Double definiteness, adjectives and parameters

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Recently there has been a lot of discussion of how double definiteness developed in Swedish and Norwegian (from the common language, Old Norse), cf. Abraham and Leiss (2007), Faarlund (2007), van Gelderen (2007), Lohndal (2007), Roehrs (2009), Stroh-Wollin (2009). In this talk I will review the debate and discuss what the core issues are and what possible solutions are. In particular, building on van Gelderen and Lohndal (2008), I will argue that there is another fact that needs to be taken into account as well, namely the fact that post-nominal adjectives are possible in Old Norse (in addition to pre-nominal adjectives) but not (productively) in the modern languages. I will argue that the location where definiteness is encoded is uniform but that the base (first-merged) position for adjectives (building on in particular Cinque forthcoming) varies. Finally I will also discuss possible implications for thinking about language change within the Minimalist Program and how this relates to current discussions about parameters and variation.