive dative in (5a), one might attribute the absence of (2') and (3') in English to the absence of (5b) in this language:

(5) a. Je lui ai cassé le vase.
b. *I broke her the vase.

This hypothesis, however, cannot explain the unacceptability of (1'), specially since sentences like (1') are acceptable in English if the NP denoting the body part has an indefinite or empty determiner:

(6) a. She would't lift a/*the finger to help.
b. She raised an/*the eyebrow.
c. They joined (*the) hands.

Unlike (1) through (3), (4) does exist in English:

(4') John hit him on the head

(1) I would like to thank Anne Zribi-Hertz for her comments and encouragement during the development of this research.

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III. What can account for the strict lexical constraints on PI constructions?[2] They require a verb of action (cf. (8)) and a [+animate] NP (cf. (10) in Wierzbicka 1988). The particular verb selected differs from one IP context to the other (cf. (7a) vs. (9b), and (7b) vs. (8a)). Only body parts can appear in them (cf. (11)):[3]

(7) a. Jean lève la main. (=(1)) b. *Jean lave la main.

(8) a. Je lui lave les mains. (cf. (2)) b. *Je lui admire les mains.

(9) a. La tête lui tourne. (=(3)) b. *La main lui lève.

(10) a. Fido bit John on the leg. (cf. (4')) b. *Fido bit the table on the leg

(11) a. Elle lui pince les fesses. (cf. (2)) c. *Elle lui prend la veste.[4]
b. *Elle lui pince le fils.

2. In Gueron (1983, 1986), I proposed that IP is based on anaphoric binding.

2.1 On the basis of (12), I hypothesized that the definite article may have the status of a pronoun in French:

(12) Pronouns are made up of ϕ-features for number, gender and person

A French child could easily identify the determiner as a pronoun from data like (13a); (13b), on the other hand, would demonstrate that the definite article is not a pronoun in English:

(13) a. le livre, la rose, les livres.
b. the book, the rose, the books.

The definite article in IP would be equivalent to PRO, a pronominal anaphor subject to control theory. Thus, the structures in (14) and (15) would be parallel:

(14) a. $Jean_i$ lève ($_{NP}$ la_i main).
b. $Jean_i$ veut ($_{CP}$ PRO_i partir).

(15) a. Jean lui_i prends ($_{NP}$ la_i main).
b. Jean lui_i dit ($_{CP}$ de PRO_i partir).

Since PRO is bound within the government category in its domain (Manzini 1983), the NP which contains it counts as an anaphor for binding theory. It follows that IP is subject to the constraints on anaphoric binding: (i) obligatory antecedent within the clause (cf. (16)); (ii) obligatory locality relation with the antecedent (cf. (17)); (iii) obligatory c-command relation between antecedent and anaphor (cf. (18)):

(16) a. J'ai acheté une table ce matin. Le pied est déjà cassé.
b. J'ai vu Jean ce matin. *Le pied est malheureusement cassé.
(Azoulay 1978)

(2) I owe to Nicolas Ruwet's influence the desire to give lexical variation its proper place. As he demonstrated (cf. Ruwet 1972, Ch. 5, or Ruwet 1984, for example), a syntactic analysis based on few examples runs the risk of falling quickly apart when confronted with a wider lexical choice.

(3) The constraints quoted here could be violated, as long as the interpretive rules in (48) are respected. I cannot develop this point here.

(4) (11c) is acceptable if *lui* is interpreted as benefactive. A possession relation between *lui* and *la veste* is then pragmatically possible without being obligatory, and the definite article alternates freely with a demonstrative, possessive or indefinite determiner.

(17) *Marie veut (que je prenne la main).

(18) a. Jean a levé la main. b. *La main a été levée par Jean.

Like other anaphors, the NP denoting a body part doesn't have any reference: it cannot be combined with a descriptive adjective:

(19) Elle a levé la (*grande) main. (Kayne 1975)

2.2 This analysis presents some problems which led to the formulation of cumbersome auxiliary hypotheses.

2.2.1 If *les mains* is an anaphor in (20a), the sentence should be grammatical, just like (20b) and (20c):

(20) a. *Jean lave les mains. b. Jean se lave
AG TH c. John washes himself

I proposed that body part and antecedent make up a single argumental chain in the syntax. (20a), where an A-chain is associated at the same time with the Agent theta-role of the subject and the Theme theta-role of the object, is then excluded by the theta-criterion, which requires that each chain receives a single theta-role.

2.2.2 The exclusion of (20a) by the theta-criterion makes the grammaticality of (21b) problematic, since a single A-chain receives the Benefactive and Theme theta-roles:

(21) a. *Jean lave les mains b. Jean lui lave les mains.
AG TH BEN TH

I therefore distinguished primary theta-roles such as Agent and Theme, selected by the verb, and secondary theta-roles like Benefactive, which are not selected. The theta-criterion would take into account only primary theta-roles, correctly excluding (21a) but not (21b).

2.2.3 But, as opposed to (21a), (22) is acceptable, even though a single chain receives the theta-roles Agent and Theme:

(22) Jean lève la main. (=(1))
AG TH

I proposed that (22) undergoes reanalysis: verb and object are analyzed as a single verb at the level of Logical Form (LF). This verbal complex absorbs the Theme theta-role, so that the verb has a single argument at LF, as required by the theta-criterion. Constraint (23), following Hatcher (1944) and Kayne (1975), permits reanalysis in (22) but not in (21a):

(23) Reanalyzed V + NP must be interpretable as a simple natural gesture

2.2.4 If the contrast between French and English with respect to (1) through (3) follows from the pronominal status of the French determiner, the absence of contrast between the two languages in the case of (4) implies that the determiner does not have a pronominal function there. I associated (4) and (4') with the structure in (24), where the article has a generic interpretation and there is a noun complement trace which functions as an anaphor bound by *le/him*:

(24) a. Je l_i'ai frappé sur [$_{NP}$ la tête t_i]
b. I hit him$_i$ on [$_{NP}$ the head t_i]

3. Subsequent research proposed alternative hypotheses, briefly summarized in this section.

3.1 Junker and Martineau's (1987) conceptual hypothesis

3.1.1 According to Junker and Martineau, by making the interpretation of IP dependent on syntactic binding, I would be putting the cart before the horse, as it were. On the contrary, syntactic structures would themselves be filtered by semantic concepts preestablished in the human brain. Filter (25) would distinguish (1) from (2).

(25) i. Is NP_2 included in NP_1? If so, then (1) or (2).
ii. Is V + NP *selfdoable*? If so, (1); otherwise, (2).

(1) is acceptable because *la main* gives the impression of raising itself independently, while (2) is used because a hand cannot take itself independently.

3.1.2 A conceptual grammar supposes the existence of a series of syntactic constructions each filtered by a concept. If such a hypothesis is to have any content, it must include a theory of the linguistically relevant conceptual structure, or at least a list of such concepts. Unfortunately, this component is missing in Junker and Martineau's grammar.

From an empirical point of view, the concept of inclusion does not account for the contrasts illustrated in (10) and (16): the leg of a table is as much included in the table as the leg of a man is included in a man. The notion of "*selfdoability*" is inadequate clearly for (1): the hand does not raise itself: it is Jean who raises it. Closer to the notion of selfdoability is sentence (9a), but, as (9b) shows, (1) is excluded under this form. Finally, as Ruwet (to appear) points out, a conceptually based grammar cannot account for the differences among languages. One cannot attribute the ungrammaticality of (1) to (3) in English to the absence of "inclusion" from the list of concepts relevant to sentences which mention body parts: the grammaticality of (4') suggests that the same concept is valid in English and in French. The problem is why this concept is associated with (1) through (4) in French but only with (4) in English. But this problem is purely syntactic.

3.2 Tellier's (1988) Predication Hypothesis

3.2.1 According to Tellier, IP hinges not on (anaphoric) A-binding, but on (quantificational) A-bar binding and Predication. Ns such as *père* 'father', *bras* 'arm', or parts of a whole assign an 'inalienable possession' theta-role to their complement. An empty category in the complement position counts as a variable bound by an operator within the SPEC,DP position, comparable to the SPEC,CP position in the clause. The operator receives a referential index via Predication, producing structures like (26):

(26) NP_i ...[$_{DP}$ OP_i D N t_i]

The phenomenon of parasitic gaps supports the hypothesis of a parallelism between CP and DP:

(27) a. ?Un livre que j'ai aimé avant de lire.
Un livre$_i$ [$_{CP}$ OP_i [$_{CP1}$ que [j'ai aimé t_i]] [avant de [$_{CP2}$ OP_i [PRO lire t_i]]

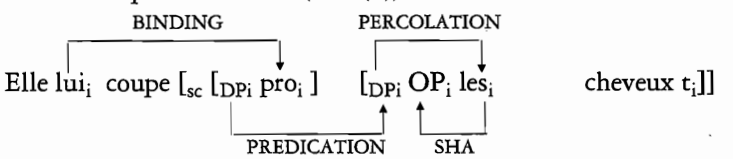
b. Quelqu'un$_i$ dont le bras est plus long que la jambe
Quelqu'un$_i$ dont [$_{DP}$ Op$_i$ le bras t$_i$] est plus long que [$_{DP}$ Op$_i$ la jambe t$_i$].

IP constructions would be parallel to the "easy to please" structure (28), where an operator within CP is identified by the subject of the matrix clause:

(28) Mary is easy to please
Mary$_i$ is [$_{AP_i}$ easy [$_{CP}$ Op$_i$ [$_{IP}$ PRO to please t$_i$]]]

More exactly, (2) is associated with structure (29). A verb like *prendre* 'take' or *couper* 'cut' subcategorizes optionally for a small clause (sc). The DP subject of the sc (the chain *lui* - pro) transmits a predication index to the DP predicate. The index percolates from DP to D, which transfers it to the operator in SPEC,DP by Specifier-Head agreement (SHA):

(29) Elle lui coupe les cheveux. (=cf. (2))



3.2.2 Without denying that an empty category in SPEC,DP may be interpreted as an operator under certain conditions, I claim that it cannot be interpreted as such in structures (1) and (3).

(i) Wherever the existence of a wh-element in Comp or of a clear quantificational intepretation makes the existence of an operator in DP plausible, English and French do not differ from each other. The sentences in (30) are parallel to those in (26):

(30) a. ?A book [which I liked t] before [reading t]
b. ?Someone I like [the legs of t] better than [the arms of t]

And DP may contain a generic operator in both languages:

(31) a. [OP le bras t] est une partie importante [du OP corps t]
b. [OP the arm t] is an important part of [OP the body t]

If, as these facts suggest, where SPEC,CP contains an operator in French it also contains one in English, the hypothesis of an A-bar chain within DP could account for (4), where the two languages don't differ, but not for (1) through (3), where they do. Moreover, the hypothesis according to which (2) has a structure of type (28) also predicts the grammaticality of (2'), since (28) also exists in English.

(ii) Predication structures are exempt from the lexical constraints which bear upon IP. Stative verbs which don't pose any problem for (28) are unaceptable in (2):

(32) a. Je lui pince/*aime/*reconnais la main (cf. (2))
b. John is easy to pinch/like/recognize (cf. (28))

And unlike IP, an NP extracted from another nominal by wh-movement does not necessarily denote a body part:

(33) a. Un garçon dont elle a pincé les fesses/le fils/la veste
b. Elle lui a pincé les fesses/*les fils/*la veste (=(11))

(iii) 'Long distance' binding of a variable by an operator is possible, but the relation between "possessor" and body part is strictly local:

(34) a. Quelqu'un$_i$ dont il a promis [d'epouser [la fille t_i]]
b. *Je lui$_i$ ai promis de [prendre [la main t_i]]

(iv) The contrast in (35) suggests that quantified DPs have a referential value which the corresponding IP nominal lacks:

(35) a. Il a levé les (*beaux) yeux
b. Un garçon dont elle admire les (beaux) yeux.

4. My new theory of IP (i) adopts the DP structure posited by Tellier, (ii) retains the analysis of IP as based on anaphoric binding, (iii) attributes the IP contrast between French and English to a syntactic characteristic of the determiner and (iv) eliminates the auxiliary hypotheses of section 2.2.

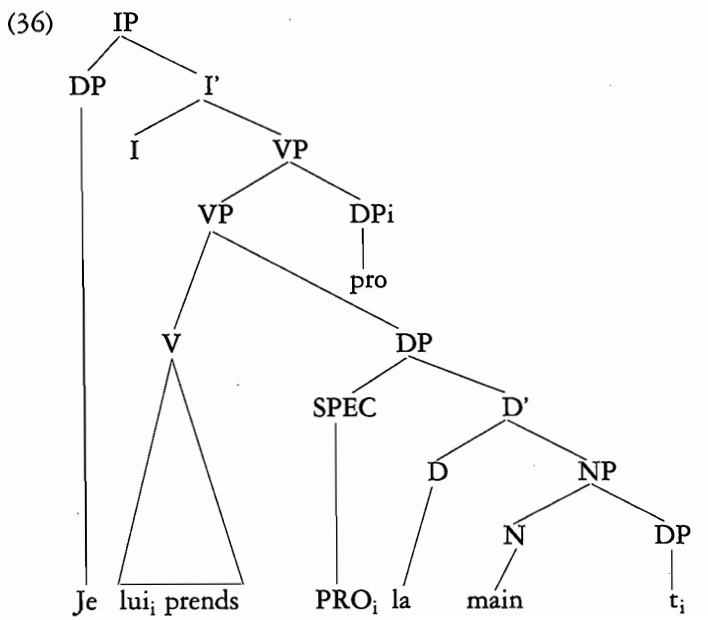
4.1 *The syntactic structure*

Let us keep structure (26), replacing the operator in SPEC,DP by a PRO anaphor:

(26') NP_i ... [$_{DP}$ PRO_i D N t_i]

The D-structure of (2) is as in (36), which contains two A-binding configurations in addition to the (lui$_i$,pro$_i$) chain: on one hand, PRO_i in SPEC,DP binds a trace; on the other, PRO_i itself is controlled by DP_i:

(36)



4.2. *The parameters*

I propose that SPEC,DP is an A'-position in (37) but an A-position in (38):

(37) l'homme dont j'aime [$_{DP}$ OP_i les yeux t_i]

(38) Elle lui a fermé [$_{DP}$ PRO_i les yeux t_i] d'un baiser

The A or A' status of SPEC,DP would depend on the referential status [± R] of D:

(39) SPEC,DP is part of an A'-chain if D has [+R] referential features.

The determiner *les* would be interpreted as [+R] in the quantification structure (37) and as [-R] in the binding structure (38). If we assume, on one hand, that the [±R] status of the determiner fixes the [±R] interpretation of DP, and, on the other, that only a [+R] DP allows a descriptive adjective, this analysis of (38,39) predicts the contrast in (40):

(40) a. l'homme dont j'aime [OP_i les (beaux) yeux t_i]

b. Elle lui a fermé [PRO_i les (*beaux) yeux] d'un baiser

The difference between French and English with respect to IP would be reduced to a difference in the status of the definite article: the definite determiner in English is always [+R], whereas it is [±R] in French.

In previous work, I proposed that the definite determiner is not a pronoun in English. However, *the* belongs to the same morphological paradigm as *this* or *that*, which are pronominal. Moreover, *the* was an invariable relative pronoun in Old English and its status in modern English may not be so different.

Following Tasmowski and Verluyten (1982), I distinguish deictic pronouns, which are always referential, from grammatical pronouns, which contain non-referential pronominal features. Although the English definite determiner is not a demonstrative like *this* and *that*, I assume that it shares with the relative pronouns *what*, *who*, etc. the feature [+D] (=deictic), which entails the [+R] (=referential) interpretation of the determiner and the operator status of any element in SPEC, DP, according to (39). French determiners, on the contrary, may also be [-D] and therefore [-R].

The [-R] interpretation of French determiners would correlate with their grammatical gender feature. The contrast in (41) shows that gender is grammatical in French DPs but referential in English DPs: while the feature 'masculine' of the specifier *son* in (41a) does not prevent the pronoun from having a feminine binder, the possessive pronoun in (41b) must have the same gender feature as its binder:

(41) a. Chaque fille$_i$ a pris [NP son$_i$ sac].
f. m. m.

b. Every girl$_i$ took [her$_i$ bag]
f. f.

The well-formedness status of structures (1) to (3) would depend on the existence in the language of an article bearing grammatical features, compatible with the interpretation of an empty category in SPEC, DP as an anaphor.

4.3 *Lexical constraints*

Since A-binding relates two argumental positions, the hypothesis that IP depends on A-binding entails that PRO_i and NP_i are arguments in (36). However, neither t_i nor NP_i are arguments at D-structure.

I assume that a [+concrete] N does not assign theta-roles, and therefore t_i is not the argument of N in (36), but rather an element adjoined to NP. The fact that French uses the same genitive pronouns, *en* and *dont,* to bind the trace of an adjunction to VP in (42a) and a trace in DP in (42b) would be explained by the identical status of both traces:

(42) a. (i) l'homme $dont_i$ [CP je parle t_i]
(ii) $j'en_i$ parle t_i
b. (i) l'homme $dont_i$ j'ai vu [$_{DP}$ la main t_i][5]
(ii) $j'en_i$ ai vu [$_{DP}$ la main t_i]

DP_i is an adjunction to VP, of the form *à NP*. Like all adjunctions, it is optional, as in (43a) or (43b). It only becomes obligatory where there is an anaphor or a variable to bind, as in (43c) or (45c) below, respectively.

(43) a. Je (lui) prends sa bicyclette
b. Je (lui) parle
c. Je *(lui) prends la main

I propose that DP_i is a place complement which determines, by means of control, the interpretation of the chain (PRO_i, t_i) as a place too.[6]

The hypothesis that a place may have the feature [+human] is necessary independently of IP. According to Bouchard (to appear), the experiencer NP in psych structures like (44) is a place:

(44) a. $Marie_i$ fait peur a $Jean_j$ ($Source_i$, $Goal_j$)
b. $Jean_i$ a peur de Marie ($Place_i$)

In Gueron (1986), I attributed the same place status to *there* in (45a), *Marie* in (45b) and *lui* in (45c): the location functions as an existential operator which binds an indefinite NP interpreted as a variable:

(45) a. There is a problem
b. Marie has brothers/a cold/nice eyes
c. Je lui_i crois [t_i un amant dan chaque port][7]

The identification of t_i and DP_i in (36) as adjunctions is compatible with the hypothesis that IP relies on A-binding only if adjunctions may acquire argument status in the course of a derivation. I propose that such change of status is possible within the conditions specified in (46):

(46) (i) An adjunction is *syntactically* integrated in the argumental structure of IP if it is T-marked (see Guéron and Hoekstra 1989), i.e. if it is governed by T+V or coindexed with T+V.

(5) On *dont* see Godard (1988).
(6) The intuition that the possessor in IP is a place is also shared by Coupas (ms.).
(7) See Ruwet (1982), chapter 5.

(ii) An adjunction is *semantically* integrated in the argumental structure of XP if it plays a role in the event structure (E-structure) of XP.[8]

I assume that in French only NPs introduced by the (abstract or phonologically realized) preposition *à* may satisfy (46i), *à* being the only locative P transparent to government of NP by T+V. In (36), the syntactic integration of the adjunctions is done by T-marking: DP_i is T-marked by V+T from the INFL position. PRO_i acquires T-marking either indirectly, by agreement with D, whose maximal projection DP is T-marked by V, or indirectly by inheriting T-marking from NP_i via control.

Control of PRO by DP_i associates (36) with the following partial interpretation:

(47) The place where body parts attach has the same referent as the place where the event denoted by VP takes place.

(47) represents the core of IP: in these structures, the human body is interpreted as a geographical place where an event identified as the transition from one spatial configuration to another takes place. (47) accounts for the contrasts in (11). In order for the body to be identified as a place, the spatial transition can only affect a part of this body: any other Theme would extend beyond the boundaries of the place in the course of its trajectory. Thus, if I take somebody's *hand*, in the only interpretation relevant to IP, the whole action takes place within the borders defined by that body. But if I take his/her *daughter* or *coat*, the physical separation between an entity's body and its daughter or clothing entails that the movement of the Theme in the space/event necessarily extends beyond the boundaries of its body. Then interpretation (47) fails and the sentence is not acceptable.

The rules in (48) and (49) define the locative aspect of a sentence from the syntactic position of the integrated place with respect to VP. (48) defines an *extensional* locative aspect and (49) a *punctual* locative aspect:

(48) If the place minimally c-commands VP at S-structure, the place has a spatial extension, and the spatial borders of the place coincide with the initial and final spatial boundaries of the event denoted by the VP.

(49) If the place does not c-command VP, it does not have a spatial extension and it coincides with either the initial spatial boundary of the event or its final boundary.

A place which is not integrated within the E-structure of the sentence functions as an operator having under its scope either a VP, as in 'I live in Paris' or an indefinite NP, as in (45a- c).

Benefactive datives are [+human] places subject to (48). [+human] places may have a spatial extension, either geographic, if perceived from the outside, as in (2), or

(8) (46ii) permits the interpretation of an adjunction to an N which denotes an event, like *destruction*, as a semantic argument.

psychological, if perceived from the inside as a container of emotions or feelings, as in (44b).

(50) below satisfies (48): the place has a psychological extension and the event denoted by VP has initial and final spatial boundaries, those described by the trajectory of a hand in space. The sentences in (51), on the other hand, do not satisfy (48): (51a) because an intransitive verb denotes an activity without a final spatial boundary, (51b) because an unaccusative verb denotes an event without an initial spatial boundary, and (50c) because VP denotes a state, which does not have any spatial boundary at all:[9]

(50) Jean lui a frappé son fils

(51) a. *Marie lui court
b. *Marie lui arrive
c. *Marie lui reconnaît Jacques

The acceptability of the sentences in (52), which contain the same verbs as those in (51), shows that the constraints at work in (51) are interpretive rather than lexical. (52a) is acceptable because the event denoted by VP has a final spatial boundary, in agreement with (48), and (52b) is acceptable because the dative pronoun itself functions as a final boundary (Goal), in accordance with (49). In (52c) the place is not subject to (48) on (49), but functions as an existential operator, as in (45c):

(52) a. Marie lui court les cent mètres
b. Il lui_i arrive un malheur t_i
c. Je lui_i reconnais [t_i des qualités]

A structure with an integrated place is usually subject either to (48), like the benefactive structure (50), or to (49), like the psych structure (44a). IP structures have the unique property of being subject both to (48) and (49).

In (36), DP_i, which c-commands VP, is subject to (48), whereas PRO_i, which does not c-command VP, is subject to (49). Since the referent of DP_i is identical to that of PRO_i, according to (47), it must be situated at one of the spatial boundaries of the event and yet encompass its initial and final boundaries. The transitive sentence (36) satisfies this double requirement: the place is located at the initial spatial boundary of the event while encompassing its entire spatial expanse. An unaccusative sentence like (53b) may satisfy (49): here the place of the action and its initial boundary define a single spatial point without an extension:

(53) a. tourne [$_{DP}$ PRO la tête t] lui (D-structure)
b. Il_j tourne [$_{DP}$ PRO la tête t] t_j

The rules in (48), (49) require that the place and the event have the same locative aspect, whether extensional or punctual. The contrast between (53a) and (54) follows from this constraint: in (54), the event has a spatial extension, but the place is reduced to a single point, creating an incoherent interpretation:

(9) For a distinction between event and state, see, for example, Vendler (1979).

(54) *Il lave la tête

(55), derived from (53a) by raising the direct object should be equally excluded: the place has a spatial extension, while the VP denotes a punctual action:

(55) a. La tête lui tourne b. [$_{DP}$ PRO la tête t] lui$_j$ tourne t t$_j$

(55) is excluded, like (51b), if the event is located within a geographical space external to the body. But it is acceptable if the place is interpreted as a container of feelings (cf. (44b)), and the action as a metaphorical process, an endless spinning around of the theme which fills the mental container from one end to the other. This interpretation creates an extensional locative aspect which satisfies (48).[10]

Locative aspect is to be distinguished from temporal aspect: (56a) has a punctual temporal aspect and (56b) a durative temporal aspect. But in both cases, the event stretches over space, satisfying (48):

(56) a. Je lui prends la main b. Je lui brosse les cheveux

And (53b), in spite of its extensional locative aspect, does not have, as a description of a state, any temporal extension.

3.4. (4) and (4') would be associated with the predication structure (57): a locative PP adjoined to VP is integrated within the argumental structure, and an animated NP identifies an operator within SPEC,DP. In future work, I will show that the interpretation of (56) is analogue to that of (36): the body part is the Theme and the animated NP is the Place:

(56) Fido bit John$_i$ [[$_{PP}$ on [$_{DP}$ Op$_i$ the$_i$ leg t$_i$]]

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(10) In "Spleen", Baudelaire appeals explicitely to the locative perspective to which I attribute the well-formedness of (55), according to which the human skull is seen as a container filled with objects:

Un gros meuble à tiroirs encombré de bilans,
...
Cache moins de secrets que mon triste cerveau.
C'est une pyramide, un immense caveau,
Qui contient plus de morts que la fosse commune.

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