On The DEFICIENT/STRONG Opposition in Possessive Systems*

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In this paper, pre-nominal possessive modifiers are compared with post-nominal ones, often neglected in works on possessives. We show that:
• the deficient / strong opposition found in pronominal systems also characterizes possessive systems. There are deficient and strong possessive modifiers. Their syntactic, semantic and morphological properties are similar to those of deficient and strong personal pronouns (section 1.1). Again parallel to personal pronouns, a proper characterization of possessives implies the tripartition into clitic, weak and strong (see Cardinaletti and Starke 1994). In other words, deficient possessives divide into clitic and weak, the former adjoined to D, the latter occurring in a pre-nominal specifier below D (section 1.2). This typology allows us to account for the properties of possessive systems in both Romance and Germanic languages (section 1.3);
• the Italian possessive that is only weak, i.e. the 3rd person plural loro 'their', differs from the other possessives in that it does not display adjectival properties. We suggest that it is a personal pronoun used DP-internally. A similar conclusion holds for cui, a weak relative pronoun. Among modern Romance languages, DP-internal personal

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pronouns are found in Italian and Rumanian, i.e. in those languages which have the corresponding weak oblique personal pronoun (section 2.1-3). DP-internal personal pronouns are very common in Germanic and Slavic languages (section 2.4); 
• with respect to the other possessives, loro and cui also display special properties when the head noun is not realized (section 3) and when they occur with singular kinship nouns (section 4). The study of ellipsis constructions in section 3 leads us to the conclusion that the possessive following the determiner is weak and not strong, despite prima facie morphological evidence to the contrary. The study of singular kinship nouns in section 4 leads us to the conclusion that Italian has clitic possessive modifiers, like e.g. French and Spanish.

1. The possessive system

In languages like Italian, possessive modifiers can appear both in pre-nominal and post-nominal position:

(1) a. la sua casa
    b. la casa sua

    the his/her house his/her

In the pre-nominal position, possessives precede all other modifiers, as shown in (2); in the post-nominal position, possessives follow demonstrative reinforcers such as qui 'here', (3)a vs. (3)b, and precede the complements of the noun, (3)a vs. (3)c (cf. Brugè 1997):¹

(3)a vs. (3)b
(3)c (cf. Brugè 1997):¹

¹. (3)c is grammatical if there is a pause between the complement of the noun (di sintassi) and the possessive, and the latter is focalized. This is the pattern typical of DP-final predicative adjectives, as exemplified by (i) (cf. Cinque 1994:92ff):

(i) a. la loro aggressione all’Albania, brutale
    b. la loro aggressione all’Albania, improvvisa e brutale

    the their aggression against Albania, sudden and brutal

We discuss some instances of post-nominal predicative possessives in sections 1.2 and 3. below.
(2)  a. la sua bella casa
    \textit{the his/her nice house}
    b. le sue due altre probabili goffe reazioni immediate alla tua lettera
        \hfill (Cinque 1994:95)
    \textit{the his/her two other probable clumsy reactions immediate to-the your letter}

(3)a. Questo libro qui suo di sintassi non mi convince.
    \textit{this book here his/her of syntax not me convinces}
    b. *Questo libro suo qui di sintassi non mi convince.
    c. *Questo libro (qui) di sintassi suo non mi convince.

The existence of pairs as in \hfill (1) is consistent with the view that the pre-
nominal and the thematic position of possessives are transformationally related (cf.
Langacker 1968, Kayne 1977, Belletti 1978). The derivation of the sentences in \hfill (1)
is as in \hfill (4):

(4)  a. \textit{[DP la [XP ... [YP caso]k [NP sua] [t]k}
    b. \textit{[DP la [XP sua]i ... [YP caso]k [NP ti] [t]k}

(Notice that the base position of possessives shown in \hfill (4)a ends up to be post-
nominal at Spell-Out due to overt movement of the noun to a functional head
intermediate between N and D, cf. Cinque 1994.)

The existence of both \hfill (1)a and \hfill (1)b could suggest that possessive
movement is optional in Italian. A closer look at these sentences reveals that it is not.

\hfill

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Brugè (1997:293) shows that in Spanish, post-nominal possessives follow post-nominal
demonstratives, which in her analysis have the same location as the Italian demonstrative reinforcer
qui:
\end{flushright}

(ii)  El libro (viejo) este suyo de sintaxis no me convence.
     \textit{the book (old) this his/her of syntax not me convinces}
1.1. Pre-nominal possessives are deficient, post-nominal ones are strong

The transformational relation between the base position and the pre-nominal position of possessives needs to be qualified. The interpretation of *sua* is slightly different in (1)a and (1)b. In (1)b, the possessive is necessarily focalized, and the contrast can be overt, as in (5)a. Post-nominal possessives are also possible when they are coordinated and modified, as in (5)b,c:

(5)a. la casa sua, non tua
    *the house his/her, not yours
b. la casa sua e tua / sua e di Maria
    *the house his/her and yours / his/her and of Mary
c. la casa solo / proprio sua
    *the house only / really his/her

On the other hand, pre-nominal possessives cannot be contrasted, coordinated, nor modified:2

(6)a. *la SUA casa, non tua
b. *la sua e tua / sua e di Maria casa
c. *la solo / proprio sua casa

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2. In the ungrammatical (6)a, the contrast involves the possessive per se. The possessive can however be focalized in order to contrast the whole noun phrase, as in (i):

(i) la SUA casa, non la tua
    *the his house, not (the) your

In apparent conjunctions of pre-nominal possessives, as in *la mia e tua segretaria* 'the my and your secretary', we very probably have a case of backward deletion in the first conjunct, from *la mia segretaria e tua segretaria*, as suggested by Chris Wilder (personal communication). He also observes that *my and your secretary* is considerably better than (39) below in the text and should be analysed in the same way as the Italian example.
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The contrast between (1)a/(6) on the one hand and (1)b/ (5) on the other recalls the well-known contrast between clitic and strong personal pronouns, illustrated in (7):

(7)a. Gianni la conosce.
   John her knows
b. Gianni *LA / *la e sua madre / *solo la conosce.
c. Gianni conosce LEI / lei e sua madre / solo lei.
   John knows her / her and her mother / only her

The analysis of personal pronouns into distinct grammatical classes (cf. Kayne 1977) can be extended to possessives, and the distribution of possessives can be expressed in related terms. In (1)b and (5), the possessive is strong and remains in the base position. In (1)a, the possessive is deficient (cf. Cardinaletti and Starke 1994 for the motivation of this term) and must move to the pre-nominal position before spell-out.

Like any deficient element, the deficient possessive must in fact be licensed in a designated specifier position. Following Picollo (1994:269), the licensing of pre-nominal possessives "can be compared to structural case-assignment to an argument". Since possessives behave as subjects of DPs (cf. Cinque 1980) and since they occupy a very high position in the DP -- they precede all adjectives, see (2) above --, we take the position where deficient possessives are licensed to be a pre-nominal "subject" position, corresponding to specAgrS in the clausal domain. In the spirit of Szabolcsi (1983), (1987), we call it specAgrSNP, where the subscript indicates that we are dealing with the extended projection of a nominal head. (4)b above can be rewritten as (8):

(8) [DP la [AGR SNP sua]i ] ... [YP casa]k [NP ti ] [tk ]

(Notice that Picollo's (1994:276-277) proposal that possessives are in specNumberP and the noun in NumberP cannot be adopted because, as we saw above, the two are not adjacent.)
The semantic properties of possessives support an analysis in terms of the deficient/strong opposition. When occurring in post-nominal position, possessives become restricted to human referents, (9), again parallel to personal pronouns, (10):

(9)a. Il suo_{i} coperchio è molto pratico.  
\[ \text{the his/its lid is very practical} \]

b. Il coperchio suo_{i} è molto pratico.  
\[ \text{the lid is very practical} \]

(10)a. Gianni lo_{i} ha visto.

\[ \text{Gianni him has seen} \]

b. Gianni ha visto lui_{i}.

\[ \text{Gianni has seen him} \]

The interpretation of the possessive modifier is similarly constrained in other contexts. In post-nominal predicative position, most clearly manifested in the context of ne-cliticization as in (11), in the predicate position of e.g. copular sentences, as in (12), and in the isolation context in (13), the possessive is ungrammatical if it refers to an object:

(11) a. (Di libri) ne ho comprati due suoi.

\[ \text{of books [I] ne have bought two his} \]

b. *(Di coperchi) ne ho comprati due suoi.

\[ \text{of lids [I] ne have bought two its} \]

(12) a. Questo libro è suo.

\[ \text{this book is his} \]

b. *(Questo coperchio è suo.

\[ \text{this lid is its} \]

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3. Sentence (9)b is grammatical in the irrelevant reading in which suo means 'appropriato' 'appropriate', and is no longer a possessive. See also È il suo in the idiomatic meaning of 'it is the correct one'.

4. The parallelism between material left in situ by ne-cliticization and predicative elements has been documented by Cardinaletti and Giusti (1991) and Cinque (1991). The parallelism is confirmed by the distribution of possessives in (11) and (12).
   *of which boy is this book? his
   of which saucepan is this lid? its

The interpretation test thus individuates all the positions in (11)-(13) as restricted to strong elements. The pre-nominal position is the only one able to host deficient possessives.

Referential properties of strong/deficient possessives also mirror those of personal pronouns. Deficient possessives may not introduce a new discourse referent. For instance, they cannot be used with ostension, a way of identifying a new discourse referent, whereas no restriction is found on the strong, post-nominal possessive, (14)a vs. (14)b. (15) shows an identical pattern with personal pronouns:

(14) Speaker A: La macchina di chi ti ha investito?  
   The car of whom you has run over?
   a. *Speaker B: La sua macchina.
   b. Speaker B: La macchina sua.  
      the his/her car

(15) a. *Gianni l'ha aiutata.
   b. Gianni ha aiutato lei.  
      Gianni (her) has helped (her)

Finally, morphological evidence from languages different from Italian confirms the different syntactic status of pre- and post-nominal possessives. In Paduan and Spanish, for instance, pre-nominal and post-nominal possessives have a different morphological realisation:5

5. Many Italian dialects have two different paradigms of possessives, cf. Rohlf's (1968) and Poletto (1995). On the obligatory presence of the determiner with post-nominal possessives (as e.g. in Spanish (17)b), see Brugè (1997:3.5.2).
(16) a. el me libro  
    (Paduan)  
    the my book  
    b. el libro mio  

(17) a. mi libro  
    (Spanish)  
    b. el / este libro mio  

The two morphological forms correlate with a different distribution: the former can only appear in pre-nominal position, as in (16)a and (17)a, the latter appears in post-nominal position, as in (16)b and (17)b, and in the other strong positions individuated above, such as predicative and isolation structures:

(18) a. Sto libro ze mio.  
    (this book is mine)  
    whose book is this? mine  

(19) a. Este libro es mio.  
    b. Speaker A: ¿De quién es este libro? Speaker B: Mío.  

As discussed in Poletto and Tomaselli (1994:171), Paduan pre-nominal possessives display the typical properties of deficient elements: among others, they cannot be contrasted and cannot be coordinated, (20), and differ in these respects from the strong, post-nominal

(20) a. *el so gato, no mio  
    (the his cat, not mine)  
    b. *el me e to gato  
    (the my and your cat)  

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6. As seen above for Italian, contrast on the pre-nominal possessive is possible provided that the whole DP is contrasted (judgments due to Paola Benincà, p.c.):

(ii)a. *el ME libro, no tuo  
    b. el ME libro, no el tuo / no el to libro  
    (the my book, not (the) yours / not the your book)
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(21)  

a. el gato suo, no mio  
the cat his, not mine  
b. el gato mio e tuo  
the cat my and your

The same is true for Spanish: pre-nominal possessives cannot be focalized, coordinated, nor modified (cf. Picallo 1994, Brugè 1997:3.4).

In conclusion, the deficient/strong opposition found in pronominal systems also characterizes possessive systems. If possessives are adjectives, as traditionally claimed (see section 2.2 below), this means that what we have found here is pairs of deficient/strong adjectives. The fact that the deficient/strong opposition is found across syntactic categories fits well with the approach in Cardinaletti and Starke (1994), in which the underlying cause of the distinction is a structural difference: Deficient elements are a structural subset of strong elements, regardless of the labels on the structure.

1.2. The tripartition in possessives

Interestingly, the tripartition individuated in personal pronouns (cf. Cardinaletti and Starke 1994) is also reproduced in possessive modifiers. In some languages, beyond the distinction in deficient and strong, two types of deficient possessives exist, so that all the three classes of clitic, weak and strong possessives must be assumed.

In Paduan, for instance, some deficient possessives allow doubling and some do not:7

(22)  

a. so pare de Toni  
his father of Toni  
b. *el so libro de Toni  
the his book of Toni

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7. We thank Paola Benincà for kindly providing the relevant judgments. See also Cinque (1980:fn.15) and Poletto (1995:section 3), where this contrast is also noted.
Doubling is *clitic* doubling. As the following Italian contrast shows, it is possible if the doubling element is the clitic *gli*, but ungrammatical if the doubling element is the weak pronoun *loro* (cf. Cardinaletti 1991:137, Cardinaletti and Starke 1994:section 3.2.2):

(23) a. Gliel’ha dato ai bambini.
   [he] to-him-it has given to-the children

b. *L’ha dato loro ai bambini.
   [he] it has given to-them to-the children

Only the deficient possessive in (22)a is a clitic, presumably adjoined to D⁰. This correlates with the fact that in this case, the possessive does not co-occur with the determiner.⁸ In (22)b, on the other hand, the deficient possessive is weak: it occurs in a lower specifier position, what we have called specAgrSNP above. Doubling is predicted to be ungrammatical.⁹

The analysis we propose here for Paduan (22)a is the same as the one proposed by Picallo (1994:section 5.1) for Spanish pre-nominal possessives, as in (17)a. *So* and *mi* are clitic, adjoined to D⁰. Picallo’s two-step derivation of clitic possessives is in agreement with the general view of clitic placement (cf. Sportiche 1989, Cardinaletti and Starke 1994:section 6.3): the clitic possessive first moves to specAgrSNP as a (deficient) maximal projection; from there, the head of the projection adjoins to D⁰.

Since the implication concerning doubling goes one way only ("doubling implies clitic", but not "clitic implies doubling"), the ungrammaticality of doubling in Spanish (*su padre de él/ella ‘his/her father of him/her’) does not affect the above conclusion.

To conclude the illustration of Spanish facts, we should mention that in Old Spanish and in some modern Spanish dialects, pre-nominal possessives can co-occur with the determiner: *la mi casa* ‘the my house’, *este mi libro* ‘this my book’ (see Picallo 1994:281,fn.14;293,fn.23 and Brugè 1997:Ch.3,fn.35). In the tripartition framework, these are instances of weak possessives.

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⁸ In Paduan, as well as in Italian, determiners are missing with singular kinship nouns. See section 4 for discussion.

⁹ We differ here from Poletto and Tomaselli’s (1994:sect. 2.1) analysis of the Paduan possessives in (16)a and (22)b as also being clitics, adjoined to the head below D. We also reject the same analysis for Italian pre-nominal possessives: they are not clitic, but weak (see below in the text).
Going back to Italian deficient possessives, it is easy to verify that they are weak and not clitic. The fact that possessives co-occur with the determiner is a first hint in that direction, which is confirmed by their behaviour in the contexts of N-to-D-raising studied in Longobardi (1994) and (1995). In these contexts, possessives do not block N-movement nor do they cliticize on the noun as a clitic would: 10

(24) a. Gianni\textsubscript{i} mio \textsubscript{ti}
   \textit{Gianni my}

b. casa\textsubscript{i} mia \textsubscript{ti}
   \textit{house my}

Before closing this section, a few words must be devoted to the following construction, found in both Italian and Paduan. A possessive in post-nominal and predicative position can co-occur with a pronominal of-phrase:

(25) a. il libro suo di lui
   \textit{the book his of him}

b. E' suo di lui.
   \textit{[it] is his of him}

(26) a. el libro suo de ju

b. El ze suo de ju.

We do not take this construction to be an instance of doubling. Contrary to true instances of doubling, (25) and (26) involve strong possessives (as is clear from their distribution, e.g. their occurring in post-nominal position, and, in Paduan, from their morphology), and the possessive and the di-phrase form a constituent (*il libro suo di

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10. Giorgi and Longobardi (1991:Ch.3) phrase the distinction between e.g. Spanish \textit{mi} and Italian \textit{mio} in terms of determiner vs. adjective, seeming to imply, without explicitly stating so, the distinction head vs. phrase which is crucial in our account involving the clitic/weak opposition (for criticism of the determiner-vs.-adicntive analysis, see Giusti 1993:63-66). Giorgi and Longobardi also distinguish between weak and strong possessives. These are however purely distributional notions (cf. Giorgi and Longobardi 1991:158), and differ from our understanding of "weak" and "strong". The two accounts most clearly differ in the treatment of possessives in the ellipsis construction, strong for them, weak for us (see section 3 below).
sintassi di lui vs. il libro di sintassi [suo di lui] 'the book of syntax his of him'). Furthermore, the construction is only possible with 3rd person singular possessives (cf. *E' mio di me [it] is mine of me, *E' vostro di voi [it] is yours of you'), displaying a restriction never found in doubling. Without trying to give a detailed analysis of (25)-(26), we simply notice that, as suggested by Poletto (1995:section 3), this construction should be analyzed as a sort of reduced predicative structure. The fact that the possessive constituent only follows the complement of the noun (*il libro [suo di lui] di sintassi vs. il libro di sintassi [suo di lui] 'the book of syntax his of him', cf. (3c) suggests that it occurs in the DP-final predicative position mentioned in fn.1. The person restriction is probably due to the fact that in Italian and Paduan, only 3rd person singular personal pronouns are marked for gender features, in combination with the disambiguation function of the construction (cf. Belletti 1978:fn.7 – notice that the 3rd person singular possessive suo does not differentiate between masculine and feminine referents, contrary to e.g. English his vs. her).11

1.3. Deficient and strong possessives in French and English

The tripartition seen in Paduan language-externally allows us to make sense of less clear patterns in other languages.

Consider French first. French possessives qualify as deficient. They have reduced forms with respect to the form used in the absence of the head noun: mes livres vs. les miennes 'my books', 'the mine' (cf. section 3.1 below); they are restricted to the pre-nominal, derived position, (27), cannot be coordinated, (28), and can have a non-human referent, (29):12

11. In those Italian varieties in which the 3rd person plural possessive is the same as the 3rd person singular one, the construction is also used to disambiguate number: suo di lui vs. suo di loro 'his of him' vs. 'his (=their) of them' (see Rohlfs 1968:122, fn.6).

12. The pre-nominal deficient form ta can receive contrastive focus. But the contrast does not involve the possessive per se, rather it is the whole noun phrase which is contrasted (cf. fn. 2 and fn. 6 for Italian and Paduan, respectively):

(i) a. C’est TA recette qui est bonne, pas sa recette.
(27)  a. ses livres
      his/her books

      b. * (les) livres ses
      the books his/her

(28)  *Ta et sa recette est tres bonne / sont tres bonnes.
      your and his/her recipe is / are very good

(29)  Ses constituant sont courts. (= de cette phrase)
      its constituents are short (= of this sentence)

At least three facts point to the clitic status of French possessives. First, (in substandard French) they allow doubling:

(30)  a. mon livre à moi
      my book to me

      b. ta maison à toi
      your house to you

      c. ses enfants à lui
      his children to him

The restrictions on possessive doubling are the same as those on personal pronouns: the doubled element can only be a pronoun:13

b. C'est TA recette qui est bonne, pas la sienne.
   it is your recipe that is good, not (the) his (recipe)

13. Full DPs must be right-dislocated, (i), which explains why quantifiers are ungrammatical in (ii):

   (i)  a. Nous avons vu son livre, à ce garçon.
        we have seen his book, to this boy

   b. Son mari est mort, à cette femme.
        her husband is dead, to this woman

   (Kayne 1977:191, fn. 155)
(31) a. son livre à lui
   b. *son livre à Jean
      *his book to him / Jean

(32) a. Il m’a vu moi.
      *he me has seen me
   b. *Il l’a vu Jean.
      *he him has seen Jean

Second, on a par with clitic pronouns, (34), French possessives license floating quantifiers, (33), another construction which distinguishes between clitic and weak elements, as the Italian contrast in (35) shows:

(33) Elle a tué notre chef à tous. (Kayne 1977:189)
    *she has killed our boss to all

(ii) **son livre, à personne
     *his book, to nobody

Right Dislocation also distinguishes between clitic and weak elements. As shown by Italian (iii), Right Dislocation is possible with clitic gli, but impossible with weak loro (cf. Cardinaletti 1991:137 for Left Dislocation):

(iii)a. Il professore non gli ha dato l’autorizzazione, a quello studente.
      the professor not to-him has given the authorization, to that student
   b. *Il professore non ha dato loro l’autorizzazione, a quegli studenti.
      *the professor not has given to-them the authorization, to those students

Sentences like (i) thus support the view that French possessives are clitic. It should however be mentioned that the sentences in (i) are judged rather marginal by our informants.

As expected if Italian and Paduan pre-nominal possessives are weak (see section 1.2. above), the sentences in (i) are ungrammatical in both Italian and Paduan (they are acceptable in the irrelevant reading in which the DP-final prepositional phrase is perceived as an afterthought).
(34) Il nous en offrira à tous. (Kaye 1977:189)
    *he to-us it will-offer to all

(35) a. Gliel’ho detto a tutti.  
    [I] to-him it have said to all
b. *L’ho detto loro a tutti. 
    [I] it have said to-them to all

Third, they display the declension typical of clitic elements, which, in French, do not have gender distinctions in the plural. Compare mon, ma, mes 'myMASC', 'myFEM', 'myPL' with the clitic pronouns le, la, les 'him', 'her', 'them' (vs. the strong pronouns lui, elle, eux, elles 'he', 'her', 'themMASC', 'themFEM'). It is in fact a general property of clitics that they display more syncretic forms than their weak or strong counterparts. Compare the Spanish clitic possessives, which only differentiate number (mi vs. mis 'mysING', 'myPL'), with the strong counterparts, which distinguish four forms (mío, mia, míos, mis). Also compare the dative clitic pronoun gli of spoken Italian, which does not distinguish either gender or number ('to-him' / 'to-her' / 'to-them'), with the fully inflected strong counterparts a lui / a lei / a loro.

    French clitic possessives cliticize to D°. The correlation between being clitic and being ungrammatical with the determiner, seen above in Paduan and Spanish, holds in French too. French possessives do not co-occur with the definite article:

(36) (*le) son livre
    (*the) his book

Finally, notice that French does not have strong possessives. In all positions where strong possessives are required, such as post-nominal, predicative and isolation contexts, a prepositional phrase shows up:

(37) a. un / cet ami *mon / *mien / à moi
    a / this friend *my / *mine / to me
b. Ce livre est *mon / *mien / à moi. 
    this book is *my / *mine / to me
    to whom is this book? *my / *mine / to me
We do not have an explanation for the fact that strong possessives do not exist in French. The reason however cannot be that French does not have adjectival possessives (cf. Kayne 1977:fn.155). The longer forms, which could in principle occur in the contexts in (37), display the typical adjectival declension (*mien, mienne, miens, miennes, etc. 'mineMASC-SING', 'mineFEM-SING', 'mineMASC-PL', 'mineFEM-PL'; see section 3.1 below).

English possessives display similar properties. They only appear pre-nominally, (38), cannot be coordinated, (39), and a pre-nominal possessive referring to a [-human] entity is possible, (40):

(38) a. her book  
b. *(the) book her

(39) *Your and her recipe(s) is / are very good.

(40) Its constituents are short. (= of this sentence)

In predicative and isolation contexts, longer forms are used, which we now take to be strong possessives:

(41) a. her house  
b. This is hers.  

The semantic restriction on strong possessives explains why the English 3rd person neuter possessive its has no strong counterpart to be used in predicative position and in isolation:

(42) a. its roof  
b. *This is its.  
c. *Speaker A: Whose roof is this? Speaker B: Its.

English possessives do not co-occur with determiners, but do not allow doubling:
(43)  a. *the her house  
    b. *her house of Mary

(43)a suggests that English deficient possessives are clitic. Since, as we saw above, the implication concerning doubling goes one way only ("doubling implies clitic", but not "clitic implies doubling"), the hypothesis that English possessives are clitics is compatible with the absence of doubling.\textsuperscript{14}

A final remark concerns the question as to why post-nominal possessives are ungrammatical (*the house her / hers) in spite of the fact that strong forms exist. As a preliminary answer, this restriction could be reduced to the ungrammaticality of *the house John's.

2. Exclusively weak possessives

In Italian, two possessive elements are only weak: the 3\textsuperscript{rd} person plural loro 'their' and the relative cui 'whose'. We will treat them in turn, starting with loro. As we will see, being only weak is not the unique peculiar property of loro and cui. Differently from the other possessives, they do not display adjectival properties.

2.1. The 3\textsuperscript{rd} person plural possessive loro

Like the other possessives, the 3\textsuperscript{rd} person plural possessive loro appears in pre-nominal position, where it precedes the pre-nominal modifiers of the noun, (44)a;

\textsuperscript{14} An alternative analysis is that English deficient possessives are weak and occur in the spec\textit{Agr}\textit{S}_{\textit{NP}} position, with the supplementary hypothesis that the requirement that D be lexically filled is not operative here. For the present concerns, nothing hinges on this choice, and we leave the issue open. What is clearly excluded in the present framework, however, is that the lack of the determiner is explained by moving English deficient possessives to spec\textit{DP} (cf. Giusti 1993:65). Since spec\textit{DP} is not a case-related position, it is not open to deficient phrases. This analysis is however in principle available to full pre-nominal possessives, as in John's book.
however, differently from the other possessives, it cannot appear post-nominally, (44)b:  

(44) a. il loro interessante libro di sintassi  
b. *il libro loro di sintassi  
the their interesting book of syntax

The only contexts in which loro does appear in post-nominal position are those of N-to-D raising (cf. Longobardi 1994 and 1995), provoking a structure where the noun is in D and the possessive in its usual pre-nominal position:  

15. It should be mentioned that post-nominal loro sounds better if the DP is indefinite: *l’amico loro vs. ?(?)un amico loro ‘the / a friend their’. This could be related to the well-known fact that possessives behave differently with definite and indefinite DPs. In many languages, pre-nominal possessives are ungrammatical with indefinite determiners, which require post-nominal possessives: cf. Brazilian Portuguese o meu livro ‘the my book’ vs. *um meu livro / um livro meu ‘a book mine’ (Carlos Mioto, p.c.). We leave this important question aside here.

16. N-to-D movement can also account for the word order in the idiomatic expressions in (i), where loro follows the determinerless head noun:

(i) a. in cuor loro  
in heart their  
b. da parte loro  
on place their

These PPs contrast with (ii), where the determiner is present and loro cannot be post-nominal:

(ii)a. nel loro cuore / *nel cuore loro  
b. dalla loro parte / *dalla parte loro

The prepositional phrases al posto loro ‘at-the place their’ (= if I were them) and dal canto loro (= from their viewpoint) display a post-nominal loro in spite of the presence of the determiner. This unexpected word order is explained by the fact that these expressions are frozen. Al posto loro contrasts with the non-idiomatic noun phrase *il posto loro, which is ungrammatical, and canto is no longer used as a noun with the corresponding meaning.
(45) a. Gianni; loro ti
    - Gianni their

b. casa; loro ti
    - home their

In addition to the post-nominal position exemplified in (44)b, loro is ungrammatical in the following contexts: in post-nominal predicative position, as e.g. the context of ne-cliticization in (46), in the predicative position of (copular, epistemic, causative) small clauses in (47), and in isolation, (48). In all examples, we contrast loro with suo:17

(46) a. (Di libri) ne ho comprati due suoi / *loro.
    of books [I] NE have bought two his / *theirs

b. (Di libri) ne ho comprati due di suoi / *di loro.
    of books [I] NE have bought two of his / *of theirs

c. Ne ho letti di suoi / *di loro.
    [I] NE have read of his / *of theirs

(47) a. Questo ritratto è suo / *loro.
    - this painting is his / *theirs

b. Ritengo questo quadro suo / *loro.
    [I] consider this painting his / *theirs

17. In ne-cliticization, di in front of the predicative possessive is required if the quantifier is absent, as in (46)c. If the quantifier is present, there is free variation among speakers, (46)a,b. The same pattern holds with predicative adjectives:

(i) a. (A proposito di libri di storia), ultimamente ne ho comprati due (di)
    interessanti.

b. (A proposito di libri di storia), ultimamente ne ho comprati *(di)
    interessanti.
    (speaking of books of history), lately [I] NE have bought (two) (of)
    interesting
b'. Ritengo suo /*loro questo quadro.
[I consider his /*theirs this painting

c. Gianni ha fatto sue /*I politici hanno fatto loro quelle istanze.¹⁸
Gianni has made his /*the politicians have made theirs those requests

(48) Speaker A: Di chi è questo libro? Speaker B: Suo /*Loro.
whose book is this? his /*theirs

In these cases, other forms must be used to express a strong 3rd person plural possessor: either the prepositional phrase di loro 'of them', as in (46)a (Di libri, ne ho comprati due di loro), (47)a,b (Questo ritratto è di loro; Ritengo questo quadro di loro) and (48) (Di chi è questo libro? Di loro), or the anaphoric possessive adjective proprio 'own', as in (47)c (I politici hanno fatto proprie quelle istanze 'the politicians have made own those requests'). The result of using di loro in (46)b is indistinguishable from (46)a. On the other hand, there is no grammatical output for (46)c, and the unmarked quantifier alcuni 'some' must be inserted: Ne ho letti alcuni di loro.

In sum: the distribution of loro is restricted to the DP-internal, pre-nominal position of possessives. In the above terms, loro is a deficient element with no strong counterpart. Given its deficient status, loro is able to refer to both human and non-human entities. See (44)a and (49):

(49) la loro facciata principale
the their (= of the buildings) front main

Loro qualifies as a maximal projection and is therefore a weak, not a clitic element. Like other possessives, it does not block N-to-D raising of proper names and nouns like casa, nor does it cliticize onto them (see the examples in (45) above).

¹⁸. The French counterpart of (47)c is grammatical, as expected if the French 3rd person plural possessive leur behaves like the other possessives in displaying adjectival properties (see section 2.2 below):

(ii) Les gens qui ont fait leur cet univers...
the people who have made theirs this universe...
2.2. *Loro* is a weak personal pronoun

The fact that *loro* does not have a strong counterpart could be simply due to a lexical gap. However, this is not the only peculiar property of *loro*. Whereas Italian possessives agree in number and gender with the head noun, *loro* is an invariant form: 19

(50) a. il mio caro amico  
    b. la mia cara amica  
    c. i miei cari amici  
    d. le mie care amiche  

    theSING/PL; MASC/FEM  mySING/PL; MASC/FEM  deSING/PL; MASC/FEM  friend(s)MASC/FEM

(51) a. il loro caro amico  
    b. la loro cara amica  
    c. i loro cari amici  
    d. le loro care amiche

    theSING/PL; MASC/FEM their deSING/PL; MASC/FEM  friend(s)MASC/FEM

Rather than assuming that some possessive modifiers may lack a strong counterpart, we will try to correlate the two properties of *loro* just seen.

Traditionally, possessives are taken to be adjectives (see also Giusti 1993:63-66). The agreement pattern on *mio* in (50) is typical of adjectives, and possessives can be used in predicative positions, once again like adjectives (see (11)-(12) and (46)-(47) above). If possessives are adjectives, *loro* could be taken to be an invariable adjective. However, as noted by Zamparelli (1993), invariable adjectives are restricted to the

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19. No morphological constraint prevents agreement on this lexical form. In Paduan, the homophonous 3rd person plural subject pronoun displays gender-inflected forms:

(i) lori / lore  

    theYMASC/theyFEM

(Benincà 1983:27)
post-nominal position, as in (52)a. They cannot appear pre-nominally, (52)b, where only agreeing adjectives such as *rossa in (52)c are allowed:

(52)  
   a.  il vestito / i vestiti blu  
       *the dress / the dresses blue  
   b.  *la blu bandiera degli avversari  
   c.  la rossa bandiera degli avversari  
       *the blue / redFEM flag of-the enemies  

In order to capture both the fact that loro is only weak and the fact that it is an invariant form, we suggest that loro is a personal pronoun. Support for this hypothesis comes from the homophony with the dative weak pronoun loro found in examples such as (53) (see Cardinali 1991):

(53)  Il professore non diede loro l'autorizzazione.  
       the professor not gave [to] them the-authorisation  

This means that the morpheme loro is a weak oblique pronoun which can function as a possessive (genitive) in the nominal domain and as a dative in the sentential domain.\footnote{Notice that loro expresses a DP-internal structural genitive (cf. Siloni 1994, Cinque 1995), and cannot be used as an inherent genitive in the sentential domain:}

\begin{enumerate}
   \item (ii)a.  Mi ricordo *(di) loro.  
       [I] REFL remember of them  
   b.  Abbiamo discusso *(di) loro.  
       [we] have discussed of them  
\end{enumerate}

\footnote{In Rumanian, on the other hand, the case syncretism only involves genitive and dative (see Renzi, in press):}
due to the existence of the clitic counterparts *lille: *Vedo loro\textsubscript{WEAK} \textquoteleft[I] see them\textquoteright\ vs. Li/Le vedo \textquoteleft[I] them\textsubscript{MASC/FEM} see'.\textsuperscript{22}

This analysis is supported by stylistic, geographical and diachronic considerations. Both genitive and dative loro belong to formal Italian and are absent in colloquial Italian. They are also absent in most Italian dialects (cf. Rohlf's 1968:§§427-429 and 463-464).\textsuperscript{23} If they are one and the same lexical item, these observations do not need further qualification.

The comparison between Old Italian and Modern Italian provides diachronic support for the conflation of the two uses of loro. In Old Italian, the possibility for a bare weak pronoun to function as a dative and a possessive is not restricted to the 3\textsuperscript{rd} person plural pronoun loro, but also holds for the 3\textsuperscript{rd} person sing. pronouns lui and lei, as shown in (54) and (55) respectively, and for other pronominal forms discussed in Renzi (in press), such as cui \textquoteleft[to]/[of] whom\textquoteright\ and alt\textit{trui} \textquoteleft[to]/[of] others\textquoteright:\n
\begin{quote}
(54) \begin{align*}
a. & \text{ mostrato ho lui tutta la gente ria} \\
& \text{(Dante, Divina Commedia, Purg. 1, 64)} \\
& \text{shown have [I] [to] him all the people guilty} \\
\text{b. & ond'io risposi lei} \\
& \text{(Dante, Divina Commedia, Purg. 33, 91)} \\
& \text{then I answered [to] her}
\end{align*}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
(i) \begin{align*}
a & \text{ portretul regelui} \\
& \text{(Grosu 1988)} \\
& \text{portrait-the [of] king-the} \\
\text{b. & Ion a 'i scris profesorului.} \\
& \text{Ion has also written [to] professor-the}
\end{align*}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{22} Given the Minimize Structure Principle of Cardinaletti and Starke (1994:Section 7.1), the smallest possible form, here the clitic pronoun, must be chosen over the bigger form, here the weak pronoun.

\textsuperscript{23} In those dialects in which the 3\textsuperscript{rd} person plural possessive patterns with the other possessives in taking the invariable ending \textit{-a (lora)} and in occurring post-nominally (cf. Salvioni, quoted in Rohlf's 1968:121), we take it to have been reanalysed as an adjective, as is the case of French leur (see below in the text).
(55)  a.  il lui padre  (Straparola, from Rohlf 1968:137)  
the [of] him father  
b.  il lei marito / la lei bellezza  
the [of] her husband / the [of] her beauty

In Modern Italian, *lui* and *lei* are lost both in the function of dative and in the function of possessive. The counterparts of (54) and (55) are ungrammatical, and *lui* and *lei* are only analysed as strong pronouns. In order to function as datives and possessives, a Case-marking preposition must be inserted, as with full DPs: *a* and *di*, respectively:

(56)  a.  Ho mostrato *(a) lui tutta la gente colpevole.  
b.  Risposi *(a) lei.  

(57)  a.  il padre *(di) lui  
b.  il marito *(di) lei / la bellezza *(di) lei

Now, the parallel existence and disappearance of 3rd person bare-dative pronouns and bare-genitive possessives can be easily explained if they are one and the same lexical entry.

This conclusion is further supported by a comparative Romance perspective: Those languages which do not have the dative weak pronoun corresponding to *loro* also do not have the genitive counterpart. In French, *leur* is a clitic pronoun in the sentential domain and a (clitic) agreeing adjective in the nominal domain. In (58)a, it occurs between negation and finite verb, the typical position for clitic pronouns; in (58)b, *leur* agrees with the head noun, on a par with the other possesives:

(58)  a.  Je ne leur parle pas.  
I not to-them speak not  
b.  J'aime leurs amies.  
I like their-FEM friends-FEM

Similarly, Catalan does not have a weak dative pronoun *llur*, and possessive *llur* agrees with the head noun (cf. Picollo 1994:295, fn.25):
On the other hand, Rumanian has both dative and genitive weak personal pronouns: the 3rd person singular lui/ ei and the 3rd person plural lor (cf. Cornilescu 1993):

(60)  

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Îi face lui / ei un portret.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a'</td>
<td>Le face lor un portret.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>elegantul lui / ei / lor apartment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>elegant-the his / her / their apartment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Loro is not the only oblique pronoun found. DP-externally in Italian. Similar properties hold of the relative possessive cui discussed in next section. Nor is this an idiosyncratic fact about Italian and Rumanian, or Romance languages. Personal pronouns inside DPs are found in other language families as well, as we will see in section 2.4.

2.3. The relative possessive cui

We now turn to the relative possessive cui. Cui is only pre-nominal, displaying a distributional restriction typical of deficient elements:24

(61)  

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Giorgio, [la cui figlia] era malata...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>*Giorgio, [la figlia cui] era malata...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Cinque 1981/82:270)

Giorgio, the whose daughter was sick...

24. The post-nominal position is available to the strong relative prepositional phrase del quale:

(i)  

<p>| | |</p>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giorgio, [la figlia del quale] era malata, ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giorgio, the daughter of whom was sick, ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Being deficient, *cui* can have both human and non-human referents:

(62) Quell’edificio, la cui facciata è stata appena restaurata ...

*that building, the whose front has been just restored*

Like *loro*, *cui* is homophous with a bare dative, the dative relative pronoun *cui:*

(63) L’uomo cui Gianni ha consegnato il pacco ...

*the man [to] whom Gianni has delivered the packet...*

As expected if it is not an adjective, *cui* does not agree with the head noun and is invariant:

(64) a. il cui amico
b. la cui amica
c. i cui amici
d. le cui amiche

*thesING/PL;MASC/FEM whose friend(s)MASC/FEM*

We conclude that possessive *cui* is not the relative counterpart of adjectival possessives, but a weak relative pronoun.\(^{26}\)

\(^{25}\) Dative *cui* belongs to the same high stylistic level as dative *loro*. The more common way of realising a relative indirect object is with the PP *a cui*:

(i) L’uomo a cui Gianni ha consegnato il pacco ...

*the man to whom Gianni has delivered the packet...*

On the differences between genitive *cui* and *cui* object of preposition, see Cinque (1981/82).

\(^{26}\) Like all *wh*-elements, *cui* behaves as an R-expression with respect to Binding Theory and gives rise to Principle C effects when reconstruction obtains: *Gianni, la cui figlia lo i aveva chiamato ieri, ... ‘Gianni, the whose daughter him had called yesterday’; *Gianni, della cui figlia non gli i avevamo ancora parlato, ... ‘Gianni, about-the whose daughter [we] not to-him had yet talked’; *Gianni, della cui figlia l’i ho convinto che avrebbe dovuto parlare, ... ‘Gianni, about-the whose daughter [I] him have convinced that [he] should have talked’.*
2.4. Deficient possessive pronouns in Slavic and Germanic languages

The Italian and Rumanian paradigms seen above are not idiosyncratic. Similar patterns exist in other languages, which confirm the correlation between the agreement properties and the grammatical category of possessives.

In Slavic languages, if the possessive is an invariant form, it is homophonous with a personal pronoun. Consider the Slovak examples in (65), where (non-anaphoric) 3rd person possessives are the same as genitive personal pronouns. On the other hand, if the possessive agrees with the head noun and displays adjectival inflection, it is not homophonous with a personal pronoun. Contrast the possessive modifier in (66) with the genitive personal pronouns teba 'you-STRONG' and t'a 'you-CLITIC':

\[ 27 \]

The Slavic paradigm in (i) could suggest that there is a one-to-one correlation between the syntactic status and the property of being anaphoric vs. non-anaphoric. In (i), adjectives are anaphoric and pronouns are obviative (the same holds for Scandinavian, see below in the text):

(i) a. M\(\dot{a}\) jeho\(\ast\)i\(j\)/k knihu.
   
   b. M\(\dot{a}\) svoji\(\ast\)/k knihu.

   [he] has his / his own book

The correlation does not exist in its strongest form. In e.g. Italian, both possessive adjectives and the pronoun loro can be anaphoric or non-anaphoric:

(ii)a. Ognuno\(i\) ama suo\(i/k\) figlio.

   each loves his son

   b. Non tutti\(i\) amano il loro\(i/k\) lavoro.

   not all love the their work

However notice that the Italian possessive adjective proprio is only anaphoric:

(iii) Ognuno\(i\) ama il proprio\(i/k\) figlio.

   each loves the own son
(65) a. Mám jeho / jej / ich knihu.
b. Mám jeho / jej / ich knihy.
   [I] have his/her/their book(s)-ACC

(66) a. Mám tvoju knihu.
b. Mám tvoje knihy.
   [I] have your-ACC book(s)-ACC

(67) shows that the pronoun with possessive function is deficient: It can have both human and non-human referents:

(67) jeho objev (Czech; Veselovská 1995)
   his (= Fleming’s) discovery / its (= of the penicillin) discovery

In Swedish, 1st, 2nd and anaphoric 3rd person possessives have adjectival declension, (68). Non-anaphoric 3rd person possessives are invariant forms; morphologically, they are the same as the genitive form of the personal pronoun, (69):

(68) a. min bil  mitt hus  mina bilar
    b. din bil  ditt hus  dina bilar
    c. sin bil  sitt hus  sina bilar
    d. vår bil  vårt hus  våra bilar
    e. er bil  ert hus  era bilar
    f. sin bil  sitt hus  sina bilar
   my/your/his/her/our/your/their car  ... house  ... cars

(69) a. hans bil  hans hus  hans bilar
    b. hennes bil  hennes hus  hennes bilar
    c. dess bil  dess hus  dess bilar
    d. deras bil  deras hus  deras bilar
   his/her/its/their car  ... house  ... cars

In conclusion, the above asymmetry does not seem to be simply coincidental, and a language with adjectives for obviative use and bare pronouns for anaphoric use is probably impossible.
2.5. On the licensing of DP-internal personal pronouns

Weak personal pronouns in possessive function have the same distribution as weak possessive adjectives. No asymmetries are found between e.g. *suo and loro in the pre-nominal field. This suggests that DP-internal weak genitive pronouns occur in specAgrSNP as well, and that this position must be responsible for their case-licensing.

Once the case feature is checked, no further movement of the weak pronoun is allowed. In particular, it cannot be extracted out of the DP and moved to the position where weak pronouns are licensed in the clause. To be concrete, consider the following impossible derivation, where Italian loro has been moved to the position where the weak dative pronoun loro is licensed, as in (70)b:

(70) a.  *Conosco loro [DP il [AgrSNP t i ... [NP t i libro]]]
        [I] know of-them the book

b. Ho consegnato loro il libro.
        [I] have delivered [to] them the book

On the other hand, the genitive clitic pronoun ne is moved out of DP. The case-licensing procedure which takes place in specAgrSNP is not sufficient for clitic pronouns, which require an additional licensing mechanism not provided in DPs (cf. Cardinaletti and Starke 1994):

(71) Ne: conosco [DP il [AgrSNP t i ... [NP t i libro]]]
        [I] of-them know the book

3. The constructions with empty nouns

While reviewing the distributional asymmetries between loro and the other possessives, we have not mentioned the following contrast, which arises when the

---

28. This reasoning does not apply to French clitic possessives mon, ton, son, etc., which are adjectives.
head noun is not present and is so to speak pronominalized by the demonstrative *quello:*

(72) a. Dammi quelli suoi.
give-me those his/her

b. *Dammi quelli loro.
give-me those their

This contrast can be captured by making reference to the deficient/strong opposition.

In order to understand the distribution of possessive modifiers in this construction, consider the behavior of adjectival modifiers. They show that *quello* requires the whole DP to be empty. Only DP-final predicative material is allowed. Adjectives such as *principale,* which cannot be used predicatively, are also ungrammatical with *quello,* as shown by the contrast between *convincente* and *principale* in (73)-(75) (on DP-final predicative adjectives, as in (74), also see fn.1):29

(73) a. Questo motivo è convincente.
this reason is convincing

b. *Questo motivo è principale. (Cinque 1994:93)
this reason is main

(74) a. Questo è il motivo della sua partenza, assai poco convincente.
this is the reason of-the his departure, very little convincing

b. *Questo è il motivo della sua partenza, PRINCIPALE. (Cinque 1994:94)
this is the reason of-the his departure, main

(75) a. Dei motivi della sua partenza, quello convincente è che ...
of-the reasons of-the his departure, that convincing is that ...

b. *Dei motivi della sua partenza, quello principale è che ...
of-the reasons of-the his departure, that main is that ...

---

29. *Principale* can only enter the ellipsis construction discussed below in the text:

(i) Dei due argomenti contro questa ipotesi, il principale [e] è che ...
of-the two arguments against this hypothesis, the main is that ...
Also notice that the form of the demonstrative in (72)a and (75)a is different from the usual prepossessive/pre-adjective form: *quei suoi libri ‘those his books’ vs. Dammi *quei / quelli suoi; quel convincente motivo ‘that convincing reason’ vs. … *quel / quello convincente è che … (for the phonological form of the demonstrative, also see Rizzi (1979:179, fn.13) and Vanelli (1979:200, fn.3)). We conclude that in (72) the possessive is necessarily in the post-nominal predicative position. Since loro, being only weak, is ungrammatical in predicative position (see (46) and (47) above), it is expected that loro is also ungrammatical with pronominal quello. No restriction, on the other hand, is expected with suo, given that it can be strong: suo is in fact grammatical in both contexts.

It is worth comparing the above sentences with the following ones, which contain the determiner instead of the demonstrative quello. Here, there is no contrast between loro and the other possessives:

(76) a. Ho invitato i miei amici, e Gianni i suoi.
[I] have invited the my friends and Gianni the his

b. Ho invitato i miei amici, e Gianni e Maria i loro.
[I] have invited the my friends and Gianni and Maria the theirs

(77) a. Il mio amico mi ha presentato il suo.
the my friend [to] me has introduced the his

b. I miei amici mi hanno presentato i loro.
the my friends [to] me have introduced the theirs

In ellipsis contexts, the material following the determiner is in pre-nominal position, as shown by the possibility of ordinal adjectives and adjectives such as ultimo, prossimo, solo, altro, etc., which cannot occur post-nominally. Contrast (78)a with (78)c, and (79)a with (79)c:

30. These adjectives can appear post-nominally only when N has moved to D (cf. Longobardi 1994:624, fn.18; 625; 626):

(i) a. Napoleone terzo fu l'ultimo Imperatore dei Francesi.
Napoleon third was the last emperor of the French people

b. Sabato prossimo facciamo una festa.
Saturday next [we] give a party
(78) a. Di quegli spettacoli, solo il primo / l’ultimo [e] mi è piaciuto.  
_of those shows, only the first / the last [to] me is pleased  
(=... I liked only the first/last one)  
b. il primo / l’ultimo spettacolo  
c. *lo spettacolo primo / ultimo

(79) a. Mentre sabato scorso siamo andati al cinema, il prossimo [e] 
faremo una festa.  
_while Saturday last [we] have gone to-the cinema, the next [we] 
will give a party_  
b. ... il prossimo sabato faremo una festa.  
c. *... il sabato prossimo faremo una festa.

The ungrammaticality of non-agreeing adjectives, which are restricted to the post-nominal position (see 2.2 above), and of complex modifiers, which are restricted to the predicative position (Cinque 1994:section 5), confirms that in the ellipsis construction the modifier does not follow the empty head noun (cf. Langacker (1968:58,fn.6) for the French counterparts of (81)):

(80) a. la camicetta rosa / a quadri di Maria  
b. *la [e] rosa / a quadri  
_the (shirt) pink / chequered (of Mary)_  
c. la donna incinta  
d. *la [e] incinta  
_the (woman) pregnant_  

(81) a. la donna pronta a partire  
b. *la [e] pronta a partire  
_the (woman) ready to leave_  
c. Maria sola si è presentata.  
_Maria only-FEM showed up_  

We conclude that the possessives in (76)-(77) occupy the pre-nominal position, and not the post-nominal ones. It is therefore expected that no difference is found between
lоро and the other possessives. This analysis implies that the possessive which occurs with an empty noun is weak. The correctness of this implication is shown in (82):

(82)  
\begin{align*}
\text{a.} & \quad *\text{il mio, non suo} \\
& \quad \textit{the mine, not his} \\
\text{b.} & \quad *\text{il mio e suo} \\
& \quad \textit{the mine and his} \\
\text{c.} & \quad *\text{il solo mio} \\
& \quad \textit{the only mine}
\end{align*}

(82) contrasts with (83), where focalization, coordination and modification of the possessive are possible. As seen above, the construction involving the demonstrative \textit{quello} requires a strong, post-nominal possessive:

(83)  
\begin{align*}
\text{a.} & \quad \text{quello mio, non suo} \\
& \quad \textit{that mine, not his} \\
\text{b.} & \quad \text{quello mio e suo} \\
& \quad \textit{that mine and his} \\
\text{c.} & \quad \text{quello solo mio} \\
& \quad \textit{that only mine}
\end{align*}

3.1. The ellipsis construction in other languages

The conclusion that the ellipsis construction contains pre-nominal possessives is supported by the observation that French and English have the ellipsis construction,

\[\text{31. The same happens in the idiomatic expression in (i), where the head noun \textit{parte} can be missing:}\]

(i)  
\begin{align*}
\text{a.} & \quad \text{Sto dalla sua (parte).} \\
\text{b.} & \quad \text{Sto dalla loro (parte).} \\
& \quad [I\text{ am on-the his/their (side)}
\end{align*}

\[\text{32. For a different approach, see Schoorlemmer (this volume).}\]
(84)a-(85)a, in spite of the fact that they do not allow post-nominal possessives, (84)b vs. (84)c, (85)b vs. (85)c (also remember that French does not have strong possessive modifiers):33

33. An apparent counterexample to the proposal that the possessive in (84)a is pre-nominal is provided by the following observation, due to Kayne (1977:191, fn.155). In the ellipsis construction (i)b, the possessive follows a numeral, which it otherwise precedes, (i)a:

(i) a. *mes deux livres vs. a'. *deux mes livres  
*my two books
b. *les miens deux vs. b'. les deux miens  
*the mine two

The word order in (i)a depends on the clitic status of French possessives, which occur in the highest functional head in the DP. Italian possessives, which are not clitic, allow both orders:

(ii) i miei due libri vs. i due miei libri

In (i)b, ellipsis is licensed by the possessive, and the numeral occurs in the predicative position. Since French numerals cannot be predicative (*Les enfants sont deux ‘the children are two’), the sequence is ungrammatical. In (i)b', on the other hand, ellipsis is licensed by the numeral, and the possessive can be strong (The structure thus differs from the English counterpart your two [e] – cf. *yours two). In Italian, where numerals can be predicative, both orders are possible:

(iii) i miei due vs. i due miei

Notice however that (i)b' is not productive and restricted to the possessive miei and the numeral deux, which complies with the conclusion reached in section 1.3 above that French does not have strong possessives. French thus contrasts with Italian, where the construction is fully productive, (iv)a,b vs. (iv)a',b':

(iv)a. ?? les deux tiens vs. a’. i due tuo
*the two yours
b. *les quatre miens vs. b’. i quattro miei
*the four mine
(84)  a. Mon ami m'a présenté le sien.
   *my friend [to] me has introduced the his
b. *(l')ami son / sien
   (the) friend his/hers
c. son ami

(85)  a. My friend has introduced hers to me.
   *(the) friend her / hers
c. her friend

This observation is corroborated by other languages, such as Dutch and German, which also have the ellipsis construction without allowing post-nominal possessives, (86)a vs. (86)b, (87)a vs. (87)b. These languages are particularly telling because they distinguish between pre-nominal, agreeing adjectives and post-nominal/predicative, non-agreeing adjectives, (86)c vs. (86)d, (87)c vs. (87)d-e. Ellipsis requires possessives with adjectival agreement inflection, which means that they are necessarily pre-nominal:

(86)  a. Dat is niet jouw boek op tafel, maar het mijne [e].
   *it is not your book on the table, but the mine-AGR
   (Schoorlemmer, this vol.)
   b. mijn boek / *het boek mijn
   *my book / *the book my
   c. het grote huis
   *the big-AGR house
   (Kester 1996:91)
   d. Het huis is groot.
   *the house is big
   (Kester 1996:81)

(87)  a. Das seine [e] gefällt mir nicht.
   *the his-AGR pleases to-me not
b. sein Buch / *das Buch sein
   *his book / *the book his
c. diese regnerische Woche
   *this rainy-AGR week
   (Cinque 1994:94)
d. diese Woche regnerisch und stürmisch
   *this week rainy and stormy
e. Diese Woche ist regnerisch.

*this week is rainy*

Notice that the possessive which appears in the French and English ellipsis constructions is morphologically different from the one which appears when the head noun is realized.  

Consider French first. Given its cooccurrence with the determiner, *sien* in (84)a is not coticized to D⁰ as its counterpart *son* in (84c) is (see section 1.3 above). The obvious proposal, with the tripartition in mind, is that *sien* is weak. The fact that in older stages of French this form could follow the article in pre-nominal position (e.g. *un mien ami*, 'a my friend', cf. Arnauld and Lancelot (1993:84), Langacker (1968:58)) can be taken to be independent evidence for this analysis. Nowadays, the clitic form *son* always blocks the weak form *sien*. Given the Minimize Structure principle of Cardinaletti and Starke (1994:section 7.1); a smaller form, here the clitic possessive, is always preferred over the bigger form, here the weak possessive. However, where the clitic form is independently excluded, the weak form becomes the smallest possible form and is ruled in. The ellipsis context represents one such situation. Once the head noun is not realized, the clitic possessive is excluded because a clitic form cannot occur alone inside a phrase (for lack of overt material to cliticize on). The weak possessive is consequently allowed, which in turn requires, in French, the presence of the determiner.  

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34. Although some French possessives appear to have only one form, Arnauld & Lancelot (1993:85) note that there always is a difference in accentuation and vowel quality: the vowel is short in the clitic, unstressed possessive, but long in its weak, stressed counterpart (so that strictly speaking there is no homophonous pair of possessives in French):


\*it is our house \*it is the ours


\*it is their fault \*it is the theirs

35. This pattern recalls that of object personal pronouns. In all contexts except from imperatives, 1⁰ and 2⁰ person clitic pronouns must be used, (i). When these are independently excluded, as with imperative verbs, the 1⁰ and 2⁰ person weak pronouns show up, (ii) (on the weak status of *moi* in (ii), cf. Cardinaletti and Starke (1994:fn.31) and Laenzlinger (1994)): 
This analysis is supported by the observation that both doubling and floating quantifiers are disallowed in ellipsis. The following sentences, taken from Kayne (1977:191, fn. 155), are judged very marginal or ungrammatical by our informants:

(88) a. ?*la sienne à elle
    \textit{the hers to her}

b. ?*C'est le nôtre à tous.
    \textit{it is the ours to all}

If doubling and floating quantifiers are only found with clitic elements (see section 1.2-3 above), (88) confirms that the possessive found in ellipsis is weak.

An analysis similar to the one just suggested for French applies to the Spanish paradigm in (89). The clitic form \textit{mi} of (89)a cannot appear alone when the noun is empty, (89)b, and the weak possessive \textit{mío} shows up, (89)c. As in Italian, the weak possessive has the same morphological form as the strong possessive of (89)d:

(89) a. mi libro

b. *mi [e]

c. el mío [e]

d. el libro mío
    \textit{(the) my (book)}

Let's now turn to English. Contrary to what we have seen in other languages, the possessive found in ellipsis contexts is capable of occurring alone (see (85)a). Its longer morphological form suggests that it is a strong possessive (see section 1.3 above), parallel to John's in \textit{My friend has introduced John's [e] to me}. This accounts

\begin{tabular}{llll}
(i) a. & Il me regarde. & vs. & * Il regarde moi. \\
    & \textit{he me looks-at} & & \textit{he looks-at me} \\
    b. & Il me parle. & vs. & * Il parle moi / à moi. \\
    & \textit{he me talks} & & \textit{he talks [to] me / to me} \\
(ii)a. & *Regarde-me. & vs. & Regarde-moi. \\
    & \textit{look-at-me} & & \textit{look-at-me} \\
    b. & *Parle-mc. & vs. & Parle-moi. \\
    & \textit{talk-me} & & \textit{talk me}
\end{tabular}
for the ungrammaticality in ellipsis contexts of the 3rd person singular neuter deficient form its: *The tree’s owner’s situation is precarious, its is good, however (Chris Wilder, personal communication).36

3.2. One apparent problem

One problem remains to be considered. It concerns the fact that in languages like Paduan, the possessive which appears in the ellipsis context (90)b does not have the expected weak form me that appears pre-nominally, (90)a, but the same morphological form as the strong post-nominal possessive of (90)c:

(90)  a. el me libro
     b. *el me [e] / el mio [e]
     c. el libro mio

*the my (book)*

If the conclusions reached above are correct, then mio in (90)b cannot be a strong, post-nominal possessive. We are forced to analyse it as weak, and to take the impossibility of el me as due to some independent reason. Various possibilities come to mind. We could argue that the empty NP needs a rich array of phi-features to be licensed (cf. Kester 1996:Ch.4, among others), which only the agreeing form mio can provide. Though plausible in principle, this proposal would make the English paradigm, which does not display agreement features (mine, yours, etc.), become problematic. Alternatively, and more likely, suppose that the restriction is of phonological nature. If me is a weak element without word stress, the ellipsis of the head noun results into a DP without any word stress (being a clitic element, the determiner also lacks word stress). In such a situation, the allomorph mio, which, we

36. Chris Wilder also observes that the 3rd person plural possessive theirs with a non-human referent permits ellipsis: The trees’j owners’ situation is precarious, theirs 3 is good, however. Theirs thus behaves like the corresponding strong pronouns they and them, which can have non-human referents. Cardinaletti and Starke (1995) argue that this unexpected behaviour should be attributed to the demonstrative status of these pronouns. That analysis can be extended to possessive theirs.
assume, has word stress, is inserted. The same phonological restriction can account for the ungrammaticality of el mi in Spanish, i.e. for the fact that the weak possessive which shows up in ellipsis is morphologically the same as the strong form mio (see (89)c above) and is not homophonous with the clitic form mi (nor with the weak form mi which occurs in Spanish dialects – see section 1.2 above).

4. Singular kinship nouns

There is one further respect in which loro and cui are more restricted than the adjectival possessives. With singular kinship nouns they keep the article, which is instead ungrammatical with possessive modifiers such as mio and suo:

(91) a. mio / suo fratello
    b. *il mio / suo fratello
        (the) my / his brother

(92) a. *loro fratello
    b. il loro fratello
        (the) their brother

(93) a. *Gianni, cui fratello ha ottenuto il premio, ...
    b. Gianni, il cui fratello ha ottenuto il premio, ...
        Gianni, (the) whose brother has got the prize

We take the possessive in

37. This is not the only situation in which two weak forms coexist in one and the same language. Cf. the Italian pair of weak subjects pro vs. egli / esso 'he', 'it', discussed in Cardinaletti and Starke (1994:section 7.2.1) and Cardinaletti (1997):

(i) a. pro ha aderito.
    b. Egli ha aderito.
        he has adhered
(91)a to have cliticized to D° ([mio]+D° [tj ... [tj fratello]]), and the ungrammaticality of (92)a / (93)a as due to the fact that loro and cui do not have comparable clitic forms. This is supported by their behaviour in the sentential domain: neither element is clitic.38

The evidence that with singular kinship nouns, possessives are clitic is provided by the fact that (i) they cannot occur alone in ellipsis and isolation, (94)- (95), and (ii) they cannot be contrasted nor coordinated, (96):

(94) Mio fratello verrà, *(ii) suo invece no.
     my brother will-come, (the) his on-the-other-hand not

(95) Verrà tuo fratello o il fratello di Gianni? *(ii) suo.
     will-come your brother or the brother of Gianni? (the) his

38. In the following sentences, loro occurs without any determiner:

(i) a. Questo è di loro competenza.
     this is of their competence

b. Questo non è di loro gusto.
     this not is of their taste (= they do not like it)

c. Abbiamo invitato Maria a loro insaputa.
     [we] have invited Maria without their knowledge

These sentences seem to contradict the claim, just made on the basis of singular kinship nouns, that loro cannot occur without the determiner. The DP contained in such predicative PPs however never contains a determiner (cf. Longobardi 1994:612f). Consider the following sentences, where the possessive is replaced by a full complement of the noun:

(ii)a. Questo è di competenza di Gianni.
     this is of competence of Gianni

b. Abbiamo invitato Maria a insaputa di tutti.
     [we] have invited Maria without everybody's knowledge

It is straightforward to conclude that with predicative PPs, the possessive occupies the usual prenominal position, specAgrSNP and not D°. The sentences with loro are expected to be grammatical.
(96)  a. *Mio padre, non suo
    my father, not his

       b. *mio e suo padre
    my and his father

Comparative support is provided by Italian dialects such as Paduan, which has weak possessives with common nouns and clitic possessives with kinship nouns (see section 1.2 above). This analysis can be extended to account for a Central Italian dialect, Anconetano, where the possessive occurring with singular kinship nouns is morphologically reduced with respect to the form used with the determiner in common-noun contexts (and does not display gender distinctions):

(97)  a. mi’ fratelo
    my brother
        (Cartocci, 1990:53)

       b. ’sto mio componimento
    this my-MASC-SING poem
        (Cartocci, 1990:50)

This reduction is typical of other Italian dialects (see also Rohlfs 1968:128). Similarly, Piccallo (1994:296) reports that in many Catalan dialects, the possessive form which occurs with singular kinship nouns is shorter than the usual one and replaces the determiner:

(98) sa germana
    his/her/their sister
        (instead of: la seva germana)

An alternative analysis of

(91)a would be to suppose that the singular kinship noun itself has raised to D°, in the same way as proper names do, and that the possessive modifier has moved to specDP (cf. Longobardi 1995: fn.3). The restriction on loro and cui shown in (92) and (93) can then be interpreted as a ban against their movement to specDP: Not being a case-related position, specDP is not a possible landing site for deficient phrases.\(^{39}\)

\(^{39}\) The same constraint would rule out (92)a and (93)a in a third possible analysis which takes the possessive of
Independent evidence for the movement of a kinship noun to $D^o$ seems to come from Sardinian and Salentino (cf. Picallo 1994:292). In the former, the determinerless head noun adjoins to $D^o$ moving across the weak possessive, in the latter it adjoins to the clitic possessive in $D^o$:

(99)  
\begin{itemize}
  \item a. frade duo  
    \begin{itemize}
      \item brother your
    \end{itemize}
  \item b. fratuta  
    \begin{itemize}
      \item brother-your
    \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

Although appealing, the proposal that singular kinship nouns are in $D$ raises the following questions:

(a) why is  
\begin{itemize}
  \item (91)a the only case where the possessive precedes a noun raised to $D$? In all other cases in which $N$ moves to $D$, the possessive does not move to specDP and follows the noun, as in (99) and in *Gianni mio / casa mia* (cf. (24) above). In other words, why don't we also get *mio Gianni* and *mia casa* on a par with (91)a?;
\end{itemize}

(b) conversely, why don't we also get *fratello loro* on a par with *Gianni loro / casa loro*, cf. (45) above (in order to circumvent the ban on the movement of *loro* to specDP)?

(c) the possessive in specDP should be strong. However, it does not display strong behaviour. *Mio* in (94)–(96) is a deficient element like any pre-nominal possessive. This conclusion is at odds with the explanation for (92)a and (93)a given above;

(d) The languages which have pre-nominal clitic possessives, such as French and Paduan, provide a similar problem. If the noun is in $D$, the clitic possessive could be either adjoined to the noun or in specDP. However, it is usually the raised noun that attaches to the clitic possessive (cf. (99)b). This only leaves the latter analysis as available, with the unwelcome consequence that *son père* and *so pare* 'his

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(91)a to have moved to specDP alone, with no concomitant $N$-to-$D$ raising of the head noun (cf. Giusti 1993:65). This analysis faces with the problems in (a) and (c) below and will not be adopted here.
father' should be impossible on a par with Italian *loro / *cui fratello in \[(92)a \]
\[(93)a\], contrary to fact.

These are serious shortcomings of the account of singular kinship nouns in terms of N-to-D raising. For all these reasons, we keep to the proposal sketched above that in \[(91)a\] it is the possessive itself which moves to D and that \[(92)a\] and \[(93)a\] are ungrammatical because loro and cui do not have clitic counterparts.\(^{40}\)

The proposed analysis has an important implication. The difference between e.g. French and Italian is not in the availability of clitic possessives, since both languages have them. Rather, the difference must lie in the determiner system, a place where rather significant differences exist between the two languages. The French determiner is such that it can, so to speak, always “leave its place” to the possessive. By Minimise structure, the clitic possessive is the smallest available form and it is therefore always used. In Italian, on the other hand, common nouns require the determiner, which explains why, by Minimise structure, the only available possessive form is now the weak one. When there happens to be no determiner around, as with singular kinship nouns, Italian possessives do cliticise.

\(^{40}\) In sum, with singular kinship nouns either the possessive raises to D (in e.g. Italian \[(91)a,\] Paduan \[(22)a,\] Anconetano \[(97)a,\] Catalan dialects \[(98)\], or the noun itself raises to D crossing over the possessive (in e.g. Sardinian \[(99)a\]), or both movements take place (in e.g. Salentino \[(99)b\]). The reasons of this wide language variation in the context of kinship nouns are still unclear.

Further language variation is represented by the fact that in many languages, the determiner is present when singular kinship nouns co-occur with possessives, as in e.g. Catalan el teu germà ‘the your brother’ (Picallo 1994:292). The generalisation here seems easy to state: This happens in those languages in which the determiner is also used with proper names (as in Catalan, and in the dialects spoken in Tuscany, Lombardy, etc. – compare Rohlf’s 1968:128 with Rohlf’s 1969:30). However, the parallelism with proper names is not complete, since the reverse is not true and, furthermore, there are dialects, such as Veneto, which also drop the determiner with plural kinship nouns: me nevodi ‘my nephews’ (cf. Rohlf’s 1968:128).
5. Conclusion

The tripartition originally proposed for personal pronouns has been extended here to possessive modifiers. Clitic, weak and strong possessives exist, which differ syntactically and semantically. In standard Italian, the three forms are homophonous, but in many Italian dialects and in other Romance languages, different morphological paradigms are found.

Possessive *loro* has been shown to differ from the other Italian possessives: it is not an adjective, but a weak personal pronoun on a par with the dative weak pronoun *loro*. The analysis has been extended to the relative pronoun *cui*, which is not the adjectival counterpart of relative pronouns, but a weak relative pronoun. DP-internal genitive personal pronouns are not peculiar of Italian. Among Romance languages, they are found in Rumanian, and they are very productive in Germanic and Slavic languages.

The possibility of weak *loro* in the ellipsis construction implies that the empty noun follows the possessive. In other words, the possessive found in ellipsis in e.g. Italian is weak and not strong. This proposal is supported by a number of distributional and morphological observations.

In conclusion, the extension of the tripartition to possessive system, on the one hand, makes it possible to account for a number of empirical facts in this domain and, on the other, supports the view advocated in Cardinaletti and Starke (1994) that the underlying cause of the distinction among clitic, weak and strong elements is a difference in their internal structure. Under this view, the deficient/strong opposition should be found across syntactic categories, and we have shown here that this is the case with possessive modifiers.
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