The expressions this cat and that glove with a hole are complex demonstratives. In this paper, we defend a thesis about complex demonstratives. The thesis we defend concerns the role of the nominal (e.g., cat and glove with a hole) in a central class of uses. In the utterances at issue, we argue, the nominal $F$ in that $F$ plays a policing role: no proposition is semantically expressed by the utterance, if the object appropriated by the speaker's use of that $F$ fails to be $F$. We'll call this nominal policing.¹

In characterizing nominal policing, we introduced the concept of an appropriated object. Roughly, a speaker's use of that $F$ appropriates an object, if the speaker demonstrates that object, where demonstrations can include both publicly observable gestures by the speaker as well as speaker intentions. For example, if a speaker says That car is better than that car, successively pointing at and intending to talk about two cars in plain view, with each use of that car the speaker appropriates a different object. In this case, the object is a car both times. If in place of one of the cars, there was a boat, but the speaker’s intentions and gestures of pointing remained the same, the speaker would appropriate a boat by one of her uses of that car. Nominal policing predicts that the speaker’s utterance in this case would fail to semantically express a proposition.

The thesis of nominal policing has been a focal point of debate within the literature on complex demonstratives. It has been defended by David Braun (1994) and Emma Borg (2000), while Richard Larson and Gabriel Segal (1995) have suggested that it is false.² Much of this debate has relied upon the view that complex demonstratives, like bare demonstratives, are referring expressions, and paradigms of direct reference at that. If such a view is assumed, then at least part of the semantic contribution of a use of a complex demonstrative is its referent, and the crucial question becomes what, if any,
semantic contribution the complex demonstrative can make beyond its referent. Policing, or the denial of policing, become theses about the status of this additional contribution.³

Now, the nominal in complex demonstratives can play a policing role, even if complex demonstratives are not directly referential. Recently, philosophers have begun to consider seriously the view that complex demonstratives are quantificational, where this is held to exclude their being devices of reference (direct or otherwise).⁴ Our defense of nominal policing, unlike previous ones, is neutral on whether uses of complex demonstratives are referring expressions (as direct reference theorists hold), quantificational expressions (as King has proposed), or discourse anaphors in a dynamic semantics (as Craig Roberts (2002) has argued). This neutrality is not a lack of interest, and its point is not simply to avoid a premise which some have recently denied. Rather, we think that understanding what underlies nominal policing is fundamental to understanding the behavior of complex demonstratives, and in particular, the behavior that makes them appear referential. We will suggest that this behavior itself can be understood without supposing that complex demonstratives have the semantics of referring expressions.

Our defense of nominal policing will focus on a certain sort of presupposition failure to which uses of complex demonstratives are prone, when the appropriated object fails to satisfy the nominal. We argue on independent grounds that presupposition failure of this sort is tantamount to failure to semantically express a proposition. This will be central to our defense of nominal policing.

The discussion will proceed as follows. After some preliminary remarks in Section 1, in Section 2 we consider and reject the view that the nominal in complex demonstratives plays no truth-conditional role whatsoever, and some other related views. In Section 3, we present the core evidence for nominal policing. In Section 4, we argue that what appear to be some counterexamples to nominal policing do not really enjoy this status. We conclude the discussion in Section 5 with a speculation: perhaps apparently referring expressions do not form any semantic category, and what unifies such expressions is rather common presuppositional phenomena.

1. Preliminaries

Two things need explaining right away: the class of utterances at issue, and the notion of appropriation that occurs in our definition of nominal policing.

First, we will focus on a range of uses of complex demonstratives: expressions of the form that F. The nominal F can itself be complex, as in that large house or that glove with a hole in it or that car which I saw the other day. The uses with which we will primarily be concerned are perceptual uses: those in which the speaker (and usually the

³ The locus classicus for direct reference is David Kaplan’s “Demonstratives” (1977/1989). There he says relatively little about complex demonstratives. As Braun (1994) remarks, the view of “Demonstratives” appears to imply policing. Braun’s own paper offers a proposal compatible with Kaplan’s which does include policing (cf. Note 2).

⁴ This recent consideration was spurred by Jeffrey King (1999), which attacks the view that complex demonstratives are devices of direct reference and defends the view that they are quantificational. See also King (2001a) Ludwig and Lepore (2000).
hearer) perceives an object, upon which she thinks the truth or falsity of the utterance depends. These are paradigmatic uses of demonstratives. We will call them “classic perceptual uses,” and we’ll call the utterances in which they occur “perceptual demonstrative utterances.”

We focus on classic perceptual uses because they exemplify what many have taken to be the paradigmatic behavior of referring expressions. For instance, when they occur in an utterance that has a truth-value, they are rigid. However, as we mentioned, our defense of nominal policing does not require any stance on the semantic category to which complex demonstratives belong.

Second, our central claim is nominal policing:
If the object appropriated by the speaker’s use of that F in a perceptual demonstrative utterance is not F, then the utterance fails to semantically express a proposition.

‘Appropriation’ is our term for the contextual supplement required by uses of complex demonstratives. Both bare and complex demonstratives require some sort of supplement from the context. In the case of complex demonstratives, the nature of this supplement is illustrated by the following contrast. Consider an utterance of:
1. That key is bigger than that key.
Suppose the speaker successively points to and intends to talk about two keys in plain view. Contrast an utterance under the same circumstances of:
2. #The key is bigger than the key.
The latter is markedly infelicitous.

The contrast just drawn between complex demonstratives and definite descriptions suggests that the contextual supplement needed for complex demonstratives differs from whatever sort may be needed in the case of definite descriptions. An utterance of (2) could be infelicitous, even when the speaker successively points to and intends to talk about two keys, both of which are already conversationally salient.

Here is a heuristic. A speaker appropriates an object o by the use of a complex demonstrative, if she stands to o in a relation of the sort that would suffice for her to refer to o by using a bare demonstrative. Some candidates for this relation include intending to

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5 Readers of Gareth Evans (1982) will recognize classic perceptual uses as a subclass of the uses to which demonstrative expressions can be put, even disregarding the kinds of quantificational examples presented by King (2001a).
6 We use ‘#’ to indicate markedly defective utterances. ‘?’ indicates marginally defective utterances. We take judgments of such defectiveness by native speakers to be on par with judgments of grammaticality as data for semantic theorizing.
7 We owe this point King (2001a, Ch. 2).
8 In some cases of definite descriptions as discourse anaphors, we can have a weakened effect. Consider:
   (i) ?Whenever a new mobster tries to muscle in on an old mobster’s territory, the mobster threatens the mobster.
   (This is similar to the sort of examples highlighted by Hans Kamp (cf. Heim 1990).) It is clearly preferable to say:
   (ii) Whenever a new mobster tried to muscle in on an old mobster’s territory, the OLD mobster threatens the NEW mobster.
refer to o by the use of a demonstrative expression, and using publically accessible cues, such as pointing, to indicate o. This is just a heuristic, as we wish to remain neutral on what sorts of facts about the context make it the case that by her use of that F, a speaker appropriates one object rather than another, or rather than nothing at all.

Our neutrality on the mechanism of appropriation makes us neutral on a subtle question concerning the role that the nominal plays in appropriation. There seem to be cases where the nominal is quite prominent in appropriation: for instance, cases in which the speaker cannot make clear what object she wants to talk about by using a bare demonstrative. If the mechanism of appropriation is the speaker’s intention, then appropriation proceeds independently of the use of the nominal, and in these cases the nominal will play a merely epistemic role, enabling addressees to discern which object the speaker has appropriated. In contrast, suppose the mechanism of appropriation is a set of publically accessible cues. This opens the possibility that the use of the nominal plays a constitutive role in appropriation: a role that not merely enables the addressee to discern which object is appropriated, but furthermore determines which object this is.

Because we are neutral on the mechanism of appropriation, we are neutral on whether the nominal plays a constitutive or a merely epistemic role in this sort of case. Whatever the nature is of the contextual supplement needed by complex demonstratives, it is clear that some such supplement is needed. ‘Appropriation’ is our term for the supplement, whatever it is. We thus content ourselves with a functional characterization of appropriation.

Given how we have defined the class of classic perceptual uses of demonstratives, we may expect the appropriated object in such uses to be something the speaker perceives, and in the simplest cases, we may expect that it is common ground between speaker and hearer which object that is. However, we wish to stress that appropriation is fundamentally a linguistic notion, not a notion in the philosophy of mind. Appropriation is achieved in acceptable uses of complex demonstratives. Being appropriated is a status something can only have in a context of discourse.

Our definition of nominal policing alludes to the object appropriated by the speaker’s use of that F. Whatever underlies appropriation, we stipulate that if any object is appropriated by a speaker’s use of that F in a perceptual demonstrative utterance, then a unique object is. Something analogous will hold for plural demonstratives.

So far, we’ve spoken as if there is such a thing as a speaker appropriating, by her use of a complex demonstrative, an object that does not satisfy that complex demonstrative’s nominal. (Our very definition of nominal policing assumes that this is possible). But logical space has room for a theory of appropriation on which an object can be appropriated by a speaker’s use of a complex demonstrative expression, only if that object satisfies that expression’s nominal. On this theory, cases of the sort described in the definition of nominal policing are not possible. Since we said we were neutral on the mechanisms of appropriation, and since the theory just mentioned is a theory in part about those mechanisms, this theory deserves comment.

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10 We will generally restrict our attention to singular demonstratives, so we will not formulate the condition for plural demonstratives here.
Martin Davies (1982) has defended a theory about complex demonstratives according to which there is no such thing as a speaker’s appropriating an object that is not F by the use of that F. Like nominal policing, Davies's view rules out that a proposition may be expressed by an utterance of That F is G when there is no appropriated object that is F. Indeed, the view seems to give the same predictions about truth-conditions in the context of utterance: an utterance of That F is G is true only if the appropriated object is F (in the context of utterance) and G, and it is false only if the appropriated object is F and not G. This view, then, makes similar predictions to ours, but in a way that makes policing appear trivial. The reasons Davies offers for his view are ones we reject. Moreover, we will present examples below which are clear cases of appropriation the nominal is not satisfied.

Though we have given only a functional characterization of appropriation, we believe this is enough to proceed to ask what role the nominal in a complex demonstrative plays, especially when an object is appropriated.

2. Inertness and shiftiness in complex demonstratives
The notion of appropriation suggests one reason why nominal policing is contentious. If we think of a demonstrative as a device of reference, then it may appear that appropriation of an object suffices to secure its referent, and that there is no truth-conditional role left for the nominal to play. The nominal appears to be, as we shall say, truth-conditionally inert. Let the strong inertness thesis be the following:

A perceptual demonstrative utterance of That F is G is true in the context of utterance if and only if the appropriated object is G.

11 We take issue with two claims made by Davies, both connected to the philosophy of mind. First, he claims that a subject cannot succeed in perceiving an object without “employing a sortal concept” in an “individuative role” (1982, p. 292). His reasons are broadly Quinean: he thinks there is no fact of the matter about whether one is perceptually representing a mereological sum of tomato-parts, or a time-slice of a tomato, or the front surface of a tomato, unless one “employs” a sortal concept that the object in fact satisfies, such as the concept ‘tomato’. Against this, we think that perceptual representations can succeed in representing tomatoes even if the subject “employs” no sortal concept that the tomato satisfies. (Perhaps the perceiver is under an illusion that it is a superbball, or perhaps the tomato is in a convincing baseball costume).

Second, according to Davies, when a speaker uses a complex demonstrative (in a classic perceptual utterance), the sortal concept that makes it determinate which object a subject is perceiving is the same as the concept expressed by the nominal in the complex demonstrative (1982, p. 293ff). Even granting Davies the first claim, that a subject perceptually represents an object only if she employs a sortal concept that the object satisfies, we doubt that the sortal concept that plays this role has to be the same as the one expressed by the nominal in a complex demonstrative. Just suppose a speaker says That physicist is nice, pointing to and intending to talk about someone sitting in a coffee shop. Even if we accepted Davies’ assumption about the role of sortal concepts in perception, we see no reason to suppose that the concept ‘physicist’ plays that role in this case.
Larson and Segal (1995, p. 213) express some sympathy for this thesis (though they do not offer a full-fledged defense of it). According to the strong inertness thesis, no matter what the value of \( F \) is, the truth of an utterance of \( \text{That } F \text{ is } G \) depends on and only on whether the appropriated object is \( G \). To keep things simple, we have stated the thesis for a sentence of the form \( \text{That } F \text{ is } G \). More generally, the strong inertness thesis holds that the semantic contribution of an occurrence of a complex demonstrative is determined entirely by the appropriated object, leaving no semantic role of any sort for the nominal.

In principle, the strong inertness thesis could be combined with a proviso about appropriation to the effect that something can be appropriated by a use of a complex demonstrative only if it satisfies the nominal (as Davies has proposed). As we mentioned earlier, this view would seem to make the same predictions as nominal policing: when no object is appropriated, no proposition is expressed; utterances of \( \text{that } F \text{ is } G \) have truth values only if the object the speaker wants to talk about is \( F \); they are true if that object is \( G \) and false if it is not \( G \).

Without this proviso concerning appropriation, the strong inertness thesis is incompatible with nominal policing. Following our remarks at the end of Section 1, in the rest of this paper, when we discuss the strong inertness thesis, we will assume that the version of the thesis at issue is free of this proviso. We will thus allows that a speaker may appropriate an object by using a complex demonstrative, when the object does not satisfy the complex demonstrative’s nominal. Indeed, as we mentioned in Section 1, we will spend a great deal of time discussing examples which make our assumption appear to be the only natural one.

The strong inertness thesis takes it to be sufficient for the truth of an utterance of \( \text{That } F \text{ is } G \) that the appropriated object be \( G \), while policing requires that it satisfy \( F \) for the utterance to have a truth value at all. The denial of the strong inertness thesis is compatible with nominal policing, but does not require it. One sort of semantics that denies the strong inertness thesis allows that in a context where the object appropriated is not \( F \), the utterance is false. In contrast, if nominal policing holds, then such an utterance fails to semantically express a proposition at all.\(^{12}\) In our case for nominal policing, the first order of business is to argue against the strong inertness thesis.

The strong inertness thesis is motivated by a sort of case made familiar by discussions of referential uses of definite descriptions (borrowing terminology from Keith Donnellan 1966). The referential uses in question are uses of the definite

\(^{12}\) We are counting policing as a truth-conditional role for the nominal. Policing holds that the nominal plays a non-trivial role in truth-conditional semantics, in that it plays a semantically specified role in determining whether a proposition is expressed. Rather than gloss this situation as one in which the nominal has no truth-conditional role, we prefer to describe it as one in which the nominal plays a truth-conditional role (though as we shall say later, one that is entirely presuppositional) because this role is encoded in the truth-conditional semantics. Moreover, policing stands in contrast to the view that the role of the nominal is purely one of aiding the hearer’s understanding of the proposition expressed.

Although it is not built into the definition of nominal policing that policing is the only truth-conditional role for the nominal, we think that it is. (Here we concur with Braun (1994) and Borg (2000).)
description the \textit{F} where the intended referent does not satisfy \textit{F}. Despite the fact that the speaker in Donnellan’s classic examples misdescribes the object she intends to talk about, communication proceeds unimpeded. In one of the examples, a speaker at a party says:

3. The man in the corner drinking a martini is happy,

The speaker is pointing at and intending to talk about a man who is drinking water. Yet communication appears to be unimpeded. Thus, part of the nominal seems to be \textit{communicatively} inert. It seems to be superfluous in indicating what the speaker intends to communicate.

In some contexts, classic perceptual uses of complex demonstratives exhibit these same features. A fox is nosing its way through the garbage. An onlooker who mistakes it for a badger says to someone witnessing the scene:

4. That badger is hungry.

In some such contexts, the nominal \textit{badger} is not needed to enable the hearer to understand what the speaker intends to communicate. It is not needed, for instance, if the fox is already available to be the topic of the conversation by being mutually acknowledged as visually prominent.\footnote{Example (4) is close to one given by Larson and Segal (1995, p. 213) in their sympathetic discussion of inertness theses.}

In general, if other factors already make it obvious to the addressee which object the speaker has appropriated in her use of \textit{that badger}, then the nominal \textit{badger} is not needed to serve this purpose.

The strong inertness thesis is motivated by the idea that \textit{communicative} inertness indicates \textit{truth-conditional} inertness. It takes those uses of complex demonstratives in which the nominal is communicatively inert as the paradigm classic perceptual uses.

It is tempting to dismiss strong inertness out of hand, as one might think that a predicate could not be semantically inert in a sentence. This idea is expressed by the following argument:

\begin{quote}
In a compositional semantics, the semantic value of a sentence is a function of the semantic values of its constituents. If the nominal \textit{F} in a complex demonstrative \textit{that F} were inert, \textit{F} could not make its usual contribution to the truth conditions of sentences of the form, for instance, \textit{a is F}.
\end{quote}

Call this the \textit{semantic contribution argument}. Borg (2000, p. 239) makes this argument in criticizing Larson and Segal’s support for the strong inertness thesis:

\begin{quote}
We know that the parts treated as otiose [by the strong inertness thesis] must be treated as meaningful elsewhere in our theory; that is to say, our semantic theory independently requires rules for predicate expressions, which will be called into play when a predicate term appears in any other context. Yet, when appearing concatenated with a demonstrative term, these meaning rules must simply be bypassed; despite the superficial similarity of ‘\textit{that F}’ and ‘the F’, the proponent of [the semantic inertness thesis] must hold that our theory treats only the latter as possessing a structured meaning…\footnote{Josh Dever (2001) makes a somewhat similar criticism of inertness theses. Dever assumes (against the strong inertness thesis) that “the proposition that that \textit{F} is \textit{G} logically implies the proposition that some \textit{F} is \textit{G}.” He then endorses what he calls a}
Though we deny the strong inertness thesis, we think the semantic contribution argument against it is misguided. The argument conflates the input to semantic composition with the output of semantic composition. This is a mistake. It is not difficult to give a semantics of complex demonstratives which allows the nominal both to have its usual semantic value, and yet to be inert when it is part of a complex demonstrative.

To illustrate this point, we need to consider a fragment of a semantic theory. Let us stipulate, not implausibly, that a sentence of the form That F is G has the structure [[[that][F]]] is G. We shall take the predicates F and G to have their usual semantic types, as functions from objects to truth-values, and we shall assume that the only composition rule at work is functional application. It is relatively easy to arrive at a semantic value for that F which is not anomalous, when that has as its semantic value a constant function on the value of F. In this case, that F will deliver the same output, no matter what value F has. This is compatible with the nominal F having the same semantic value as it has in other constructions.

Rather than develop this theory in much more detail, let us consider what it predicts with respect to a use of an English sentence of the form That F is G. Return to the scene with the garbage, in which a speaker mistakes a hungry fox for a hungry badger, and utters That badger is hungry (4). Let us first suppose that, for an occurrence of that as part of a classic perceptual use of a complex demonstrative, there is a function a(c) which returns the appropriated object of the context of use c. Then the semantic value of that will be a constant function from the value of F to a(c). In notation, [[[that]]] = λF.a(c), where an expression inside double brackets superscripted with c indicates the semantic value of that expression relative to the context c. Then, by applying function to argument, we can compute:

5. 
   [[[that badger is hungry]]] = 1 iff 
   [[[hungry]]]([[that badger]]) = 1 iff 
   hungry(a(c))

This is true if the object appropriated by the use of that badger has the property of being hungry.

In this fragment of a semantic theory, the nominal retains its usual semantic value. It nonetheless satisfies the strong inertness thesis, thanks to the unusual rule for that. Granted, the way in which the semantic value of that F depends on the semantic value of F, in this fragment, is not very interesting. But it is compositional just the same. This illustrates that it is possible to give a compositional semantics for That F is G with the following three features. First, the truth or falsity of a use of That F is G does not depend on whether that object is F; second, the semantic values of nominals need not differ from what they are in other constructions; third, it uses only entirely standard modes of version of semantic innocence, which he says “insists that the predicate F in that F is G make the standard F-type contribution to content, and hence guarantees the overlap of F-ness and G-ness that licenses the inference [from the proposition that that F is G] to the proposition that some F is G” (p. 277, notation modified to fit our own).

We have somewhat arbitrarily chosen to sketch a semantics in which [[[that]]] has type <<e,t>,e>, taking as input a predicate and giving as output an individual. It would be easy to give similar treatment making it a full-fledged generalized quantifier with type <<e,t>,<<e,t>,t>>. Nothing we say is sensitive to this difference.
semantic composition (indeed, only functional application). The fact that the semantic theory sketched has these three features shows that the semantic contribution argument does not threaten the strong inertness thesis. For all the semantic contribution argument shows, that thesis is perfectly plausible.

Although the strong inertness thesis is not threatened by the semantic contribution argument, it is threatened by other considerations—notably, by some pragmatic considerations. Return once more to the fox in the garbage. Suppose that this time, the speaker mistakes the fox for a secret agent. The fox does not look like a secret agent, in the way in which gasoline looks like water. But the speaker has a set of idiosyncratic beliefs: he believes that a new sort of secret agent has come to patrol the garbage, on a hunt for potentially useful information, and that the secret agent has the capacity to make himself look exactly like a fox. Let us suppose that the speaker in this situation is making two sets of mistakes. First, his beliefs about the disguises of secret agents are mistaken: there are no such secret agents who can disguise themselves as foxes. A fortiori the fox in the garbage is not a secret agent. Second, let us suppose, the speaker mistakenly believes that his addressee shares these beliefs. In fact, the addressee knows that the creature in the garbage is a fox, and knows as well that there are no secret agents that can disguise themselves in the way the speaker imagines.

In such a context, consider the speaker’s utterance:

6. #That secret agent is hungry.

He takes this to be both appropriate and true. More exactly, he thinks that the nominal *secret agent* is an epistemically useful nominal to use, in order to communicate what he wants to about the creature he sees in the garbage.

Once apprised of the facts, native English speakers do not tend to regard as true the speaker's utterance of (6) in the context described. We take this to be a datum. There seem to be three possible explanations for it: (i) Something is appropriated by the speaker’s use of *that secret agent*, and the nominal plays a truth-conditional role. (ii) Something is appropriated by the speaker’s use of *that secret agent*, and the utterance is true, and in judging that it is not true, speakers are confusing lack of truth with pragmatic inappropriateness. (iii) Nothing is appropriated by the speaker’s use of *that secret agent*.

Only explanation (ii) is compatible with the strong inertness thesis. According to (i), since the nominal plays a truth-conditional role, the utterance is either false or truth-value-less, and according to (iii), the utterance is truth-valueless because nothing is appropriated. Given that only (ii) is compatible with the strong inertness thesis, the weaker the case for explanation (ii), the weaker the reason to believe the strong inertness thesis.

Explanation (ii) must posit a merely pragmatic role for the nominal in (6). It cannot be part of this role to break appropriation, since by hypothesis the fox is appropriated by the speaker’s use of *that secret agent*. What makes explanation (ii) inferior to (i) and (iii) is that there is no such role for the nominal to play. There does not seem to be any epistemic role for it to play in helping the addressee figure out which thing is appropriated. It is easy to imagine the case in such a way that it is obvious to the

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16 So in a sense of look different from that in gasoline looks like water, the fox does look like a secret agent: it looks to the speaker as (the speaker believes) a secret agent would look under the circumstances that speaker believes himself to be in.
addressee that the speaker is pointing to and intending to talk about the fox, in which case there is no further question about which object the speaker wishes to say is hungry.

In response to this pragmatic criticism of the strong inertness thesis, a fan of the main idea behind the strong inertness thesis might try to weaken the thesis as follows:

There are some contexts in which a perceptual demonstrative utterance of
\[ \text{That } F \text{ is } G \] is true, if the appropriated object is G and not F.

Whereas the strong inertness thesis says it is sufficient for an utterance of \( \text{That } F \text{ is } G \) to be true, the appropriated object is G, the weakened thesis allows that there are utterances of \( \text{That } F \text{ is } G \) that are not true, even though the object appropriated by the use of \( \text{that } F \) really is G.

We shall call this the 
\textit{weakened inertness thesis}. As formulated, the weakened inertness thesis is very weak: weak enough to be compatible with number of different theses about the semantics of complex demonstratives. But the basic point of any of them is the same. Call contexts like that of (4) (the fox/badger) \textit{reasonable}: in such contexts, it is reasonable to take the appropriated object to satisfy the nominal. Call contexts like that of (6) (the fox/secret agent) \textit{unreasonable}: in these contexts, it is unreasonable to take the appropriated object to satisfy the nominal. The point of the weakened inertness thesis is to have the nominal behave as if inert in reasonable contexts like (4), but not in unreasonable contexts like (6). The nominal will thus appear to be inert in reasonable contexts, but will play a stronger role in unreasonable ones. We will consider three ways of implementing the weakened inertness thesis.

The first stays as close as possible to the model of the strong inertness thesis, in that it applies the inertness semantics. But it applies the semantics selectively, taking it to apply only in reasonable contexts. On this view, in reasonable contexts, the nominal combines by a rule like the one discussed for strong inertness; in unreasonable contexts, it combines by a rule that applies the nominal’s default value. So this option appeals to context-dependent rules of composition: which composition rules apply, on this view, depends on whether the context is reasonable or unreasonable. Rather than introduce context-dependence via a rule, it makes what rule applies itself context-dependent. \(^{17}\) We find this highly implausible, and are inclined to dismiss it out of hand. (For any readers not so inclined, the objection we raise against the second proposal will apply to this one as well).

The second option avoids appealing to context-dependent composition rules. Instead, on this option, what is sensitive to whether the context is reasonable or unreasonable is the nominal itself, rather than any special composition rule. On this view, in reasonable contexts, such as (4), the nominal contributes a sufficiently general property

\[^{17}\] Technically, it is easy enough to formulate such rules. A modification of the rule in (5) would not be difficult. To highlight our neutrality on just what the semantics of complex demonstratives must be, we could also give a semantics along the following lines.

\[
[[\text{That}]] = \lambda F \lambda G. \Phi'(F, G).
\]

For contexts like that of (4), where inertness is desired, \( \Phi'(F, G) = G(a(c)) \), getting the same result as (5) above. For contexts where we do not want inertness, like that of (6), we could have \( \Phi'(F, G) = F(a(c)) \& G(a(c)) \). Other options, more in line with nominal policing, are also available. Note that this semantics is context dependent, not in the sense that the mode of composition depends on the syntactic environment, but that it depends on features of the context of utterance.
that the appropriated object satisfies it. And in unreasonable contexts, such as (6), it makes its normal contribution. One cost of avoiding context-dependent rules is that the nominal is never genuinely inert, as it is according to the strong inertness thesis. For in both kinds of context, it contributes a property, albeit a less restrictive one in reasonable contexts. The weakened inertness thesis is weak enough that this option satisfies it.

Like the context dependent composition rules invoked by the first option, the context dependence invoked here is not very plausible, *prima facie*. Consider a perceptual demonstrative utterance where the nominal contains the clearly context-dependent expression *tall*:

7. That tall secret agent is hungry.

In the unreasonable context of (6), the nominal would contribute the usual value of *tall secret agent*, where the value of *tall* is fixed in part by the context. Now, consider a reasonable context for (7). There is a five-foot tall man wearing a trench coat and a hat. By a trick of the light, he looks to be about six feet tall, and he is not in fact a secret agent, he is a banker. The view we are considering predicts that in this context, the nominal *tall secret agent* will contribute its less restrictive value. Assuming that the value of *tall secret agent* is the intersection of the values of *tall* and of *secret agent*, this option predicts that the context extends the extension of *tall* to five feet, and extends the extension of *secret agent* to include bankers. But nothing that we know about how the value of *tall* depends on the context gives any reason to expect that its value will change in this way. More generally, nothing we know on independent grounds about the context-sensitivity of such adjectives suggests that they are sensitive to whether a context is reasonable or unreasonable.

There are other reasons to think this second option makes false predictions. If sensitivity to whether a context is reasonable or unreasonable is an aspect of the context-dependence of the nominal, then it should appear independently of what determiner goes with the nominal. With this in mind, consider:

8. The badger is hungry.

In the reasonable context of (4), the second option predicts this will come out true. (It does not merely say that there is a true speaker meaning associated with the utterances; it says that the semantic value of the sentence in context is evaluated to truth). This appears wrong, and is predicted to be wrong on most theories of definite descriptions.

Let us turn to a third way of implementing the weakened inertness thesis. Whereas the previous option called for the nominal to shift its contribution between different uses of complex demonstratives, this option calls merely for shiftiness between nominal contributions in complex demonstratives, on the one hand, and nominal contributions in other constructions, on the other. It is, therefore, equally a view about the contributions of *that* and *F* in *that F*. The single sort of contribution allegedly made by the nominal in complex demonstratives is this. The semantics of *that* converts the value of *F* to *reasonably taken to be an F*, and the nominal then contributes this value in a policing role.

As with the previous option, the nominal’s role is not inertness, as posited by the strong inertness thesis, since the nominal always make some sort of semantic contribution. But it satisfies the weakened inertness thesis nonetheless. In reasonable contexts, *That F is G* will be true even if the appropriated object is not an F. This will be so because, by hypothesis of what reasonable contexts are, it is reasonably taken to be F.
The third option may appear to circumvent the problems with the previous proposal, as it
avoids context dependent rules of composition, and does not ask the nominal to shift its
value between uses of complex demonstratives.

Our objection to the third option considers the following pair of sentences:

9. A. That mouse is hungry.
   B. That thing reasonably taken to be a mouse is hungry.

According to the third option, the complex demonstrative construction makes the
extension of mouse expand to include things (in that context) reasonably taken to be
mice. So it predicts that (9A) and (9B) will be synonymous.

This prediction appears to be false. Suppose we are in a zoology lecture. The
lecturer informs us that mice and shrews can be reasonably mistaken for one another, and
that even experts sometimes make mistakes. But the lecturer goes on to show us one
animal of each kind, and shows us precisely how to tell by looking which one is which.
She can certainly go on to say (9B) twice in succession, once pointing to the mouse, and
once pointing to the shrew she has just explained can be reasonably taken for a mouse.
Assuming the animals really are hungry, both utterances of (9B) are true. In contrast, we
get no such judgment for the corresponding uses of (9A). There, when she is pointing at
the shrew (which was just explained not to be a mouse), there is a strong judgment that
her utterance of (9A) cannot be true. More importantly, there is a strong differential
judgment between (9A) and (9B). This is incompatible with the prediction that they are
synonymous.

Let us summarize the dialectic so far. The strong and the weakened inertness
theses are motivated by the imperviousness of communication to (some) misdescription.
The strong inertness thesis has trouble with demonstrative utterances (of the form That F
is G) in which the object appropriated by the use of That F is G, yet in which speakers are
strongly disinclined to assess the utterance as true. The weakened inertness thesis tries to
accommodate these cases, but, we have argued, it cannot plausibly be implemented.

If both the strong and the weakened inertness theses fail, then the remaining
option is that the nominal plays a truth-conditional role of some sort. This would be either
a policing role, or a role whereby an utterance of That F is G is false if the appropriated
object is not F. We now argue directly for nominal policing.

3. Presuppositional phenomena as evidence for nominal policing

Our argument for nominal policing has the following three-step structure. First, we will
point out a glaring sort of semantic defect to which uses of bare demonstratives (this, that
and their plurals) are prone. In the case of bare demonstratives, it is relatively easy for
hearers to tell when this phenomenon is present, as the defect is something that can be
readily observed. Aside from the striking feeling of defectiveness, however, there are

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18 As with sentence (6) (That secret agent is hungry), one explanation for speakers’
judgments that the sentence is not true is that speakers have confused lack of truth with
pragmatic inappropriateness. We have already criticized this explanation (in the
discussion of explanation (ii) in our original discussion of (6)), and in any case what
matters here is the difference in judgments about (9A) and (9B), not whether those
judgments are correct.

19 The latter view is defended by Richard (1993).
also tests, involving the ways in which discourse may sensibly continue, by which one can detect this phenomenon. The second step of the argument is to present these tests.

In the third step, we move from bare demonstratives to complex demonstratives. We will argue, using the tests presented in the second step, that certain uses of complex demonstratives behave the same way as defective uses of bare demonstratives do: namely, uses in which the speaker appropriates an object that does not satisfy the nominal turn out (by the lights of the tests) to be just as defective as the defective uses of bare demonstratives. From the fact that the tests give the same results in both of these cases, we conclude that the same phenomenon of semantic defectiveness is present both times.

This will amount to an argument in favor of nominal policing. As will become clear as the discussion progresses, it will offer diagnostics for when an utterance fails to semantically express a proposition. When an appropriated object fails to satisfy a nominal, those diagnostics are met, and no proposition is expressed.

3.1 Bare demonstratives
Let us begin with the glaringly defective uses of bare demonstratives. Suppose a speaker points generally off into the distance and says:

10. #That is a fine piano.

This utterance is defective. There are two important features of its defect. First, it seriously inhibits communication. Second, the reason it inhibits communication appears to be somehow semantic—it is not that the utterance is rendered irrelevant, off-topic, or opaque. In this case, it appears the utterance cannot completely determine the conditions in which the item referred to by the occurrence of the demonstrative that has the property of being a fine piano. There is no such object, so we fail to determine truth conditions in this sense.

In light of this, we shall describe this sort of situation as one in which no proposition is expressed by the utterance (as we likewise do in nominal-policing). This formulation is no doubt somewhat theory-laden. The situation could be described in slightly different (and equally theory-laden) ways. It could be described by saying a structured proposition is expressed, but is gappy, in virtue of missing a constituent corresponding to the noun phrase. Alternatively, it could be described by saying a false proposition is expressed, but one that is false in a way distinctive of reference failure. (This is especially theory-laden, as the negation of the sentence would require the same distinctive falsehood status). No doubt, there are other options.

In light of the failure to determine truth conditions in the sense we described, we believe our preferred description is apt. But we also want to stress that for our concerns here, the theoretical differences between these various descriptions of the situation are comparatively minor. First of all, the judgment that there is something wrong in cases like (10) is very clear, and we take it to demonstrate the phenomenon in question, independently of any description we might choose. Moreover, each description agrees that the example exhibits some kind of grave semantic defect, be it lack of a proposition,

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20 As noted earlier, this is Braun’s (1994) view. Gappy propositions are further discussed in Braun (1993).
21 Michael Dummett (1959) discusses this option.
incompleteness of a proposition, or a distinctively marked sort of falsehood corresponding to reference failure.

It will be useful to have a label for the defect at issue. We'll call it *p-infelicity* (‘p’ for ‘propositionless’). The term ‘infelicity’ is often used to indicate that something is inappropriate or unacceptable. The judgment that (10) is somehow defective is a clear case of a judgment of infelicity. There are many kinds of unacceptability, and ‘p-infelicity’ is a label for the sort displayed in the utterance of (10). 22

We now turn to the second step of our argument, in which we present tests that can detect cases of p-infelicity, such as the defect apparent in the utterance of (10) when the bare demonstrative is empty.

### 3.2 Tests for p-infelicity

The defective utterance of (10) is an example of a *presupposition failure*. The utterance of *That is a fine piano* presupposes that the demonstrative *that* indicates a unique contextually salient individual. It is the failure of this presupposition that leads to failure to express a proposition. The tests that detect p-infelicity will be tests for a certain sort of presupposition failure.

Before elaborating the tests, it will be useful to comment on the notion of presupposition at issue. In linking presupposition to judgments of felicity, we are working with a *pragmatic* notion of presupposition. This sort of presupposition describes the requirements a sentence places upon a context for an utterance of the sentence to be felicitous in a context. Thus, sentence *S* presupposes proposition *p* if a context must satisfy *p* for an utterance of *S* to be felicitous in it. A bare demonstrative triggers the presupposition that the context contain a contextually salient demonstrated individual, as an utterance of a sentence containing a bare demonstrative will not be felicitous unless this requirement is met. 23

The pragmatic notion of presupposition is to be distinguished from the notion of logical presupposition: a relation between (gappy) propositions which describes when a proposition has a truth value. Our notion is pragmatic, in that it is an aspect of the way...
sentences behave in contexts, rather than a relation between propositions characterized in many-valued logic. At the same time, it must be stressed that p-infelicity picks out a subclass of pragmatic presuppositions. Not all infelicities are p-infelicities, and not all presuppositional requirements lead to p-infelicities when they are not satisfied. We have argued that bare demonstratives trigger presuppositions which lead to p-infelicity, but we do not insist that all presuppositions have this effect. Presuppositions leading to p-infelicity are basically expressive presuppositions, of the sort highlighted by P. F. Strawson (1950): they are requirements placed on a context for a sentence to express a proposition in that context. Just as p-infelicity is a subspecies of infelicity, this is a subspecies of (pragmatic) presupposition.\(^{24}\)

A presupposed proposition stands in an unusual relation to the sentence that presupposes it. (When clear enough, we will simply talk about a sentence which expresses a proposition, and talk about entailments between sentences). Consider a non-defective utterance similar to (10):

11. A. That is a fine violin.
    B. That is not a fine violin.
    C. If that is a fine violin, then we should appreciate it.
    P: That picks out a unique contextually salient individual.

Each of (A-C) entails (P). This is a mark of what is usually called the “backgroundedness” of presuppositions: presupposed propositions are background for felicitous utterances, and so are insensitive to whether it is a sentence or its negation which is uttered, or whether the sentence appears in a conditional.\(^ {25}\)

We have noted that bare demonstratives trigger presuppositions that lead to p-infelicity. We will say the same for complex demonstratives. To argue this, we need to know more clearly how to detect p-infelicity. Many early discussions of presupposition, notably that of Strawson (1950), linked the relevant notion of felicity to that of truth value. Strawson noted that in many cases of presupposition failure, especially in cases like (10), we are not inclined to say that what was said is true, or that it is false. We are not inclined to assign a truth value. As we mentioned, it is natural to associate this with the lack of a proposition to be true or false.

Unfortunately, the situation is not quite as clear as this explanation suggests. One reason is there is often an option to employ a so-called presupposition-canceling negation. Consider:

12. That is NOT a fine piano—there is nothing there at all.

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\(^{24}\) The classification in terms of logical, expressive, and pragmatic presupposition is due to Scott Soames (1989). Glanzberg (forthcoming b) presents examples of presuppositions whose failures trigger weaker infelicities than p-infelicity.

\(^{25}\) The family of environments in (11) can provide a useful set of diagnostics for presupposed content. In much of the literature concerned with what contents are presupposed by what sentential constructions, these diagnostics are often offered as virtually definitive of presupposition. They also indicate the basic facts about the projection of presuppositions from their triggers to complex sentences. The literature on these issues is quite large. For an introduction along the lines we pursue here, see Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet (2000). More extensive surveys of recent literature can be found in David Bever (1997) and Nirit Kadmon (2001).
This is a marked construction, but speakers often have it available. We are left wondering if the marked nature of the construction allows it to count as assessing a proposition for truth or falsehood. But nonetheless, in uttering (12), speakers appear to say something hard to distinguish from declaring an utterance of (10) to be false.26

Luckily, there is some more stable behavior that goes with p-infelicity. Here, finally, we come to two tests that we will shortly employ with uses of complex demonstratives. The first involves what we will call echo-assessments; the second involves indirect speech reports.

An echo-assessment of a sentence S that has already been spoken in a context is a repetition of S (perhaps correcting for occurrences of speaker-specific indexicals like I and you), preceded by either yes or no. In responding to an utterance of (10), speakers (who do not have any misapprehension that there is a demonstrated object) are strongly unwilling to make echo-assessments. They will not say either of:

13. A. #Yes, that is a fine piano.
   B. #No, that is not a fine piano.

When they do offer a negative judgment, as in (12), they do so by way of initiating a repair, marked by the stressed negation and the gloss on what semantic defect is present in the original utterance. This is the first test for p-infelicity. If an utterance is p-infelicitous, then echo-assessments are unacceptable, without initiating a repair.

The second test involves indirect speech reports. Speakers typically will not offer indirect speech reports that make use of the defective phrase. In response to (10), for example, they will not say simply:

14. #He said that is a fine piano.

If they do attempt this, they will typically initiate a repair, as in:

15. #He said ‘that is a fine piano’, but I don’t know what he was pointing at.

That is the second test for p-infelicity. If an utterance is p-infelicitous, then indirect speech report of it is unacceptable, without initiating a repair.

A crucial point about the repairs in these cases is that they are obligatory. The conversation cannot be acceptably continued, in these cases, unless some repair is made. Before speakers in the discourse can comment on the truth of p-infelicitous utterance, or report its content, the utterance must be repaired. Unlike the truth-value test, the need for repair is not made difficult to detect by such devices as presupposition-canceling negation. That just is a repair strategy. We propose that these two tests offer a reliable guide to p-infelicity.

Each of the tests we have proposed targets a central aspect of the notion of proposition expression: propositions are bearers of truth, and propositions are what speakers say. The echo-assessment test targets a proposition expressed by an utterance as the bearer of truth, which determines if the utterance is correct or not. If an echo-assessment fails, in a given context, it is because an assessment for truth of what was explicitly said by a speaker cannot be given, without initiating a repair of their attempt to express something. Hence, their attempt was sufficiently defective to preclude truth.

26 It may well be that these turn out to be what Laurence Horn (1989) calls ‘metalinguistic negation’. We are not committed to any particular analysis of this phenomenon here; we only need to note that constructions like (12) make it difficult to apply the Strawsonian test for p-infelicity.
assessment. This, we suggest, is a central aspect of their having failed to express a proposition at all. This test is thus a more refined version of the traditional test of truth value judgments.

The indirect speech report test targets the second aspect of proposition expression: propositions are what speakers say. If a speaker cannot give an indirect speech report, it is because they cannot appropriately express something the initial speaker might have been attempting to say by the means that speaker used. This occurs if in fact the first speaker’s attempt to express a proposition—to determine ‘what was said’—failed. As both features—being bearers of truth and being what speakers say—are aspects of the single notion of proposition expression, the tests are typically passed or failed together.

It is important to stress that information from a p-infelicitous utterance may nonetheless reach a knowledgeable interpreter. There are many cases in which information is conveyed which are clearly not cases of expressing a proposition. Consider a sun-burnt man, parched and dirty, who crawls out of the desert, pointing to a pitcher of water and attempting to speak. Too parched, he merely manages to produce a scratchy sound vaguely like:

16. Waa…

By nearly anyone’s lights, no proposition is semantically expressed. But lots of information is available in the act. The act conveys that he man is thirsty, wants water, wants that water, wants it more than to call his wife, etc. Information may be conveyed in all kinds of ways, many of which do not rise to the level of expressing propositions.

There is not the space here to explore fully what this difference amounts to. But let us simply note that it is important that the issue is one of expressing a proposition, by the assertion of a specific sentence, in a specific context. That can fail, even if there is a proposition that might be charitably attributed to the speaker. This comes out, for instance, when we apply the indirect discourse tests. There may well be cases where the reporter knows fully well what the speaker meant to convey, and can in many cases report it. To apply the test, we need to consider whether the reporter can report what the speaker meant, using their very words (allowing certain small modifications, like changing I to she). It is this which targets whether a proposition was expressed, rather than merely whether information was made available.

We should also pause to comment on the idea that a repair is obligatory. This is a normative notion, and it makes applying the tests somewhat difficult in some cases. The norm in question is a norm of discourse, as is appropriate for one that tests for presupposition. Such norms do not operate in a vacuum. If we concoct a case in which a speaker can save a small child from a horrible fate by making an otherwise bad indirect speech report, we may rest assured most decent speakers would do it without a second thought. A norm of discourse brings with it a felt unwillingness on the parts of speakers, and a tendency to seek out ways to avoid violations. Repair initiation is a well-established way to do so.

The basic mark of p-infelicity, and the presuppositions which induce it, is obligatory repair. But testing for the presence of such a norm, in the presence of other

27 An exception may be Robert Stainton (1995), who has argued that there are cases of non-sentential assertion.
28 Glanzberg (forthcoming a) explores them at greater length.
competing norms, can be a difficult task. The task is made more difficult by the fact that there are phenomena other than presupposition which can lead to obligatory repair. A failed utterance, like (16), or a grossly ungrammatical sentence, will also require repair. Moreover, a person might be unable to echo-assess or to make an indirect speech report, even if no presupposition fails: this could happen, for instance, if the person were ignorant of some features of the context of utterance, such as who is being referred to by an indexical like you, they.29

P-infelicity, in the form relevant to presuppositions, is marked by obligatory repair even when these other factors are not present. It is marked by obligatory repair even when a fully grammatical sentence is uttered in a case where there is no relevant ignorance of context, nor any significant interference from competing norms. In these cases, the source of p-infelicity is a failure of presupposition. Our tests are designed to detect this, but they must be applied properly to do so. They must be applied in cases where there is no question about what sentence is uttered, or what the values of its constituents are. Likewise, they must be applied when the dominant norms demand correct assessment for truth, and for correct reporting of what was said. In such cases, the echo-assessment and indirect speech report tests can reveal remaining p-infelicities, which mark the sort of presupposition failure that clearly goes with bare demonstratives.

To make the proper application conditions for the tests vivid, we will sometimes imagine them being applied in a ‘courtroom’ setting, where a witness is being asked by a lawyer for an echo-assessment or an indirect speech report. This setting makes vivid the assumption that all sentences are well-formed, and all the information needed to determine the values of their constituent is common knowledge. The setting also makes vivid the screening-off of competing norms. In the courtroom (as we imagine it), there is a clear premium on speaking correctly in the most narrow sense. For the witness on the stand, whether or not what they say is misleading, unhelpful, or irrelevant, is not really their concern. Their obligation is only to speak correctly. When the tests bear in these cases, they all the better detect the basic matters of whether truth-evaluable information was expressed by the very utterance in question. They all the better detect whether a proposition was expressed.

We now turn to the third step of our argument: applying the tests for p-infelicity to uses of complex demonstratives.

3.3 P-infelicity in complex demonstratives

Earlier, we discussed the notion of appropriation. Demonstratives, both bare and complex, require a supplement from the context. In the case of classic perceptual uses of complex demonstratives, the need for a distinctive contextual supplement is illustrated by the existence of contexts in which an utterance of (1) That key is bigger than that key

29 If the person asked to report or assess is considered ‘outside’ the context, this ignorance need not be counted as a mark of obligatory repair, which applies primarily to speakers within a context. On the other hand, if it is speakers within a conversation who are ignorant, it could be that sufficient ignorance of context leads to p-infelicity in some cases. We will not decide this matter here, as it engages some delicate questions of what constitutes a context which we do not need to resolve for our purposes. (Thanks to Jeff King for bringing this point to our attention.)
would be felicitous, but (2) *The key is bigger than the key* would not. We have been neutral on what the nature of this supplement is, offering no more than this functional characterization. But as we discussed in Section 1, some candidates include speaker intentions of some sort, and publically accessible gestures of pointing.

One route to p-infelicity in complex demonstratives is through failure of appropriation. Call this the *pre-appropriation* route to p-infelicity. This sort of failure leads to genuine p-infelicity. Suppose, for instance, I point at an empty counter and say:

17. #That key is mine.

I have failed to appropriate anything by my use of *that key*. Compare this with the case in which I say:

18. #That is mine.

Both utterances are similarly defective. A speaker will not provide an indirect speech or an echo-assessment for either (17) or (18) without initiating a repair. For example, applying the indirect speech report test to (17) gives:

19. A. #She said that key is hers.
   B. She said ‘that key is mine’, but I don’t know what she meant, because there was nothing there.

The pre-appropriation route to p-infelicity really does lead to p-infelicity. Even so, as pre-appropriation failures are not generally due to the nominal, these are not the crucial cases for policing.

It is the second route to p-infelicity that is especially relevant to our defense of nominal policing, so we will focus on it. This route is through appropriation success, where there is an object that the speaker appropriates by her (classic perceptual) use of a complex demonstrative, but *it fails to satisfy the nominal*. This would be a *post-appropriation* route to p-infelicity. To argue for policing, we have to argue that this really is a route to p-infelicity as well.

Suppose someone at a restaurant is speaking to the waiter. The silverware is in plain view to everyone. Pointing clearly to the fork, the speaker says:

20. #That knife is dirty.

This is indeed a p-infelicity. Running our diagnostics, we can see that the waiter will be unwilling to offer an echo-assessment. He will not say either:

21. A. #Yes, that knife is dirty.
    B. #No, that knife is not dirty.

Nor will we find indirect speech reports like:

22. #The person at table 8 said that knife is dirty. [Speaking to the cook.]

The speaker might avoid the issue, by saying:

23. Yes, that [pointing] is dirty.

Or perhaps a repair might be initiated, with:

24. Yes, I see your FORK is dirty. I’ll get a new one.

As we have described the case, there is an appropriated object: the fork. We relied upon the pointing gesture to make this clear, but it is not crucial to the case. We might well have appealed to intentions manifested in some other way. But however appropriation happens, there is further reason to think it happens in this case. The further reason is illustrated by non-linguistic behavior. Suppose we have a command following (20), as in:

25. #That knife is dirty. Bring me a new one!
We have marked infelicity here. It is p-infelicity, as our tests will readily show. But a thoughtful waiter, trying to satisfy his client's desires, will still have no trouble picking up the fork and replacing it. This shows we have appropriation, though we still have p-infelicity.

What we see here is evidence for nominal policing. The failure of an appropriated object to satisfy the nominal leads to p-infelicity. Failure to satisfy the nominal is thus tantamount to failure to express a proposition. So there is proposition failure in cases in which an appropriated object fails to satisfy the nominal, which is just what nominal policing predicts. Moreover, the requirement that the appropriated object satisfy the nominal behaves precisely as we expect of a presupposition which triggers p-infelicity. We see just as much:

26. A. #That knife is dirty.
   B. #That knife is not dirty.
   C. #If that knife is dirty, I will make a scene.

We thus conclude that it is a presupposition of sentences with complex demonstratives that the appropriated object satisfy the nominal, and if this presupposition fails, we have p-infelicity. This is nominal policing.

It may be objected that if there is appropriation, then the sentence uttered in fact determines a proposition in context. On this view, and utterance of That F is G is true just in case the appropriated object is G.

Our response to this worry begins with a ‘courtroom’ version of (20). The lawyer holds up a fork and says to the witness on the stand:

27. Yes or no: this knife killed the victim.

In this case, the witness will find repair obligatory in echo-assessment.

28. #Yes, that knife killed the victim.

The objection is presumably based on the observation that we can have:

29. Yes, that killed the victim.

This is perfectly acceptable; but it is not an echo-assessment.

There is a strong differential judgment between (28) and (29). (29) is entirely acceptable, while (28) is markedly bad. If the objection where correct, then given that we have clear appropriation of the same object in both, we would expect little or no difference between the two. With policing, we predict just the difference we see.

Because of the behavior of presuppositions under negation, we do not follow Richard (1993), which predicts that That F is G has the same truth-conditions as That is F and G (where the demonstrative in both cases is a device of direct reference). This prediction requires that an utterance of That F is not G be true when the appropriated object fails to satisfy F, while we maintain it is a p-infelicity. A slightly more delicate matter is the proposal of Dever (2001), that complex demonstratives map to non-restrictive relative clauses, so That F is G has the truth conditions of That, which is F, is G. Judgments about these cases are not clear, but with Dever himself, we do not see false non-restrictive relative clauses as inducing p-infelicity. We take this as a reason to doubt that complex demonstratives map to such clauses. We hence believe our proposal is more accurate, and simpler, than Dever’s. (Cf. Chierchia and McConnnell-Ginet (2000) for an argument that non-restrictive relative clauses do not induce presuppositions.)
It is worth stressing here that the felicitous (29) constitutes an understated repair, which substitutes a successful bare demonstrative for a defective complex demonstrative in answering (27). A more pronounced repair would be:

30. Well, that is a fork, but that fork did kill the victim.

We thus find, as policing predicts, p-infelicity with the complex demonstrative, but not the bare demonstrative.

It might also be objected that defective utterances containing complex demonstratives such as (20) are p-infelicitous for a different reason than the defective uses of bare demonstratives are. If this is right, then p-infelicity is not the unified phenomenon of proposition-failure that we have presented it to be. For instance, it might be suggested that what is bad about (28) is more accurately glossed as its being misleading. But this is at odds with the obligatory nature of the repair. Suppose the witness is a doctor. The doctor knows the fork pierced victim’s heart, but by some medical peculiarity, its piercing did not kill the victim. Rather, what killed him was a long-standing liver disease resulting from years of desultory living. The prosecutor may ask (31A), pointedly, and be answered by (31B):

31. A. Yes or no: this fork pierced the victim’s heart.
   B. Yes, this fork pierced the victim’s heart.

Here, the echo-assessment (31B) is highly misleading, as the doctor fully knows. But the repair is not obligatory, and in this setting, (31B) is in no way defective. There is a repair that the doctor might make, to cancel the misleading effect, but it is optional. Optionally, the doctor can say:

32. Yes, this fork pierced the victim’s heart…but that did not kill him.

The courtroom situation highlights the optional nature of this response. It is unlikely the doctor will make the repair (or be allowed to make it) in this setting.

A closely related objection is that the acceptability of (29) shows that the content of lawyer’s question all along was what follows yes in (29). We disagree. What the acceptability of (29) shows is simply that, as in more extreme cases like (16), there is a way to express what appears to be the intent of the lawyer’s question. The report in (29) is quite easy to come by, and quite close to the words used by the lawyer, but it remains a different sentence, even if close. It remains a repair. That a different sentence can be an accurate representation of what the lawyer had in mind is no more significant than extreme cases like (16).

There may remain a worry that the problem in (28), and the other policing examples we have considered, do not ‘feel’ like those in bare demonstrative cases like the original (10). They do not ‘feel’ like there is no proposition expressed. We suggest that the appearance of a proposition is the misleading result of the ease of the switch from (28) to (29), which obscures the difference, highlighted in (16), between expressing a proposition and making information available. This may return us to the issue we have already discussed, of whether or not to insist that p-infelicity is to be glossed as ‘failure to express a proposition’ or some other grave defect. But as we said, the two p-infelicity tests target the basic features of the phenomenon in question, whatever its name. In p-infelicitous uses of complex demonstratives, truth value cannot be straightforwardly calculated, and what the speaker said cannot be straightforwardly reported. This is evidence for nominal policing.
4. Communicative smoothness and policing

So far, we have argued that the strong and the weakened inertness theses are unsustainable, and we have presented evidence in favor of nominal policing. Together, these make a strong case: we must have some policing, and the only way to have it sometimes is to have it all the time.

But there remain a few cases where policing appears to be too much: the very cases that motivated the inertness theses to begin with. Consider the earlier example (4), repeated here:

4. That badger is hungry.
In the context we described, the fact that the appropriated animal is not a badger, but a fox, does not appear to cause any evident problem. This might tempt one to embrace an inertness thesis. Though we have argued against inertness theses, we would now like to explain why the cases motivating them are not counterexamples to nominal policing, and why they don’t support inertness theses as much as they might seem to initially.

Let us begin with a new example. Suppose I am highly knowledgeable about cooking, sharing a kitchen with someone less knowledgeable who confuses colanders and sieves. Pointing to a sieve, she says:

33. The holes in that colander are too small.
I know that the appropriated object is not a colander. So as far as I am concerned, the utterance is markedly odd. But there is an extraordinary measure I can take. I can recognize that my companion has little if any idea what she is talking about, and is misusing the word. I can play along, and even reassure my companion by saying:

34. No, the holes in that colander are just fine.
If I say (34), there will be no evident problem with communication. Indeed, I might choose to say (34) for just this reason: communication will proceed as well as it needs to for the purposes at hand if I do.

The communicative smoothness enabled by my utterance of (34) is compatible with p-infelicity. If I play along in this way, pretending to have the same mistaken belief as my interlocutor, I will experience the discomfort that comes from knowingly misusing a word. Although the mistaken interlocutor may not feel it, there is something defective about both utterances (33) and (34). The defect would show up if someone else, who was neither ignorant nor pretending to be, reported the conversation. Suppose, for instance, that I tried to report what my mistaken interlocutor said to someone else. I would not say:

35. #She said that the holes in that colander are too small.
I would not say this, because I would be following the linguistic norm that I suspend for the sake of communicative efficiency in uttering (34). Even in that context, repair is obligatory. The speaker who utters (34), while knowing that the appropriated object is not colander, in effect trades off obligation to follow one linguistic norm for the sake of following a competing norm. In this case, the norm of efficient communication wins over the norm obligating repair.31

31 There are contexts in which the norm of repair would win, and an utterance of (33) would trigger a repair for echo-assessment. This is just what our tests are designed to detect. As we mentioned, the ‘courtroom’ setting is a natural one for applying the tests. Suppose the interlocutor is a lawyer, who demands of the witness under oath:

(i) Yes or no: Are the holes in the colander too small?
What about the original fox/badger case (4)? There too, speakers can make do with the utterance of (4), if their epistemic state is such that they cannot distinguish foxes from badgers. They can then simply assume that the animal is a badger, and go on thinking that things are fine. And even if they know too much about what badgers look like to assume this (badgers do not really look like foxes!), speakers may still find it possible to carry on as if the animal was a badger—just as one might, in response to (33), speak as if sieves were called ‘colanders’. The crucial point is this: the fact that locally there might be conversational smoothness does not show that there is not a problem with the discourse that would appear in other settings. The norm which obligates repair may be in effect, even if we do not follow it because we are placing a premium on communicative smoothness locally. Local conversational smoothness is not enough to avoid p-infelicity.

Another way to see this point is to consider an extreme case. Suppose two people simultaneously hallucinate a green monster, which seems to both of them to be in the same location. One of them points in a way that would appropriate the monster if it were really there—and in a way that appears to both hallucinators to do just that—and says:

36. #I am frightened of that.

For the hallucinators, communication is entirely smooth. But it is rather drastic step to say that a proposition is expressed here. The context is defective enough to refuse to count a proposition as expressed even if the speakers think there is one, and even if it appears locally that they communicate smoothly. That is a reason to think that there is p-infelicity, despite how things seem to the speaker and hearer.

The moral to be drawn here is that not all participants in a conversation will be able to recognize a p-infelicity. Repair does not cease to be obligatory, simply because there is communicative smoothness. In some cases, the presence of p-infelicity is not enough to impede all aspects of communication. One can get what one needs out of the conversation, even if there is a problem that would become evident in a wider context.

We have argued that the cases motivating inertness theses are not counterexamples to nominal policing. We have not said very much, however, to explain the intuition that the utterances in these cases are true, other than pointing out that they can be met with communicative smoothness, rather than attempts at repair. Much more can be said about what underlies communicative smoothness in these cases, and this will be our focus for the rest of the section.

In (34), the object appropriated by a use of a complex demonstrative does not satisfy the nominal, and the speaker knows it. For cases like these, there is a natural story to tell about the communicative smoothness in terms of the dynamics of conversations. Let us begin with some preliminary remarks.

We think of conversation as a matter of exchanging information. Following Stalnaker (1974, 1978) and David Lewis (1979), we think of these exchanges as build a conversational record of information that has been accepted in the course of the conversation, together with whatever background information may also be taken for granted by participants in the conversation. Information is normally added to the record in such a context, unlike the easygoing one described above, the obligatory nature of the repair is made manifest.
by assertion. If the content of an assertion is accepted in the conversation, it is added to the conversational record.\(^{32}\)

Whatever is in the conversational record becomes common ground among speakers in a conversation. It is common also to think of a context in terms of the accumulated common ground information at a given point in a conversation. The context of an utterance may be thought of as the current common ground—the current state of the conversational record—at the point of utterance. From this perspective, for instance, what the indexical you refers to is a matter of who is taken to be the addressee by speakers, which is a matter of what the common-ground information about the addressee is. We might think of appropriation in these terms as well. What object is appropriated by an utterance might be a matter of what common-ground information about the salience of objects is present in a given utterance. (Though as we discussed in Section 1, we do not adopt this as our official view, for it may preclude a more extensive role for speakers’ intentions. As we said there, we wish to remain neutral on this issue.)

It is well-known that there are other ways to add information to a conversational record than assertion. One that is especially important is accommodation. Consider the familiar case of a factive verb:

   B. John does not regret voting for Reagan.
   P. John voted for Reagan.

The presupposition of (37A) is (P). If the information that John voted for Reagan (P) is not in a given context—not part of the conversational record—an utterance of (A) may appear infelicitous. It may. But more often, speakers will simply add this information to the context, and move on. This may well induce a sort of 'double-take' feeling, but it will not lead to any genuine infelicity. This is the process of accommodation. As we are describing it, accommodation is a kind of Gricean, on-the-fly repair strategy. To avoid rendering an utterance infelicitous, speakers add the information required by its presuppositions to a context, and proceed as if that information had been there all along. A rather stylized version of this can be seen with clefts, as in the textbook that starts:

38. It was in 1812 that Napoleon fought the battle of Borodino.

Such an utterance in a somewhat less direct way conveys the date of the battle.\(^{33}\)

\(^{32}\) Of course, this is an idealization in many ways. Not all conversations are oriented towards building a record of information. Those that are involve more structure, such as a complex structure of turn-taking. But none of these issues affects our point about conversational smoothness and policing. (For a survey of some of these sorts of issues, see Levinson 1983.)

\(^{33}\) We are treating this sort of accommodation as type of conversational repair, inducing what is sometimes glossed as the phenomenon of ‘informative presupposition’. This is fairly close to Lewis’s original use of the term, and may well be close to Stalnaker’s treatment as well (see Simons (2003) for more discussion). In more recent literature, such as van der Sandt (1992), accommodation is more closely allied with projection mechanisms.

Factive presuppositions are discussed at length by Stalnaker (1974). Clefts have been the subject of much discussion, including Atlas and Levinson (1981), Delin (1992), and Glanzberg (forthcoming b).
Presupposition accommodation can happen with complex demonstratives as well. Suppose my car mechanic tells me *Your fuel injector is cracked*, while pointing to a silvery thing in the engine of my car. Some time later, I am complaining about this, and to make the point, I open the car’s hood, point down to the silvery thing and say:

39. That fuel injector is cracked.

This can be perfectly felicitous. Suppose the context provides an appropriated object. Let us suppose, for instance, that my pointing is clear. Suppose, furthermore, that I did in fact glean the right thing from my mechanic, and what I point to really is a fuel injector. (It could easily have been otherwise. My mechanic could have been pointing to the place where the gasoline spilled out, rather than the fuel injector.)

In this case, both the speaker and hearer have accommodated. Each adds to her store of information that the thing pointed to is a fuel injector. (No doubt, both have highly partial understanding of this proposition, but they can add it nonetheless.) The result is that this proposition becomes common ground among speakers. It becomes information in the context. In the fuel injector case (39), the accommodated proposition is in fact correct. But this is not necessary for the process. The same phenomenon is at work in the colander/sieve case (34), when the speaker knows that the appropriated object is not a colander but for present purposes decides to speak as if it is. The speaker might have been inclined to take what colanders are as common ground, in a cooking setting. But she might now revise this supposition, adding information in the common ground that she knows to be false—namely, that the object in question is a colander. There is no general requirement that information in a conversational record be true. This is asking too much. Nor is there even a requirement that all speakers believe it. It is possible to go along with a conversation, even if one does not believe what is said.

Summing up, the communicative smoothness in the cases motivating the inertness theses is explained as follows. What appears to impede smooth communication, as far as speakers in the conversation are concerned, is the information contained in the context. Impairment can be avoided by such strategies as accommodation, which is a way of adjusting this information. We have argued that this can take place in spite of grave semantic defects in an utterance: in spite of p-infelicity. Thus, if the situation is right, the norm of repair can be overridden to preserve communicative smoothness. But, we have argued, there is p-infelicity nonetheless.\(^{34}\)

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\(^{34}\) Throughout, we have treated nominal policing as the thesis that the object appropriated by a use of a complex demonstrative must satisfy the nominal, in order for the utterance in which it occurs to express a proposition. We have argued that this thesis is true in virtue of the presuppositional behavior of complex demonstratives. Some linguists and philosophers (such as Stalnaker 1974, 1978) hold a view of presupposition that would in effect recast nominal policing in epistemic terms. This view builds on the idea of context as common-ground information. According to it, the only issue for satisfaction of presuppositional requirements is whether the information in a context entails a presupposition. (Propositional presuppositions, such as those of factives like (37), are naturally treated this way.) If we treated policing this way, it would be recast as an epistemic thesis: a nominal would count as satisfied in a case in which all speakers accept a mistaken proposition.
5. Conclusion

Complex demonstratives in their classic perceptual uses are standardly taken to be paradigmatic referring expressions. If the nominal in such uses of complex demonstratives plays a policing role, this does not mitigate against the standard categorization of complex demonstratives as referring expressions, as other defenders of nominal policing have pointed out (e.g. Braun 1994; Borg 2000).

We said at the start that our defense of nominal policing, unlike previous ones, leaves it open whether complex demonstratives are devices of reference or not. But it may initially seem mysterious how they could fail to be such devices. How, for example, could complex demonstratives plausibly be thought to be quantificational?

Jeffrey King (2001a. Ch. 2) has recently defended a view according to which, in a context of utterance, that in that F contributes a two-place relation between properties to the semantic value of utterance in which it occurs, just as the contributions of some, every, one, and other generalized quantifiers are thought to do. (It is not unproblematic what makes an expression a quantifier; King points to several syntactic and semantic features that complex demonstratives, on his view, share with paradigmatic quantifiers). According to King, the lexical meaning of that in that F—its meaning, considered outside of any context—is a function from properties and context to a truth value. Where blanks are placeholders for properties, King thinks that the proposition expressed by an utterance of That F is G is structured in the following way:

\[
\text{__ and __ are uniquely __ in an object } x \text{ and } x \text{ is __.}
\]

The first and last blank are filled in by F and G, respectively. How the middle two blanks are filled depends on whether the use of that F is rigid or not.

We have been concerned exclusively with classic perceptual uses, which are rigid, so let us focus on those. When the use of that F is a classic perceptual use (and so is rigid), the second blank is filled with the property of being identical to the appropriated object, and the third blank is filled with the property of being jointly instantiated in the

In explaining problematic examples like (4) and (33), we have in effect noted that this more epistemic approach is useful in explaining phenomena of conversational smoothness. But we have also noted that in some cases, this smoothness is the result of a kind of pretense. In (35), for instance, the accommodating speaker finds uses of that colander marked, and cannot make them outside of the highly localized context.

Though we have not argued against this more epistemic view as a basis for approaching the wide range of presuppositional phenomena, we have in essence argued that it is not adequate for the presuppositions of demonstratives. We think this is fairly clear in hallucination cases like (36). More generally, we have suggested that even when the participants in a given conversation do not recognize a defect in their common-ground information, and so do not recognize p-infelicity, it may be present nonetheless. As we noted in discussing (35), the infelicity may still be brought to light in wider conversational settings, where speakers not entertaining the same propositions are involved. Generally, though speakers need not believe all the propositions in a conversational record, gross errors in the record, or asymmetry in speakers' attitudes, can constitute defects in a context which can generate p-infelicity.
context. The second blank is needed, King thinks, to account for what we have called appropriation. Call this the proposition's appropriation position.

Let us see what a simple example looks like on King’s view. Suppose someone utters:

41. That fox in the garbage is hungry.

Suppose the object appropriated by the use of that fox is the creature Frida. Then the property filling in the appropriation position is the property of being identical to Frida, and the entire proposition, according to King, will be:

42. FOX IN GARBAGE and =FRIDA are uniquely jointly instantiated in c in an object x and x is HUNGRY.

(Here c stands for the context of utterance, and capitals indicate properties.)

Now, with respect to nominal policing, King’s account is silent. King’s account leaves open what happens if there is no unique thing that is both Frida and a fox. It leaves open whether an utterance in such a context is straightforwardly false, or fails to express a proposition. But the latter option could easily be written into King’s semantics, without spoiling the status of the expression as a quantifier. This would simply be a matter of appending a clause that says there is a presupposition that there is a unique object that has both F and the property in the appropriation position.35

If such a presupposition were added to King’s semantics, the result would be a quantificational account of complex demonstratives in which the nominal plays a policing role.36 This illustrates the neutrality of our defense of nominal policing. If our defense works, then complex demonstratives (at least when used in the classic perceptual way) carry a presupposition that the appropriated object satisfies the nominal. But the fact that these uses carry such a presupposition places no constraints on whether the expression is a device of direct reference, a device of reference of some other sort, a quantifier a la King, or something else.37 The presuppositions that we have argued complex demonstratives carry do not map on to any particular semantic category.

Suppose that the nominal in classic perceptual uses of complex demonstratives plays a policing role, but that these expressions are either quantificational, or are discourse anaphors in dynamic semantics. This would be an interesting combination of features for these expressions to have: they would not be devices of direct reference, or of...

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35 That generalized quantifiers can carry presuppositions has been well-known for some time, certainly since the work of Barwise and Cooper (1981).
36 Nominal policing is compatible with the view (call it nominal stalking) that for an utterance of That F is G to be true with respect to a world the appropriated object has to be F in that world—and not merely in the context of utterance. (So if nominal policing is true and nominal stalking false, then with respect to a world in which Frida is a fox but is not by the garbage, the an utterance of (41) would be true, so long as in that world, Frida, wherever she is, is hungry.) Braun (1994) and Borg (2000) defend nominal policing and deny nominal stalking. Richard (1993) endorses nominal stalking. We argued against this in Note 30. King’s account of rigid uses of complex demonstratives denies nominal stalking as well.
37 For instance, Roberts’ (2002) dynamic treatment of complex demonstratives makes them a subspecies of definite noun phrases, all of which are treated as discourse anaphors in a dynamic framework.
reference of the sort that Evans (1982) and McDowell (1984) take demonstratives to exemplify. They would retain the main marks of referring expressions: they would be rigid; they would involve a rapport between speaker and object; and they would be object-dependent, in that if nothing is appropriated by the speaker’s use of the expression, then the utterance in which it occurs will lack a truth value. Of course, it is not news that expressions can be rigid, or sometimes require special rapport between speaker and thing spoken about, even if the expression is not a device of reference. What may be more surprising is that an expression (or some uses thereof) can be object-dependent, without being a device of reference, and without including any such device as a part. (A direct reference theorist would predict object-dependence for utterances of Something identical with that, but would not expect a quantifier phrase to be able to be object-dependent when it did not include any directly referential expressions.) The compatibility of our account of nominal policing with a wide range of different semantics for what many consider to be paradigmatic referring expressions brings this surprising fact into focus.

We conclude on a speculative note. Perhaps what we see in the case of complex demonstratives is an instance of a more general phenomenon: perhaps when an expression appears to be referential, this is due its having certain presuppositions. If this turns out to be correct, then all that may be left of the category of referring expressions are presuppositional phenomena, rather than a special sort of contribution to a proposition expression. We are not sure whether to believe this speculative hypothesis, but the case of complex demonstratives suggests that it is worth investigating.

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38 The way Evans and McDowell think of such expressions, they have de re Fregean senses.
39 This hypothesis bears on Stephen Neale’s (1993) “dilemma hypothesis,” according to which every singular term is either a quantificational expression or a referring one, where referring expressions are taken to be syntactically simple. Borg (2000) and Dever (2001) both argue that the case of complex demonstratives seems to make trouble for this hypothesis, on the grounds that these expressions are not syntactically simple (for Borg, this is a consequence of nominal policing). Neither rejects the dilemma hypothesis in the end, though for different reasons. (Borg concludes that the notion of what a referring expression is should be expanded, while Dever concludes that complex demonstratives have a great deal of underlying syntactic and semantic structure. For more critical discussion of the Dilemma hypothesis, see King (2001b).) If our speculative hypothesis turns out to be correct, then while complex demonstratives, as Borg and Dever suggest, pose a problem for the dilemma hypothesis, the moral to be drawn is rather than referring expressions do not form any semantic category at all.


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