BINDING DOMAINS IN HAITIAN*

Like many Kwa languages of West Africa (Awóyále 1986), Haitian lacks unique, morphologically reflexive expressions equivalent to English *herself, himself, themselves*. Instead, local binding has three compositional sources. *Morphological economy* (Burzio 1989) construes an object pronoun reflexively just if no morphologically reflexive expression has the same agreement features. This elsewhere-type principle, generally satisfied in Haitian, applies only exceptionally in French and English, creating surface anaphor/pronoun complementarity as the predominant pattern in those languages (Bouchard 1984). *Referential economy* (Pica 1987) "anaphorizes" a possessive DP headed by an inalienably possessed noun such as *tèt* 'head' or *kò* 'body'. *Inherent reflexivity* licenses a null internal argument with an inalienably possessed lexical constant *BODY*. The necessity of all three mechanisms in Haitian argues for the reduction of the LGB binding conditions (Chomsky 1981) to the "On Binding" framework (Chomsky 1980).

1. AMBIGUOUS OBJECT PRONOUNS

With a large number of Haitian verbs, a third person object pronoun is ambiguous between reflexive and pronominal readings. One such verb is *wè* 'see'.

(1a) Li wè l (nan glas la).

3sg see 3sg Loc mirror Det

S/he saw her(self)/him(self)/it (in the mirror).

b. Yo wè yo.

3pl see 3pl

They saw them(selves)/each other.


The same potential ambiguity arises for first and second person object pronouns.

(2)a. M wè m. 
   1sg see 1sg
   I saw myself. 
   Jak wè m. 
   see 1sg

b. Ou wè w. 
   2sg see 2sg
   You saw yourself. 
   Jak wè w. 
   see 2sg

c. Nou wè n. 
   1/2pl see 1/2pl
   We saw ourselves/each other/you (pl.). 
   Jak wè n. 
   see 1/2pl
   OR You (pl.) saw us.¹

Bernabé (1983: 918–20) cites nearly identical facts in Guadeloupéen, a close relative of Haitian. Similar facts are reported in Seychellois and Mauritian (Corne 1977, 1988), and in Niuean (Seiter 1979: 78f.) and Chamorro (Chung 1989: 149).

Some speakers, while accepting all of (1–2), prefer object reflexives in the form of an expression which independently means ‘x's head’ (where x is any pronoun).²

(1’)b. Yo wè têt yo. 
   3pl see head 3pl
   They saw themselves/each other OR They saw their head/the heads.³

(2’)b. Ou wè têt ou. 
   2sg see head 2sg
   You saw yourself OR You saw your head.

¹ Although nou is ambiguous between 1pl and 2pl, a reflexive/reciprocal reading is mysteriously out for 2pl nou: (2c) cannot mean ‘You (pl.) saw yourselves/each other’.
² Carden and Stewart (1988) cite speakers who have (1–2) ambiguous as indicated. To express regional, class, and diachronic variation, they parametrize binding principles across time and space.
³ Têt yo can mean ‘the heads’ because yo ‘3pl’ is categorically a Determiner.