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Roles and non-unique definites

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1. Introduction¹

The basic meaning of the definite article in English has often been analyzed as unique identifiability, that is, *the* indicates that the speaker presumes the addressee is able to pick out the unique referent of the definite description (Chafe 1994, Givón 1984, Gundel et al. 1993, Hawkins 1991, Hintikka and Kulas 1985, Kadmon 1990, Lambrecht 1994, Löbner 1985, Russell 1905, Searle 1969, inter alia). Nevertheless, researchers have long known about a class of NPs with *the* that seems to pose a serious difficulty for any theory which claims that uniqueness is a general characteristic of definite NPs. Several examples of this sort are shown in (1):

- (1) a. Towards evening we came to **the bank** of a river.
[from Christophersen 1939:140]
b. The boy scribbled on **the living-room wall**. [from Du Bois 1980:232]
c. Switch **the light** on. [from Löbner 1985:307]

The article is perfectly felicitous in each of the sentences in (1) even though rivers have two banks (1a), most living rooms have four walls (1b), and many rooms have more than one light (1c). These definite descriptions appear to be exceptions to the uniqueness requirement associated with *the* because they do not refer to uniquely identifiable individuals.

In this paper, however, I will argue that definite descriptions such as the ones in (1) do in fact refer uniquely and thus, do not represent counterexamples to the uniqueness requirement. I agree that these NPs do not refer to unique individuals. My claim is that they refer to unique 'role' functions rather than to any of the multiple potential individual instantiations ('values') of the roles. The paper is structured as follows: in section 2, I summarize the findings of other studies that treat these sorts of definite descriptions. In section 3, I present the analysis of the data in terms of (unique) roles within frames and show that these NPs do not constitute a special class of definites—as sometimes claimed (e.g. Kadmon 1987:187)—since the use of *the* to introduce roles is actually quite common. In the final section, I briefly suggest that although NPs such as (1) are not ultimately a problem for uniqueness theories of definiteness, other evidence does exist against the systematic uniqueness of definite descriptions.

2. Other Studies

Several researchers point to the existence of facts such as (1) but do not offer a solution to the questions they raise for uniqueness.² Christophersen (1939:140)

even calls them "strange" and talks about "the illogicality of the *the*-form" in these cases. Other studies, however, make insightful contributions towards the analysis of these facts (although none gives a completely satisfying account). Du Bois observes that the referents of these definite NPs "are often those which come in small symmetrical sets as part of a well-defined frame" (Du Bois 1980:233), e.g. four walls typically figure in the 'room frame' (1b). This observation is supported by the fact that some of the most frequently cited cases of apparently non-unique definites involve terms for body parts, which often come in small, well-defined sets that are part of the 'body frame': *Lee kissed Pat on **the** cheek; The dog bit him on **the** finger;* etc.³ The examples below in (2), (7), (9) and (10) provide evidence that it is not necessary for these referents to come in small symmetrical sets; however, my own account of the data, in section 3, will follow Du Bois in making crucial use of frames. Du Bois also makes the important point that the definite NPs in (1) are used in contexts where the exact identity of the particular referent within the small set does not matter. A speaker would only utter the sentence in (1b) when it makes no difference to the addressee which one of the four walls was scribbled on.

Du Bois treats the NPs in (1) as referring to particular, though non-uniquely identifiable referents (whose complete identity is considered superfluous). In contrast, Löbner (1985:304-307) argues that sentences such as those in (1) refer only to "abstract situations" and that the definite NPs in question are "not really referential", but rather, generic (Löbner 1985:304). In a sentence such as (1c), *Switch the light on* (spoken, say, in a room with three lights), *the light* refers not to a concrete (non-unique) token but rather to an abstract (unique) type. Like Löbner, Ojeda (1993) maintains that these definite NPs do not contravene the uniqueness requirement. But Ojeda (1993:247) rejects Löbner's notion of an abstract situation, proposing instead that a sentence such as *John was hit on the arm* is "not about any one of John's two arms, but rather about John's unique *group* of arms" (Ojeda 1993:249; italics in the original). I agree with both Löbner and Ojeda that the definite NPs in (1) do not directly refer to particular individual entities, but it seems incorrect to analyze these NPs as having generic reference or as referring to groups. Ojeda himself notes that it would not be natural to say *John was hit on the arm* if, in fact, John had been struck on both arms, i.e. on the group of arms.⁴ I will also argue in the next section that the notions of 'abstract situation' and 'group' do not supply the proper constraints for predicting which NPs with *the* can (or cannot) be used felicitously in a manner similar to the definites in (1).

One of the most detailed analyses of these apparently non-unique definite NPs is presented in Birner and Ward (1994). Unlike Löbner and Ojeda, Birner and Ward (1994:93) claim that sentences such as *Could you please open **the** window?* (uttered in a room with three equally salient windows) and *Take **the** elevator to the sixth floor* (uttered by a hotel concierge to a guest in a hotel with four elevators) do violate the uniqueness requirement. They conclude that "uniqueness is not a necessary condition for the felicitous use of the definite [article]" (Birner and Ward 1994:95). In effect, they recast Du Bois' analysis in terms of Relevance theory,

arguing that the definite article may be used to refer to a non-unique referent as long as there is "no relevant basis for differentiating it from other referents denoted by the NP" (Birner and Ward 1994:101). Thus, at a table containing four pitchers of milk, it is possible to say *Please pass **the milk*** (their example 10) as long as no individual container of milk can be distinguished from any other container in a way that might be relevant for the purposes of the exchange, i.e. as long as it makes no difference which pitcher of milk is passed. If the pitchers of milk can be distinguished in a way that might be relevant—for example, if two contain whole milk and two contain skim milk—then the non-unique definite becomes infelicitous (Birner and Ward 1994:97).

Birner and Ward (1994:97-98) also attempt to specify the types of definite descriptions that can be used with non-unique reference. They suggest that these uses generally occur with NPs whose heads are mass nouns (*the milk*) or plural nouns, e.g. *Pass **the rolls*** (which can be used to request a single basket of rolls at a dinner table containing three—undifferentiated—baskets of rolls). Furthermore, they claim that non-unique definite descriptions with singular countable head nouns can only occur in a highly restricted class of cases, namely, NPs referring to locations, e.g. *I spent a week in **the hospital***; *I need to go to **the bank***. In support of this claim, they note that in the aforementioned dinner table scenario it would not be appropriate to say *Pass **the roll***, using a count noun in the singular form, even if the speaker just wants one roll (because a roll, presumably, is not a location).⁵

Let us examine some of Birner and Ward's arguments more closely. First, although non-unique definite descriptions with singular count nouns do commonly refer to locations, it is easy to find examples that do not. For instance, NPs involving kinship terms are standard cases in the literature on exceptions to uniqueness, e.g. *He was **the son of a poor farmer*** (Löbner 1985:304; also cited in Kadmon 1987:182). This sentence does not imply that *He* was the only son of the farmer (other kinship terms can be found in note 2 and in example 3 below). Consider also the data in (2):

- (2) a. No problem, I'll get **the maid** to do it.
 b. Waiter, I demand to see **the menu**!
 c. I read it in **the paper** this morning.

The sentence in (2a) may be used in either a hotel or a home in which there are several maids; (2b) would be felicitous in a situation where both the speaker and the waiter can see an entire stack of menus on the counter; and (2c) is possible even if the speaker reads several newspapers every day. However, none of these nouns designates a location.

Next, although Birner and Ward's argument that the various potential referents of a non-unique definite description must not be relevantly differentiable seems true in most cases, this requirement may not be strictly necessary, as suggested by (3):

- (3) In January, Patricia Arquette hit the big time ... And Arquette, **the granddaughter** of comic Cliff Arquette and sister of actress Rosanna, has proven to be the real thing. [LAT 3/9/93 p.F1]

Patricia Arquette is not the unique granddaughter of Cliff, but the difference between her and Rosanna is indeed relevant in this context (for one thing, Patricia is highly topical but Rosanna is not). As Du Bois (1980:235) observes, even when they come in small, well-defined sets (e.g. the set of someone's grandchildren), the differences between human beings are generally highly salient.

Finally, do the facts we have been discussing really represent instances of non-unique definite descriptions, as Birner and Ward argue? We have already mentioned that Löbner (1985) and Ojeda (1993) do not consider this to be the case. Ojeda (1993:251) offers the contrast in (4) as evidence that the uniqueness requirement on the use of *the* remains in force in these examples:

- (4) a. John was hit on an arm and John was not hit on an arm.
b. ?John was hit on the arm and John was not hit on the arm.

Since indefinites are not associated with uniqueness implications, (4a) is not a contradictory statement because each conjunct is understood as predicating information about a different one of John's arms. However, the sentence in (4b) is quite odd, presumably because it makes contradictory predications about the same referent. Only one referent for *the arm* must be therefore available in the context of (4b)—in other words, the referent of *the arm* is unique. If this referent is not one of John's individual arms (assuming John has two arms, then neither one is unique) nor the group consisting of John's two arms (as Ojeda argues), then what kind of referent is it? I shall address this question in the next section.

3. Roles

An important, though often overlooked, use of the definite article is in setting up 'role' functions ('value-free' interpretations of NPs, in the terminology of Barwise and Perry 1983:150-151). When a NP designates a role, it refers to a fixed property, not to a particular individual. The 'value' taken by the role—the individual instantiating the role—is not fixed; typically, it varies from one occasion to another (Fauconnier 1994:40). Whether a definite description refers to a role or a value depends on the context in which the description occurs, as illustrated in the following sentences:

- (5) a. The President is elected every four years.
b. The President is giving a speech tonight.

In (5a), the NP *the President* is most likely to be interpreted as a role designating the property of 'being President'. This property remains constant regardless of which

individual happens to fill the role at any given time. In (5b), the same NP is most likely to be interpreted as designating not a role but a single value of the role 'President', that is, the particular individual filling the role at the time of utterance (for more on roles and definite descriptions, see Fauconnier 1994:39ff., Epstein forthcoming).

Crucially, for our purposes, it is a typical characteristic of roles to have multiple potential instantiations. For instance, the role of 'President' may be instantiated by a range of individual values, such as Lincoln, Truman, Clinton, etc. In general, only one value of a role will apply in any given context (relevant contexts can be delimited by a variety of parameters, e.g. time, place, etc.). To illustrate, for the year 1864, the value of the role 'President' can only be Lincoln; in 1946, it must be Truman; and so on (assuming, of course, that we are talking about U.S. Presidents). We shall see below, however, that it is also possible for a role to have multiple instantiations in a single context.

Definite descriptions frequently refer to roles representing stereotypical elements within cognitive frames (in the sense of Fillmore 1982). For example, talking about a race, one may say *The winner will receive \$100*. In this sentence, no particular person can be identified as the winner at the time of utterance, yet the definite article is appropriate in the NP *the winner* because its referent is a role which is uniquely identifiable thanks to knowledge of the 'race frame', i.e. everyone knows that a race has a unique winner. In fact, speakers commonly opt to employ a definite article (as opposed to, say, an indefinite article) precisely as a means of indicating that a NP should be interpreted as referring to a role instead of an individual value:

- (6) Recently it has become possible to buy space in someone else's womb, and we are promised that embryos, and tissues grown from them, are soon to be available from **the catalogue**. [NYT 1/23/99 p.A19]

In this passage, the definite article signals that *the catalogue* is to be read as a role which is uniquely identifiable as a salient aspect of the 'commercial event frame' (evoked by mention of *buy*). The referent of this NP cannot be read as a uniquely identifiable individual because, at present, there are no catalogues that sell human embryos or tissues (nor had any specific catalogue been previously mentioned). Notice that the indefinite *a catalogue* could also have been selected in this context, but then the NP would be construed as an unidentifiable, arbitrary instance of the type 'catalogue'.

Now that the main elements are in place, I turn next to the analysis of the definite descriptions presented in (1) and throughout section 2. My principal claim is that each of these NPs refers to a salient role within a frame. The role itself is uniquely identifiable since the frame to which it belongs is part of the general background knowledge shared by all members of the speech community. The uniqueness requirement on use of the definite article is therefore met in these NPs.

What makes these data especially interesting is that the (unique) roles occur in situations in which they can take more than one individual value, i.e. multiple potential instantiations of the roles are available in a single context. The existence of non-unique values of the role does not, however, give rise to infelicities in the use of the definite descriptions since the precise identity of the actual individual satisfying the description does not matter. By saying, for instance, *The boy scribbled on the living-room wall* as in (1b) or *I demand to see the menu!* as in (2b)—instead of *The boy scribbled on a living-room wall* or *I demand to see a menu!*, with the indefinite article—we indirectly access an entity of relatively low salience (a value whose precise identity is of little importance) via the direct mention of a highly salient entity, the role, which itself is very relevant. Choosing to mention the role instead of the value is a strategy which focuses on the conventionalized and highly stereotypical aspects of a situation rather than the specific details.

This analysis in terms of roles within frames provides an explanation of the 'relational' nature of the entities commonly found in these definite descriptions. Du Bois, Löbner (1985:305-306), Kadmon (1987:186), Ojeda (1993:250) and others have noted that, in these cases, there is an 'association' of some sort between the referent of the definite NP and some other entity present in the context: "the reference ... is partly identifiable due to association with a specific object" (Du Bois 1980:233). For example, a wall is associated with a room, a menu is associated with a restaurant, a body part is associated with a person, etc. Within the present analysis, the association in question is characterized as the link between the role and the frame of which it is a stereotypical element. We are able to say such things as *The boy scribbled on the living-room wall* because the 'room frame' contains a slot (role) for four walls; it is possible to say *I demand to see the menu!* because a menu is a typical aspect of any meal in a restaurant; *I read it in the paper this morning* (2c) refers to the newspaper as a stereotypical role in a 'mass media frame' (in contrast to other media, e.g. the television, the radio, etc.). The rest of the examples in this paper can be explained in parallel fashion.⁶

Treating these definite descriptions as referring to stereotypical roles within frames allows us to explain certain constraints on their use. In particular, when such NPs do not designate salient roles, they cannot be used felicitously even in situations in which the exact identity of the speaker's intended referent is not relevant. To illustrate, let us return to Birner and Ward's example of the dinner table with three baskets of rolls. As they point out (Birner and Ward 1994:97-98), in such a situation, it is possible to say *Pass the rolls* (with a plural noun) but it would be strange to use the singular form *Pass the roll* (even if the speaker wants only one roll and it does not matter which one). Under the account I am proposing here, the reason is that the 'dinner table frame' contains a salient, uniquely identifiable role for a set (i.e. a basketful) of rolls (plural) but not for an individual roll (no individual roll is salient in this context, and we do not typically find a single roll on the table). In contrast, the infelicity of the singular *Pass the roll* cannot be explained under the accounts of Löbner or Ojeda since this sentence should be capable of referring to either an

abstract situation (Löbner 1985) or a group of rolls (Ojeda 1993), in the same way as *Pass the rolls* (or *John was hit on the arm*, etc.).⁷

Birner and Ward (1994:99) reject the need to invoke the notion of frames in analyzing these data. They cite the facts in (7) as evidence against the frame analysis:

- (7) a. The first thing we did upon arriving in Santiago was to go to **the park** and have a relaxing picnic lunch.
 b. Somebody left their shopping cart outside here where it could roll into a car ... I'll just leave it up front near **the cash register**.
 c. When I was six years old, I had to spend a night in **the hospital**, and I was terrified.

They note that (7a) (their example 16a) is "felicitous despite the fact that there is typically more than a single park within a given city" (Birner and Ward 1994:99). As this remark shows, though, a park does represent a stereotypical element (a role) within the 'city frame'. And because it is not relevant which exact park the speaker went to, *the park* in (7a) turns out to be nice illustration of a (unique) role (with multiple potential values) in a frame. Regarding (7b) (their 17), they state: "bringing in a shopping cart from outside and leaving it nearby is not a prototypical event with respect to any plausible frame for a cash register" (Birner and Ward 1994:99). This argument is flawed because the relevant frame that guides our understanding of the events in (7b) is not associated with the concept of a cash register but is rather a more general 'store frame' (e.g. a supermarket or a department store), within which the cash register has a salient role. Lastly, they say that in (7c) (their 16b) "there is no mention of a city or any similar scene to give rise to a frame that might plausibly contain a hospital" (Birner and Ward 1994:99). However, the availability of frame-knowledge is not dependent on explicit mention of the frame itself in the surrounding discourse, as shown in (8):

- (8) So we lost the Rams and Raiders. Lost our innocence. But hold **the flowers**. Put away **the handkerchiefs**. Stop **the sobbing**.
 We still have the Rose Bowl, don't we?! [LAT 12/31/95 p.C1]

The three NPs *the flowers*, *the handkerchiefs*, and *the sobbing* are interpreted in (8) as roles linked to a 'funeral frame'. This frame is easily accessed in the context of (8) despite the absence of any overt mentions of a funeral. In the same way, mention of a city is not needed in (7c) to trigger activation of a frame in which *the hospital* is a salient role. Consequently, rather than providing counterevidence, each of the examples in (7) actually supports the roles-in-frames analysis.

Summing up thus far, the facts under investigation in this paper are not exceptions to the uniqueness requirement on definite NPs because they represent unique roles (though not unique individuals). An examination of naturally-occurring

discourse reveals that these definite descriptions are actually quite common and occur in a wider range of circumstances—involving a wider variety of NP types—than suggested by previous research. Let us briefly consider a few more examples, starting with (9):

- (9) "If speaking *for* someone else seems to be a mysterious process," Stanley Cavell has remarked, "that may be because speaking *to* someone does not seem mysterious enough."

Looked at in this way, **the aim of anthropology** is the enlargement of the universe of human discourse. That is not, of course, its only aim—instruction, amusement, practical counsel, moral advance, and the discovery of natural order in human behavior are others; nor is anthropology the only discipline which pursues it. But it is an aim to which a semiotic concept of culture is peculiarly well adapted. [Geertz 1973:13-14; italics in the original]

In the first sentence of the second paragraph of (9), the subject NP *the aim of anthropology* represents a salient role inasmuch as any intellectual endeavor (anthropology or otherwise) typically has an aim. The predicate nominal, *the enlargement of the universe of human discourse*, is a value instantiating the role. In the next sentence, the author explicitly states that the role has more than one value (*That is not, of course, its only aim*) and goes on to list some other aims of anthropology (*instruction, amusement, practical counsel, etc.*). This example is similar to the ones analyzed above in that it is a definite description with several potential referents in a single context. The definite article is felicitous in (9)—and the uniqueness requirement is satisfied—because the referent of the NP in which it occurs is actually a role (not one of the non-unique values), which is uniquely identifiable due to its stereotypical nature.

Role NPs with *the* are frequently found in copular sentences, either in subject position (as in 9) or in predicate nominal position, as in (10). In the latter case, as in the former, the role can have non-unique values:

- (10) While he has rejected a theory, put forward by his former lawyers, that he was driven to insanity by "black rage," Mr. Ferguson argued today that as a black man, he, like other blacks, was **the target** of a conspiracy to destroy him. [NYT 1/27/95 p.A12]

The *target* is a uniquely identifiable role in the frame associated with the concept 'conspiracy', i.e. part of the widely shared background knowledge concerning conspiracies is that they are typically directed against people whom we may describe as 'targets'. This sentence explicitly evokes the existence of more than one target in the context (*he, like other blacks*), so (10) is parallel to (9) insofar as both involve a unique role instantiated by non-unique values.

Notice that expressions asserting non-uniqueness (viz. *That is not, of course, its only aim* and *like other blacks*) are not necessary for the definite descriptions in (9) and (10) to be construed as roles with multiple values. If these expressions were omitted, *the aim of anthropology* (in 9) and *the target of a conspiracy* (in 10) would remain compatible with the interpretations in which several aims of anthropology exist or in which Mr. Ferguson is not the only target of a conspiracy to destroy him. But apart from the overt presence of the expressions of non-uniqueness, (9) and (10) are not significantly different from examples such as (11):

- (11) To avoid such violations of intimacy, one would have to live without love, without friendship. Is that what we want in political leaders? All politicians, not just Presidents, are now fair game for **the prying journalist, the obsessed prosecutor**. [NYT 9/8/98 p.A25]

The definite NPs *the prying journalist* and *the obsessed prosecutor* represent highly salient roles within the frame of the current political situation in American politics (relating to the impeachment of President Clinton). Just as in (9) and (10), we do not assume that either of these definites refers to a unique individual (journalist or prosecutor). Moreover, it would be unproblematic to add the names of several prying journalists or obsessed prosecutors into the text, which would make (11) resemble (9) and (10) even more closely. Therefore, (11) is also similar to (1), (2), (3), (7) and the other standard cases of "non-unique" definites analyzed in this paper—all these examples consist of a definite description whose referent is a unique role with non-unique potential values.

Data such as (9)-(11) are not at all unusual. The fact that NPs with *the* commonly refer to (unique) roles with multiple values lends further plausibility to the principal claim of this paper, according to which the standard cases of "non-unique" definites are roles, too. The main difference between the standard cases (the NPs in 1, the body-part expressions, the kinship terms, etc.) and those in (9)-(11) is that, in the former cases, the speaker uses a role NP to indirectly evoke a value of that role (because while the role is highly relevant, the precise identity of the value does not matter).⁸ The existence of multiple values is inferred from knowledge of the frame to which the role belongs. In the latter cases, the speaker refers directly to a role. The values of the role are either left implicit (but can be inferred from background knowledge, as in 11) or are overtly specified elsewhere in the discourse (as in 9 and 10).

In conclusion, definite descriptions such as (1), (2), (3), (7) are not counterexamples to the uniqueness requirement on definite NPs because they refer to unique roles. In addition, they do not constitute a special class of definites, nor are they "restricted in distribution" (Kadmon 1987:187), because NPs with *the* often refer to roles (see 5a and 6) and many roles have non-unique potential values in a single context (see 9-11). More generally, it is a fundamental characteristic of roles to have multiple instantiations.

4. Postscript

I have argued that none of the definite descriptions examined in the previous sections is an exception to the uniqueness requirement. However, this does not mean that I believe that no counterexamples can be found. In other work, I have attempted to demonstrate the existence of various classes of *the*-NPs whose referents are not uniquely identifiable. In these cases, the article fulfills other functions—it indicates that a referent is highly prominent, that the referent is accessible from a non-canonical point of view, or that the referent should be construed as a role. To illustrate, let us look again at role NPs. The example in (12) contains two NPs with *the* referring to non-unique roles:

- (12) Researchers who reported in July that family history appeared to play a slightly smaller role in breast cancer than previously believed backed off, saying they had erred ... "We took **the wrong number** and multiplied it by **the wrong number**," said Dr. Graham A. Colditz, a co-author of the study. [LAT 10/7/93 p.A20]⁹

The definite article is used in both occurrences of *the wrong number* to indicate that the referents of these NPs are roles (belonging to the frame evoked by the verb *multiplied*). As in the examples discussed previously in this paper, the values of these roles are not uniquely identifiable. In contrast to the previous examples, however, in (12) the roles themselves are also non-unique. These definite descriptions are nonetheless felicitous because the referents are 'accessible' (in the sense of Ariel 1990, Fauconnier 1994, inter alia) by virtue of the frame-based knowledge according to which multiplication problems are stereotypically associated with slots (roles) for two numbers (see Epstein 1996, 1998, forthcoming, for other examples of definite descriptions with non-uniquely identifiable referents).

Sources of Data

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[LAT] = *Los Angeles Times*

[NYT] = *The New York Times*

Notes

1. Thanks to Michael Israel and Ritva Laury for helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper. Any remaining errors are my own responsibility.
2. See, for instance, Kadmon (1987:182-187). Russell, too, was aware of these facts, but avoided them: "Now *the*, when it is strictly used, involves uniqueness; we do, it is true, speak of '*the* son of So-and-so' even when So-and-so has several sons, but it would be more correct to say '*a* son of So-and-so'. Thus for our purposes we take *the* as involving uniqueness" (Russell 1905:481).

3. Body part expressions with a possessive determiner—*She put her hand on his knee, I broke my toe*, etc.—also pose a problem for uniqueness theories (though discussion of possessives falls beyond the scope of this paper).
4. Ojeda nevertheless maintains that the ‘group’ analysis is correct because if John were hit on both arms, then the sentence *John was hit on the arm* would, strictly speaking, still be true (though perhaps not entirely cooperative).
5. I will give an alternative analysis of the infelicity of this example in section 3.
6. Ojeda (1993:250) characterizes the ‘association’ in question as follows: “each group ... must be *inherently* related to a distinct entity” (emphasis added). For example, body parts are inherently related to their possessors, banks are inherently related to rivers (1a), walls are inherently related to rooms, etc. However, this requirement that the relation be an inherent one appears too strong. For example, maids are not an inherent element of a household (2a), not even of a wealthy one (there are wealthy people who do not have maids). Nor is milk an inherent part of a meal (cf. Birner and Ward’s example *Please pass the milk* mentioned above). It is not even clear that a light is an inherent part of a room (1c). Instead, the association need only be a stereotypical or highly conventional one, that is, the referent must be a likely element of a frame.
7. Similarly, it would be strange to say to a clerk in a bookstore: *#I’d like to return this book, the page is torn* (meaning that only one of the pages is torn, but it does not matter which one). In the context of an entire book, an individual page is of such low salience that it cannot be accessed with a *the*-NP. During the question period after my talk, audience members also came up with the following interesting contrast: *The writer had a great idea, so she {#picked up the pen / sat down at the computer}, and began to write* (once again, meaning that although more than one pen or computer are present in the context, any one will do). Computers are—perceptually, at least—much more salient than pens. Nevertheless, why is a pen not salient enough in this context to be felicitous with the definite (at the very least, it would seem to be more salient than a single page in a book or a roll on a table)? Ultimately, it would be helpful in understanding such cases to have independent (psycholinguistic?) evidence of the relative salience of elements within frames.
8. Langacker (1993) discusses many other instances in which we employ an expression referring to a highly salient entity in order to evoke a less salient one.
9. Thanks to Gilles Fauconnier for bringing this example to my attention.

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