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Whorfianism and the Linguistic Imagination of Nationality

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My discussion takes as its focus two important texts of linguistic ideology, one by Benjamin Lee Whorf, the other by Benedict R. O'Gorman Anderson. My aim is to show how Whorf's analysis of the semiotic mechanisms of language ideology can help us to understand what is problematic about Anderson's heavy reliance on language in modeling the cultural phenomenology of nationalism.

Whorf's name has shared the fate of those of many physicians who first propose a differential diagnosis, in that the condition or "disease" he diagnosed now bears his name, Whorfianism, with its neutralizing adjectival form, Whorfian.¹ These terms have generally been used as pejoratives in the linguistic literature because of a sad though understandable history of Whorf-stimulated psycholinguistic research in the behaviorist 1950s, followed immediately by the era of rabidly dogmatic anti-"relativism" orchestrated by and in the name of Noam Chomsky. These trends have taken Whorf to task for the earlier, misguided Whorfianism Whorf himself would have only seen as a further symptom of the disease.²

I shall attempt to sketch out in this essay the three lines of theoret-

ical argument found in Whorf's oeuvre and will discuss the one central to the analysis of linguistic ideology. I will then turn to Benedict Anderson's brilliant little book, *Imagined Communities* (1991[1983]). It concerns the conditions under which nationalism has arisen as an ideological force and continues to exist and spread as a cultural form, exemplifying, however, classic Whorfian thinking. My point is this: that although Anderson's argument about the rise of nationalism recognizes the centrality of language as medium and even prototype of this cultural condition, it is itself a species of Whorfian construction from within that state or condition, a conceptual product of the linguistic conditions on which it rests.

THE THREE WHORFIAN THEMES AND HOW THEY GREW

Let me begin with Whorf (1897–1941), whose centenary we celebrated in 1997. There has now been constructed about Whorf a multi-generational, intertextual edifice of projective misrepresentations that have followed the various “fashions of speaking” about language in several disciplines.

Whorf's Generally Boasian Intellectual Milieu

Whorf himself was a consociate of many of the now seniormost generation of anthropologically influenced linguists. He was in his most active professional phase during the 1930s, the last decade of his life, when he was part of the network of students and others that had, since 1931, formed around Edward Sapir at Yale. Coming into anthropological linguistics through his interest in Mayan hieroglyphs, Whorf demonstrated an analytic brilliance that still shines through in his detailed linguistic descriptions of Hopi, Aztec, Shawnee, and other Native American languages (see Whorf 1946a, 1946b, 1956c[1940]).³ Indeed, Whorf shows himself to be perhaps the only Sapir associate who both theoretically mastered and was able consistently to put into practice the abstract conceptual machinery and methodological (analytical) dictates of commonly evolving descriptive linguistics in the American mode of the 1930s.

Having both an academic and a commercial professional identity, Whorf gave public voice to the enriching experience of a generation's

collective enterprise of focused descriptive-linguistic work on Native American languages. He rearticulated various Boasian truisms from this experience and went beyond them: from his long-term ruminations on Einsteinian physical “relativity” (Hibbard 1991), he prodded inferences in an area we might term “relativistic epistemology,” based on the contemporary scientific grammarian's understanding of language structure in relation to a cultural consideration of language use. It was, however, not Whorf's mentor, Sapir, who codified and ideologically framed the linguistics underlying this particular period of methodologically concerned Boasian relativism, but Leonard Bloomfield, in *Language* (1933), his comprehensive rewrite of Saussure's *Cours* (1916).⁴ Whorf's work must be read in light of this.

Whorf, in other words, was committed to such Boas-derived anthropological linguistic issues as the structural diversity of specific languages, the problem of defining the grammatical (or “conceptual”) categories of particular linguistic structures, (and comparing them in an appropriate typological framework); the question of doing deep linguistic history (comparative and historical linguistics) in North and Middle America to determine the “family” units of languages such as his own Uto-Aztec specialty; and in articulating to a wider audience, both in the social sciences and beyond—especially outside of academia—the implications of the findings of these specialized studies for what Boas (1928) termed “modern life.” But Whorf's vehicle for articulating these issues was a profound understanding of Bloomfieldian linguistic science, in which he was a superb practitioner at the same time that he was suspicious of, and indeed hostile to, the various obiter dicta of Bloomfield's outlook.⁵

The Bloomfieldian Irritant

Bloomfield was a born-again Vienna positivist (self-reconstructed in the image of Rudolph Carnap and Otto Neurath), a behaviorist (paying homage to his late friend Albert Paul Weiss and the tradition of German theorizing), and a fierce philosophical operationalist (hoping to do for linguistic science what Percy Bridgman and others were doing for physical science).

In the realm of philosophical positivism, Bloomfield (1936) declared that knowledge of matter (mass) in space-and-time plus

knowledge of autonomous syntax are the foundations of everything knowable as “reality,” including what reality lay behind received metaphysical speculation about human “mind,” which linguistics was going to be able to reduce in the technical, logico-philosophical sense of scientific reduction according to the Viennese “*Aufbau*.⁶

In the realm of psychological behaviorism, Bloomfield declared that whatever structure underlies the stimulus-response episodes of human interaction constitutes the unstable psychobiological glue that holds individual organisms of this species together in societies and other, more ephemeral, social formations. To solve the problem of human mentality, we need only figure out (1) the principles of schedules of reinforcement versus extinction of effects of stimuli to which language forms appear to be the responses, and (2) how linguistic forms themselves can serve as stimuli to which an individual responds. In its recalcitrance to self-study, human mentality seemed to others to involve distinct a priori intentional, historical, dialectical, or sociocultural-order principles impossible to associate easily with an individual human biological organism. Such attempts, for Bloomfield confessions of primitive ignorance, he captioned with the pejorative term “mind.”⁶

Finally, in the realm of scientific metatheory, Bloomfield, like all good operationalists, held that what he published in 1926 as “postulates” for linguistics as a science (1987a; see Silverstein 1978 for a commentary) were a set of unprovable but minimally essential and necessary heuristic “working methods”—indicating logically allowable operations of synchronic and diachronic linguistic analysis—from which emerged our scientific confidence in the existence of the empirical phenomena we deal with (things, and conditions relating such things). Thus all linguistic phenomena were to become abstract yet operationally locatable entities—operationalizable as equivalence-classes-under-distributional-rules—that one could never experience directly by sensorial means; operational postulates provide to the linguist the equivalent of laboratory meters for discovering unknowns. In this way the linguist could speak of (or ‘model’, as we now say) such “things” (linguistic units) in “structural” relations in specific analyses of the constitutive regularities inferred of grammar. The linguist understands in what sense such regularities are the norms that underlie particular stimulus-response phenomena in which linguistic noises or their

equivalents play the role of stimulus or response.

Whorf had a profound and ready ability to utilize the Bloomfieldian conceptual and analytic vocabulary for articulating the nature of linguistic structure. (When Whorf writes “taxeme” or “tagmeme” or “morpheme” or “class meaning,” he knows precisely what Bloomfield’s famous 1933 text says and applies the terms accordingly.) Notwithstanding, his whole scientific and philosophical stance, indeed his whole framework of belief (in part derived from an unshakable New England spirituality; see Rollins 1972, 1980), lay elsewhere. His discovery of Boasianism in the network around Sapir allowed him to rearticulate misgivings about scientific modernism (already long since articulated in polemics against Morganian evolutionary genetics, Einsteinian special relativity, and so on) that are specifically couched in terms of the lessons of linguistic science for a much broader, relativistic, and recognizably anthropological conception of humanity, and in particular of human *Geist* or ‘mind-in-sociohistorical-reality’. There are three component arguments, each with its own particular resonances with both Boasian and Bloomfieldian discourse.⁷

Linguistics as a Generalizing, Comparative Science

The first of Whorf’s messages is a joyful celebration of linguistics as a human “science,” something exceedingly important to Whorf, who came to the field from applied chemical engineering in the fire insurance business, and even more so to Leonard Bloomfield, who had a particularly bad case of science envy. In such articles as “Linguistics as an Exact Science,” the second (of three) he wrote for the MIT alumni readers of *Technology Review*, Whorf (1956e) shows how mutual distributional patterning of formal units—the phonemes—in the phonological structure of English words is highly predictable. He thus demonstrates the power of the Bloomfieldian method that realized the Saussurean vision of language structure as rules for “syntagmatic” compositionality of equivalence-classes or “paradigms” of more elementary linguistic forms. Just like a chemical formula, a symbolic formula for English monosyllables—occurred, occur, occurring, and possible of occurrence under this grammatical system, note!—can be fashioned as a formally symbolizable generalization about this particular language’s structure. Toward such generalizing descriptions, at all planes of linguistic

structure, linguists' "laboratory" work with language consultants ("informants," in the idiom of Whorf's day) is directed, not only for a single language, but for all Language. In his concluding pep talk to outsiders to this field (who were insiders in the world of unquestioned "science"), he seems enthusiastically to endorse the Bloomfieldian translation of the Viennese positivist vision of the universe as susceptible of reduction to two kinds of forces:

We all know now that the forces studied by physics, chemistry, and biology are powerful and important. People generally do not yet know that the forces studied by linguistics are powerful and important, that its principles control every sort of agreement and understanding among human beings, and that sooner or later it will have to sit as judge while the other sciences bring their results to its court to inquire into what they mean. When this time comes, there will be great and well-equipped laboratories of linguistics as there are of other exact sciences. (Whorf 1956e[1940]:232)

Whorf was articulating this ironically envious, tongue-in-cheek disciplinary boosterism at the end of a decade of the Great Depression to a scientific and technical audience for whom the invisibility of Whorf's linguistic "forces" contrasted with the obviousness of atomic and subatomic—"relativistically" conceptualized—forces. The impending Second World War and its Manhattan Project would ultimately make the latter even more salient to the general public as well as to physicists, chemists, and engineers.

In this first Whorfian thematic, the metaphoric and literal vocabulary of "relativity" would be Whorf's mode of introducing the argument common to all Boasian linguistics, practiced by Bloomfield as well as by Sapir and his students. We can summarize its major points as follows:

1. The grammatical categories of any particular language can be revealed only by analysis of distributional " patterning" or "configuration" of formal units one with another, as in Whorf's proposed formula revealing all possible syllable structures for an English monosyllable (see also Bloomfield 1933:130–37). This projects struc-

ture onto otherwise unanalyzed linguistic forms by assuming that linguistic form is to be modeled by an algebra of compositionality.

2. Such categories as we can define by linguistic-analytic methods differ from language to language as a function of the distributional structure of each language. This difference is structure-dependent but manifested in the way that apparent categorizations of the universe of experienceable or imaginable "reality" are projected differently into linguistic form in particular languages (see Boas 1911:24).
3. In terms of such conventional grammatical categories, a fundamental ontic intuition about the simplexes and complexes of the universe of denotation—a "metaphysics," in short—comes into being and is made available to some level of cognitive capacity of the users of a particular language. Languages, then, each seem to contain an implicit ontology as a function of structural factors of mapping from/projecting onto the universe of "reality," the uniqueness and nonlinguistic manifestation of which become critical issues.
4. It thus becomes possible to conceptualize gradiently equivalent constructive denotations of extensional "reality"—in effect, semiotically indistinguishable applications of intentional linguistic representations to the universe of prelinguistic experience, save that they conform to distinct structural starting points, as in two "languages" differing in their fundamental grammatical categories and modes of combining them (notwithstanding their use by speakers to achieve comparable denotational specificity).⁸ This would allow us to "translate" from one structurally distinct language to another in a principled, theoretically grounded way rather than through mere Quinean shortcuts, guesses, and other leaps of "radical translation."

5. Development of linguistics as the field of comparative grammatical-categorial analysis is, therefore, a prerequisite to articulating the nature of the “relativity” of grammatical-ontological categories of different languages and their associated cultures. On this basis one can found a scientific, rational, and potentially universal framework for conceptual understanding among all humanity.

Conceptual “Relativity” Based on “Scientific” Grammatical Categories

“The relativity of all conceptual systems, ours included, and their dependence upon language stand revealed,” Whorf tells his MIT peers in “Science and Linguistics” (1956d[1940]:214–15). He makes the Boasian (also Sapirian and Bloomfieldian) brief for the equality of all languages in their status as evidence “as to what the human mind can do” with experiential (or extensional) reality; for that “languages dissect nature in many different ways” at the intentional level is shown in their varying grammatical-categorial structures. He celebrates the existence in one language of directly coded categorial distinctions for certain areas of conceptualizable natural phenomena that are absent in another language. The type example is the coding of events seemingly composed of cyclic iterations, “naturally” occurring in an American Indian language, Hopi, that is at once different from the grammatical categorial structure coding these phenomena in “Standard Average European” languages like English, and at the same time is revealed to be closer to the very model of these phenomena made by the explicit formal-theoretic conceptual structure of alphanumeric “real” physical sciences, such as were familiar to his readership.⁹

In Whorf’s less technical discussions, such as “Science and Linguistics” (1956d[1940]) and “Languages and Logic” (1956f[1941]), he used the linguist’s method of presenting foreign language examples through the mechanism of glossing. This gives a feel for the strange categorial structure one would more seriously analyze by attempting a lexically focused piece-by-piece (morpheme-by-morpheme) calque of a foreign-language form into the language of the readership. In this way, Whorf attempted to reveal something of the grammatical-categorial structure of complex morphological constructions in polysynthetic and

incorporating languages of North America by keying the areas of denotational relevance of each piece of a complex word-form through a familiar vernacular English word or phrase, rather than through precise grammatico-semantic terminology. Thus does the category of ‘Plural’ (as opposed to, say, ‘Singular’ and ‘Dual’ in a three-term paradigm of distinctions of ‘Number’) get glossed by Whorf as “many” or “more-than-two” by this method of lexical calquing. Of course glossing has no theoretical or methodological status in the scientific metalanguage of Boasian or any other structurally informed linguistics; it is a shortcut we still use, attempting through translation of what Whorf called mere “lexations” to bring two linguistic structures into view for the naïve professional outsider.¹⁰

In more technical treatments intended for his linguistic peers, Whorf makes quite clear that he is dealing with the complexities of grammatical categories as projected from the Bloomfieldian formalization of the structure of grammars. In this view, apparent, durationally experienced linguistic forms—what we call “surface segmentable forms” in the contemporary idiom—are “lexical” expressions (Whorf’s “lexations”), from the smallest segmentable pieces of words up to the maximal phrase-type, the sentence; they have associated with them certain regularities of denotational meaning. By contrast, from every such lexical expression can be projected its grammatical organization, stated in terms of a phonological plane of structure and a morphosyntactic or more narrowly “grammatical” plane of structure. In order to project grammatical structure(s) corresponding to (or immanent in, or “underlying,” as we now say) any specific lexical expression, the analyst, like the native speaker, must know the grammatical structure of the entire language (see points 1 and 2 above on the system-relativity of the mappings between grammatical form and sense).

In turn, knowing such grammatical structures for particular languages in the empirical science of linguistics is a function of what we know about grammatical patterning in general. The discovery of new modes of such patterning in particular languages contributes to constant revision of our knowledge of patterning in general on a worldwide scale. Such general knowledge Whorf (1956h[1945]) calls “a general science of grammar” (we now term it “universal grammar” or “the study of linguistic universals”). He goes on to remark that

Only in such a sense can we speak of a category of “passive voice” which would embrace the forms called by that name in English, Latin, Aztec, and other tongues. Such categories or concepts we may call TAXONOMIC categories, as opposed to DESCRIPTIVE categories. Taxonomic categories may be of the first degree, e.g. passive voice, objective case; or of the second degree, e.g. voice, case. Perhaps those of the second degree are the more important and ultimately the more valuable as linguistic concepts, as generalizations of the largest systemic formations and outlines found in language when language is considered and described in terms of the whole human species. (Whorf 1956h[1945]:100–101)

Linguistics on a “universal” scale seeks in this manner to “calibrate” particular linguistic systems one with another through a framework of taxonomic categories.

Note how Whorf counterposes scientific linguistics, with all its theoretical, methodological, and formal-operational specificities, to the folk conceptualization of language, which he terms “Mr. Everyman’s” view of his own language in relation to other people’s languages, and which he mocks as naive and unscientific. (Did Whorf perhaps do this to appeal to *Technology Review* readers, linguistic Messrs. Everymen in the “other exact sciences,” thus compelling their embarrassed agreement?) This folk view, Whorf says, considers linguistic structure as a “background” phenomenon and focuses on how well a particular language’s lexical expressions correspond to the “reality” they denote. Messrs. Everymen compare two or more languages in this respect of referential and predicational “accuracy” or “precision” only in the shallowest and most unscientific terms, by in effect attempting interlinguistic glossing of one lexical expression by another, looking for matches and mismatches.

By contrast, the systematic, scientific study of grammatical-categorial structure reveals what is really transformed and what remains the same in going from one language to another, going from one implicit ontological reference-category framework to another. Linguistics is to provide the systematic and scientifically undertaken basis, the structure of Whorf’s “taxonomic categories,” to articulate a theory of ontological relativity (in Quine’s [1968] felicitous phrase).

The Cultural “Mind” in the Language(d) State

There is, thus, a second substantive Whorfian theme that lurks in this discussion: how to account for the clear divergence between the folk views of Mr. Everyman, both on “Language” in general and on specific “languages” in particular, and the scientific views of the Linguist, both on Language in general and on specific categorial structures that linguists attribute to languages despite their lack of transparency to the native-speaker gaze.

The Everybodies that Whorf refers to range from the average MIT graduate to (by name) C. K. Ogden, H. G. Wells, and other well-intended amateur linguistic do-gooders of the 1930s.¹¹ Why, and how, does there emerge the folk focus on (mere) lexation and (mere) glossing in the face of the implicit richness of crosscutting categorial structuration in language? If, as linguistics purports, such structuration is the major “background” factor allowing the users of language—all of humanity, Whorf (1956d[1940]:212) claims—to use language

in all our foreground activities of talking and reaching agreement, in all reasoning and arguing of cases, in all law, arbitration, conciliation, contracts, treaties, public opinion, weighing of scientific theories, formulation of scientific results...whether or not mathematics or other specialized symbolisms are made part of the procedure...

If such background phenomena underlie all this, how does the human mind remain unaware of them? How does the aware human intentionality come to the particular understanding it has of its own—and, through a glancing, surface-lexational gloss, of others’—linguistic usage?

Both Boas and Bloomfield had remarked on this limitation-in-principle of linguistic consciousness. Boas takes up the issue in his “Introduction” to the *Handbook of American Indian Languages*, particularly in discussing the “Unconscious Character of Linguistic Phenomena” (Boas 1911:67–73), meaning the categorial phenomena analyzed as part of grammatical descriptions and linguistic history, of which their users have no accurate, conscious, metalevel understanding. Discussing the “misleading and disturbing factors of secondary explanations” that emerge from native consciousness of such categorial

phenomena, Boas provides numerous examples to demonstrate that the focus of native consciousness of language is on how lexical expressions, words and phrases, relate directly to the things and situations they appear to denote. He shows how, from the analyst's perspective, the native speaker's misrecognition of language relates to cultural practices both functionally and historically, playing a role also in the native's "secondary rationalistic attempt to explain a custom that otherwise would remain unexplained" (Boas 1911:69)—except, I would add, in anthropological theorizing.

Such secondary rationalizations by people of their own otherwise unconscious habitual customs constitute, for Boas, the principal cultural component of what are the very objects-of-study of most realms of ethnology other than linguistics. This fact privileges language among all such objects of anthropological study both for yielding a "true history" of human thought in the German neo-Kantian tradition (out of which came the disdainful Boas) and for yielding significant generalizations of humanitywide scope, increasingly a hopeless goal for anthropology, in Boas's view, as his career of negatively critical argumentation progressed.¹²

With the stance of the self-celebratory scientist, Bloomfield too takes up the issue of the relationship of native consciousness—generally limited to lexation and gloss—to those pervasive form-class differentiations in a Saussurean grammatical system that he terms formally demonstrable "categories" of the morphological system of grammar, the realm of word-structure. In *Language* (Bloomfield 1933:270–71) he observes:

The categories of a language, especially those which affect morphology (*book : books, he : she*) are so pervasive that anyone who reflects upon his language at all, is sure to notice them. In the ordinary case, this person, knowing only his native language, or perhaps some others closely akin to it, may mistake his categories for universal forms of speech, or of "human thought," or of the universe itself. This is why a good deal of what passes for "logic" or "metaphysics" is merely an incompetent restating of the chief categories of the philosopher's language....Our knowledge of the practical world may show that some linguistic categories agree

with classes of real things...for instance, that our non-linguistic world consists of objects, actions, qualities, manners, and relations, comparable with the substantives, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions of our language. In this case it would still be true, however, that many other languages do not recognize these classes in their part-of-speech system. Moreover, we should still have to determine the English parts of speech not by their correspondence with different aspects of the practical world, but merely by their functions in English syntax....Linguistic categories, then, cannot be defined in philosophical terms.

Bloomfield clearly understands that all the faults of grade-school grammars are but examples of the "metaphysical" tendencies of the Messrs. (and Mmes.) Everybody who see the universe denoted by their language as transparent from the perspective of, or through the lens constructed from within, one highly restricted part of the linguist's sense of the overall structure of the Everybodies' language. As Bloomfield points out, categories of morphological structure that get surface lexical expression so as to constitute words and their internal shapes are at issue in the Everybodies' consciousness. Bloomfield, like Boas, does not seek to explain this phenomenon but only warns against it as a scientific proposition (thus differentiating the "scientific" view of language from that of the Everybodies).¹³

WHERE DO SPECIFICALLY 'CULTURAL' CONCEPTS COME FROM?

Whorf takes up these themes of Boas and Bloomfield in his essay "The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language" (1956g), which was originally printed in the 1941 Sapir memorial volume (Spier, Hallowell, and Newman 1941). The substance of the article concerns the "cultural" nature of concepts of 'space' and 'time', ontic categories the prelinguistic, precultural—indeed, absolute—nature of which Bloomfield himself espoused in his 1935 Presidential Address to the Linguistic Society of America (Bloomfield 1987c). Even if Bloomfield had to yield to the special-relativistic sense of 'spacetime' that was becoming the stock-in-trade of quantum physics—and recall that for Bloomfield, the investigable universe consisted of momentum

(mass of a certain velocity-in-space) and syntax (categorial structure of language form)—Whorf is articulating here the “new kind of relativity” that epistemologically self-critical scientists would have to take account of, a relativity of “habitual thought” or default conceptualization that emerges from, but is distinct from, linguistic categorial structure.

In the year following Bloomfield’s address, as shown in manuscripts published (1956a[1936]) in the collection edited by John B. Carroll, Whorf began to write about the Hopi language as a counterexample to such physicalist, positivist notions of what are presumed by Bloomfield and others to be the ‘time’ and ‘space’ universally organized by linguistic denotation. But the 1941 essay is Whorf’s ultimate and most subtle development of his second theme, so subtle that it has long been merely assimilated to the equality-and-diversity argument of other writers and of Whorf himself, such as in publications like the *Technology Review* pieces (1956d, 1956e, 1956f) in which he addressed a linguistically and anthropologically uninformed readership in their idiom of “relativity.”

Whorf begins by invoking this “linguistic relativity,” which is embodied in an epigrammatic quotation from Sapir, the volume’s honoree and Whorf’s late mentor and patron. The quotation (in Sapir 1949c:162) merely articulates the standard Boasian view; perhaps it was the passage from the master closest to what Whorf was about to spell out, but it surely is on an inferior plane of conceptualization. For Whorf’s essay actually goes on to schematize a truly pathbreaking explanation for why there might be culture-specific “metaphysical” concepts, the concepts of the purportedly absolute physical envelope of all our experience available to, for example, the Cartesian—or even Bloomfieldian—intuition.

Grammatical Analogy and Discursive Dialectics

The most sustained argument in Whorf’s 1941 essay (1956[1941]) works through specific proposals about the complex, semiotic origin of ‘space’ and ‘time’ as “intellectual tools,” that is, verbal captions and discursively manifested cognitive concepts that were supposed, by Bloomfield and those who inspired him, to be precultural and prelinguistic intuitions from “nature.” In effect, Whorf proposes a seven-part explanation for how such cultural concepts emerge in the language(d) state of humanity. Its main points can be outlined as follows:

1. In the verbally captioned concepts of (meta)physical reality of a cultural group, we are dealing with a “relativity” of conscious, goal-directed language use as people attempt to communicate about normatively informed (“habitual”) cultural practices of practical task orientation. This “relativity” emerges at the level of discursive practice (contrast the level of ontology implicit in grammatical categories), in which we can be consciously oriented to making a text-in-context determinately related to that context by representing (referring to and predicated about) it.
2. Such conscious language use in the denotational mode—the mode of describing and evaluating the universe of conceptually graspable “reality”—is biased for each linguistic group (e.g., a sociologically locatable language community) by what Whorf terms “fashions of speaking” about the phenomena of the universe. These fashions of speaking present degrees of phraseological givenness (conventionalization) and distinctness-to-domain (“literalness”); with them we encompass conceptualizable phenomena both familiar and unfamiliar in specific verbal ways, representing them in terms of assumed, or indexically presupposed, categorizations and dimensionalities. (Note that according to Boas and Bloomfield the internal grammatical-categorial structure of any fashion of speaking about a domain of conceptualizable reality will, in general, be transparent only to the analytic gaze of the linguist.)
3. The conscious native-speaker sense of the transparency of the universe to representation by one’s own language, and perhaps to language in general, is a function of (a) language’s fashions of speaking, through which the universe makes itself manifest to the speaker and which thus guide the conscious, common sense of the representability of the universe in language and its dependent representational systems.

4. Any fashion of speaking is a sociohistorical product that over the course of cultural process reaches a certain generativity (positive feedback toward emergent consistency in dealing with unfamiliar situations in new domains of representation). To the outsider, this looks like “metaphorical” transfer of fashions of speaking. Increasingly, a fashion of speaking that encompasses what at first might have been conceptualized as new domains of representation is understood as a straightforward, “literal” formulation of a fundamental aspect of the universe of experience.
5. At least in one central functional component, this generativity of a fashion of speaking is driven by apparent “analogy”—a technical linguistic concept (cf. Bloomfield 1933:275–77, 404–24; Silverstein 1978:245n26, 249n31)—within a grammatical system. Analogy results in the apparent (re)analysis of one surface (lexical) form in terms of the grammatical-categorial and related structural features of another form or class of forms in system-determinate ways. The existence of what we might term ‘analogic forces’ among surface lexical forms is dependent on how configurated structural categorizations are projectible from those surface lexical forms, with degrees of ‘analogic force’ (tendencies for imposition of reanalysis) depending on multiple such factors.
6. A growth point of a fashion of speaking involves essentially the working of analogic forces that make plausible for speakers of a language the projective misrecognition of the grammatical structure in the lexation targeted for analogic change, as we would describe such categorial structure with the usual machinery of grammar. This constitutes a predictive theory of analogy across fashions of speaking that inherently involves the structure of language in the technical linguistic sense, which is one of its points of origin.
7. The other, discursive and representational component of the generativity of a fashion of speaking is the practical, action-centered use of language in concrete situations of rational “thought,” where linguistic expressions seem to their users to be indexically anchored to situations they are used to represent. To the speakers, language forms in actual use seem to be a metalanguage for the realia they describe. Critical to such beliefs in indexical anchoring is the ultimate authorization of the language-form-to-exemplar-of-reality, the “baptismal” (Kripke 1972) situation. Here, what we term a ‘performative nomination’ combined, perhaps, with a ‘representative declarative’, gives the fashion of speaking its originary denotational value in relation to an indexed aspect of reality. It does so upon validated use by someone socioculturally endowed with the authority so to do (a priestly incumbent, as it were, such as “scientist,” “clergy,” “judge,” or “umpire”).

It is through such a chain of connections—obvious to any thoughtful theoretician in the Boasian-Bloomfieldian milieu in which Whorf worked—that we can understand the argumentative movement in Whorf’s discourse about cultural categories (see also Lucy 1992b:45–61). He starts from some linguistically simple fire insurance examples from the Hartford Insurance Company and moves, analogically, to the complex argument contrasting English and Hopi “space” and “time.”

Starting from the simple analogies of fashions of speaking grammatically constructed as (adjectival) modifier plus (nominal) modified, Whorf demonstrates a semantic relation of denotational class inclusion between expressions constructed with the unmodified noun and expressions with the modified one. This productive and compositionally regular taxonomic relation of unmodified to modified compound head is the basis for a strong analogic force on any expression that seems to native-speaker cognition of language to be analyzable as modifier plus modified. Lo and behold, reconstructing the reasoning behind certain tragedies as analogy-based (based, that is, in language

and not in “reality”), Whorf shows such analogic “error” to be consistent with the fire-insurance investigator’s story of someone’s carelessness that led to the origins of a blaze.

Thus the proper or “literal” class of denotata coded in the nominal head-word limestone- (itself a compound stem headed by the stem stone-), should bear a taxonomic relationship of class inclusion to the class of denotata of the modifier-plus-modified nominal construction, spun limestone-, with its modifying adjective being the passive participle of the transitive verb spin- . So ‘spun limestone’ ought, analogically, to denote a class of things that is basically a subclass of the class of things conceptualized as ‘limestone’, by virtue of ‘having undergone spinning’. Here, grammatical analogy directs the cognition with respect to the denotatum of the expression spun limestone in instances of practical agency with respect to it, informed by this phrase as the “fashion of speaking” about the substance in industrial use, rather than by specific formulaic knowledge of its chemical composition—which turns out to be anything but ‘stone’. And hence, to the commonsensical folk rationalist, the properties of the stuff, “spun limestone,” which entail certain possibilities for “rational” action with respect to it, must subsume those fundamental to how one conceptualizes “limestone” and even “stone,” the analogic foundational forms.

Seeking to contrast cultural concepts of “space” and “time,” Whorf eventually looks to different cultures of mensuration, the institutional focus on practical acts of measurement that result in rational, denotational use of verbal expressions as “fashions of speaking” about a society’s measurable phenomena. Such expressions of ‘numerosity’ or ‘extent’ or ‘degree’ are projectible as an area of grammatical construction we call Measure Phrases.¹⁴ Whorf shows by example that using Measure Phrases in English implicates the grammatical fact of two great polar ‘selective’ (obligatorily distinguished) classes of nouns, the way these classes occur in Measure Phrases constituting for the grammarian their key differentiating diagnostic.¹⁵ One such polar class, so-called Count Nouns (member: tree-), permits direct quantification with numerals, as in the three trees; the other polar class, so-called Mass Nouns (member: wood-), requires a special phrasal construction, as in the three blocks of wood.

Now Whorf, recall, is after the language- and culture-specific influ-

ences on the way explanatory concepts emerge in native theorizing to rationalize the applicability of denotational phrases to practical situations. He hypothesizes that there is a strong analogical pressure on speakers to understand the Measure Phrases for Mass Nouns in terms of the more basic but completely distinct structural (grammatical) arrangement of the same categories of lexical forms like the three statues of wood, the nine events of reference, the five matters of (some) delicacy, the seven consequences of truth, the two gentlemen of Verona, that is, noun phrases expressing material composition, manner, instrumentality, origin, provenance, and so on. In the latter type of phrase, each of the two constituent-heading nouns, for example, statue and wood, has its fullest, most autonomous semantic value, denotationally most transparent to the universe it describes from its canonical (or “literal”) value of lexical categorization. One can even have appropriate plurals of either Count or Mass Nouns in the modifying phrase, as in the eight sculptures of finishing nails.

This structure of the noun phrase of material composition, with its pluralization of the Count noun that serves as its head, becomes what we call the “founding form” for the analogic folk interpretation of Measure Phrases involving Mass nouns. Note that the latter grammatically require a quasi-classifier Measure-Phrase noun to code semantic ‘numerosity’ of the denotata of the Mass noun (‘singular’ vs. ‘plural’ in English); this serves, moreover, as the grammatical head of the phrase for projecting agreement to verbs, and so on. In this way, Whorf reasons, the nouns in such phrases as (four) blocks of wood, (two) cups of sugar, (ten) board-feet of pine, seem plausibly to native speakers to be transparent lexical codings folk concepts of “dimensionalized, though essenceless, bounded configuration-s”—“block-s,” “cup-s,” “board-feet”—of “otherwise formless and nonbounded stuff, or essence”—“wood,” “sugar,” “pine.” Whorf argues that linear, planar, and volumetric spatial measure terms like cubit, hectare, pint, and so forth, ultimately take on the folk-conceptual characteristics of the sequentially first nouns in Mass Measure Phrases, understood then to be bounded, recurrent as well as possibly concurrent, dimensionalized entities in an otherwise non-bounded realm of stuff (essence, the “[a]ether”) called “space.”

In the West, the invention of practical techniques of coordinating social intervals of experience and experienceable durations, “time”-

reckoning with clock mechanisms, has from the outset (ca. 1271 C.E.) depended upon linear or angular measures of distance traversed by a nonaccelerating indicator on a metricized background. Mediated over nearly six centuries by the evolution of increasingly authoritative mensurational practices centered on clock-mechanisms, the gradual “Standard Average European” (SAE) development of an elaborate, distinctively usable Measure Phrase terminology is an indicator of the emergence of a commonsensical, intuitively obvious and rational folk conceptualization of another nonbounded stuff, called “time,” with its strongly presupposed linear dimensionalization.¹⁶

Whorf’s point is that the cultural concepts of “space” and of “time” are just that: cultural concepts. For Whorf they emerged in the dialectic sociohistorical process between, on the one hand, language used (to its users) rationally and rationalizable as a way of representing the universe and of reasoning about it, and on the other hand, the universe of phenomena so represented. Someone’s analogically driven use of an existing “fashion of speaking” about phenomena performatively baptizes some new situation as the parallel figuration (“metaphor”) of something already encountered. In turn, this newly extended mode of representation is enriched with a whole new area of eventually “literal” denotational value from the analogical growth of the figuration in the new context. Whorf has, in a sense, given a constructive, dialectical account of Peircean ‘abduction’, that is, of empiricism in relation to theoretical concepts. His account gives the intersection of analogical process and grammatical-categorial structure the privileged generative capacity of the dialectic, though we must not forget the role of socio-cultural practices, authoritatively centered, as absolutely necessary to the dialectic he hypothesized.

“Time,” Tense, and Time

Such folk-theoretic concepts of “space” and “time” are particularly valuable for the Whorfian approach not merely as a reaction against Bloomfield and his Vienna Circle jingoism; they also allow Whorf to place the SAE metaphysics he sees therein in two fields of contrast. First, in this same paper (1956g[1941]), he contrasts a Hopi metaphysics of emergence to culmination in ordinal-like event series. He claims that this Hopi metaphysics does not distinguish “space” from

“time” in the same way SAE metaphysics does. If SAE temporal practices dialectically emerge as congenial to the folk metaphysics of “time,” Whorf sees a comparable fit in Hopi. Hopi cultural practices are carried on with respect to such emergent culminations (what we call, in SAE, events involving entities occurring at such-and-such time and place), and hence human agency involves the kinds of culturally understood “forces” with their applicable degrees of intensity that can be brought to bear on emergent culmination.

Second, Whorf rests his analysis of the culture-specific metaphysics of “space” and “time” on the contrasting analysis of the relevant grammatical coding categories in the two respective languages, against a backdrop of universal grammar. English is a language having Tense, Aspect, and a hybrid category of Perfection as regular grammatical categories of the predication phrase; Hopi is a language having multiple layers of Aspect and a category of sender-receiver calibrated Epistemic Status. (Early on, Whorf calls the latter “tenses” and later rectifies this to “assertions”; see 1956b[1938]:113–15.) There is, for Whorf, a chasm between what universal grammar tells us about the way the grammatical machinery of Tense × Aspect × Perfection operates in English as an exemplary SAE language, and the native conceptualization of the transparency of this system to the folk concept of “time.”

We can now see rather sharply, as few among Whorf’s earlier addressees could, that he is talking the Boasian talk about contrasting ways that language structure is implemented in practical situations of denotation so as to give a compositional reading of the modalized referential-and-predicational values of particular grammatical categorial structures. These are, by our first Whorfian theme, different from language to language. And yet, in the Boasian or Bloomfieldian framework, he is able to compare two languages to show that each has sufficient formal machinery to encompass any practical demand of denotation, though their grammatical-categorial dimensions in particular empirical circumstances will, of course, differ.

Whorf’s famous chart from “Science and Linguistics” (1956d[1940]:213) compares English and Hopi constructions used to communicate certain calibrated observations of an event or state of affairs. English uses its formal-categorial space of Tense × Aspect × Perfection, while Hopi uses its formal-categorial space of Aspect ×

Epistemic Status. Both languages are “perfect”—or, equivalently, equally “imperfect”—grammatical engines for describing various practical situations, since they leave out certain differentiations as much as they include others. Where they differ is in how individual practical situations are, in effect, implicitly grouped or classified through the application of descriptive language to represent and reason about them. Whorf’s chart shows this difference of grouping in contrasting English and Hopi.

Since English has Tense as an elementary and obligatory grammatical inflection within the predication piece of a sentence (making at least one lexical verb in the sentence “finite”), we must consider, with Whorf, the difference, even disjunction, between the grammatical category of Tense and the “time” concept that speakers of English within the SAE metaphysics ascriptively see as its transparent realm of denotation. Tense is, by definition, an indexical-denotational taxonomic category. It indexes—points to—the occurrence of some reference-event and presents some denoted state of affairs as occurring in sequence with the reference-event (‘prior-to’ or ‘subsequent-to’ it) or nonsequentially, generally understood as ‘simultaneous-with’ the reference-event. Some tense systems distinguish only two specific paradigmatic values of Tense, a Past (‘prior-to’) versus non-Past (not ‘prior-to’; by implicature, a Present-Future), as in English. Or they distinguish a Future (‘subsequent-to’) versus a non-Future (not ‘subsequent-to’; by implicature, a Present-Past). Some languages, such as French, distinguish three such values, a Past, a Future, and the residual, unmarked “present” by markedness implicature. As William Bull (1960) has shown, systems become increasingly complicated by creating simultaneity/sequentiality relations between predicated states of affairs and second- and third-order reference events—themselves presupposed (indexed) to bear certain computable simultaneity/sequentiality relations with the default reference-event on which the whole system rests.

But if Tense involves only a relationship of simultaneity/sequentiality of events, one an indexed reference-event, the “here-and-now” of the presupposed communicational event in the primordial ‘default case’, how do people get the idea that Tense is “about ‘time’?” Moreover, how do people get the idea that Tense is “about” (i.e., codes) what Whorf sees as “objectified” time, where “[c]oncepts of time lose contact with the subjective experience of ‘becoming later’ and are

objectified as counted QUANTITIES, especially as lengths, made up of units as a length can be visibly marked off into inches” (1956g[1941]:140)? This is a very culturally local phenomenon, according to Whorf, in which the practical techniques of denoting experienceable durations of simultaneities/sequentialities—by measure phrases in the linguistic realm, by clocks and such paraphernalia in the nonlinguistic realm—are brought to bear on the folk interpretation of the deictic grammatical category that points to this experience of simultaneity/sequentiality of durations (event-intervals).

So the folk-practical and folk-conceptual realms of the infinitely divisible and measurable timeline become the culture-specific backdrop for SAE folk interpretation of Tense, which, as an indexical denotational category, confirms the complexly produced intuition of “time” by seeming, to folk consciousness, to invoke it and point to it each time (!) we use an instance of a Tense category. It is an intuition that is historically locatable for Whorf in the emergence of clock and calendar techniques, as shown by the etymological rise of “time” words for the interval measures out of two different elements of earlier periods’ cultural sense of simultaneity/sequentiality: (1) words and expressions that come from the linear, planar, and spherical geometries involved in iconic representations of motion-marked durations, for example, lengths of knotted ropes in water clocks or angular distances on circular planes representing a cycle, such as (pars) minuta ‘1/60th part of a degree [of angular distance]’...>...Mod.E minute; and (2) words and expressions that come from older notions of natural and social durations within cycles, and their conventional subdivisions, for example, ‘season’, Greek ho:ra: taken into Latin as ho:ra...>...O.Fr./Mid.E (h)oure ‘1/12th of “natural” day [=light time]’.

Over centuries, terms that came from these two etymological sources became mutually calibrated in the practice of using Measure Phrases, for example the ‘hour’ (source 2) getting a fixed equivalence in ‘minutes’, ‘seconds’, etc. (source 1). Such a uniformity of grammaticosemantic usage of temporal terms in measure phraseology goes together with the emergent interpretation of them within the same “fashion of speaking.” But this is the very emergent conceptualization of a homogeneous envelope of-and-for eventhood, “time,” in coding which these newly semanticized words emerge as

pluralizable (Count category) head-nouns, as in three minutes (of “time”).

From a strictly grammatical point of view, Tense is a configurational category unconcerned with any such direct and joint mensurability, continuity, and scalar or vectorial directionality of “time” as such, an etymological course established for the “time” words. This association is made plausible through the Whorfian disease of native speakers of SAE languages in the habitual world of SAE practices-as-representable. In the SAE “habitual thought” microcosm, as Whorf terms it, Tense transparently and locally codes “time” for its native speakers.

Homogeneous SAE space-time, in which we conceptualize ourselves to be “situated” in our habitual thought world, according to Whorf, though there is no specifically grammatical-categorial evidence for this in our systems of deictics. There is only the complex, analogically driven process whereby culturally specific concepts, and particularly culturally specific verbalizable concepts, emerge from the dialectic of grammatically anchored linguistic discourse and institutionally centered social practice, mediated by verbal and equivalent representational practices of both. By a kind of projective imagination, native speakers in such cultural universes “discover” that what is coded by expressions for these concepts are the essences of which “reality” is composed. This discovery is based on interpreting the indexical categories that anchor language to contexts of use with the aid of these discovered essences. For native speakers, then, indexical categories point to (presuppose) the very frameworks of essential properties of the universe that are revealed to habitual thought in fashions of speaking about the reality worked in/on by social practices. The unilingual cultural universe, though dialectic in its working, is ultimately quite closed in its efflorescence.

THE THEME NOT TAKEN

There is thus the third theme, darkly announced at the unhappy conclusion of Whorf’s life, that perhaps all of the calibration of languages—and through language, of any form of cultural semiosis—is impossible because we just do not know how much of our own “calibration” of one grammatical categorial system with another through taxonomic categories of universal grammar rests on chimerical schemata of

equivalently folk-theoretic emergents, as we have seen with “time” in SAE. That is to say, we are uncertain of the extent to which this Whorfian dialectic applies to grammarians’ concepts about language structure as an object of practical focus, thus making them folk concepts rather than properly scientific ones. This dubiety into which Whorf leads us is the stance of what I term nihilistic relativism. It can be argued against not on general philosophical grounds, of course (viz. the folly of much postmodernist deconstructivism in launching the “Science Wars”), but only constructively, that is, empirically and pragmatically, by studying such phenomena. I will not have anything further to say about this third, deconstructive Whorfian theme in what follows.

OUR IMAGINATIONS, OUR SELVES

It should now be clear to those conversant with Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (1983, 1991) that an elaborate Whorfianism underlies its conceptualization of the cultural form in which “the magic of nationalism ... turn[s] chance into destiny” (1983:19; 1991:12). Within such a cultural order, nationality is a primordial aspect of one’s very sense of selfhood. This primordiarity appears to emerge out of an ontic realm beyond the contingent one of historical circumstances and happenings, such as one’s birth or one’s first job or any other life-event. To the subjectivity Anderson characterizes, nationality perdures above and beyond all these as a kind of essence of one’s selfhood realized in and through such contingencies. Anderson’s account locates the magic essence in what Whorf would term an unshakable metaphysical commitment that establishes the nationalist subjectivity.

And indeed, in the text, we do find two characteristic Whorfian themes. On the one hand linguistic and language-laden (or language-“relayed” [Barthes 1967:10]) representations, genres of text, contexts of interaction, and social-institutional structures form the central evidentiary material for Anderson’s argument. On the other hand, the fields on which nationalism’s imagination plays and the very figurations that dynamically comprise its game are crucially spatiotemporal at both literal and tropic planes: geopolitical areas and their maps, censuses, and other museologized/archivized exhibits; collective and aggregate events-in-time and their historiographies; people’s synchronic—and

synchronizable—memberships in groups, emblematically represented and performatively renewed; and so forth. By my count, twenty-one of Anderson's textual passages crucial to understanding his argument concern space-time and its structuring by and through nationalism as mediated by such language-laden semiotic forms; virtually all the rest straightforwardly address other, framing aspects of language and its textualized discursive forms. Here truly are exemplified the ingredients in social practices with which Whorf's most innovative discussions are fashioned about the ideological underpinnings of concepts of space and time.

In good Whorfian fashion, Anderson's *Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, as the book is subtitled, chronicles the emergence some two centuries ago of a cultural order of 'nationality' in the mediated image of its underlying linguistic order. The conditions of this emergence were essentially discursive in the Foucauldian sense; they comprised, centrally, (1) print-capitalist production, circulation, and consumption of (2) text-artifacts (newspapers, broadsides, pamphlets, novels, etc.) bearing (3) texts genred in realistically reportive voicings and composed in (4) standardized or emergently standardizing vernacular languages.¹⁷ I will discuss each of these four intersecting preconditions of the nationalist "imagination" below.

Anderson goes on to describe the efflorescence of variant forms of nationalism as the cultural order these preconditions have licensed, and their global spread in distinct periods during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But notwithstanding the historical presentation, Anderson clearly believes that there is something common to the cultured phenomenology of the nationalist subject, itself in a way a condition perduring through global time and space: Everywhere it is a cultural order corresponding to an inclusive political entity that provides each social being with the essential property of national identity. And the cultural phenomenology of nationalism operates, Anderson theorizes, by projecting and constructing a homogeneous space-time of distinctive, differential membership. In this space-time every individual in a national population can be simultaneously located in relation to any other; and such bounded groupness as a habitable space-time—both synchronically and diachronically, as it were—is to be contrasted with that of any other such groups imagined to be included in other

possible groupings of this overall cultural order (as one can note in the phrase, "the community of nations," for example, denoting that higher-order, overall space-time of space-times). Nationality is a taxonomy of differentiation of individuals as members of such groups, together with essentialized nondifferentiation of individuals within group boundaries.¹⁸

In practice a kind of classification that corresponds to having or seeking certain political rights, nationalism is thus a cultural phenomenon of very large, non-face-to-face social formations, in what we might term the superstructural order of collective consciousness. According to Anderson, it emerges from the way particular politicoeconomic modes of generating and circulating (particularly verbal) representations effect a "worldview." Nationalist worldview is experienced as a metaphysical sense of the primordiality of one's membership in the homogeneous groupness commonly associated with (or expressed by) a polity such as a nation-state. And there are nationalisms without nation-states in comparable "nationalist" cultural orders, for example so-called stateless nationalities, for whom an obvious telos is the achievement of autonomous nation-statehood. Within the contemporary United States, furthermore, comparable imaginations underlie concepts of ethnicity in particular. Increasingly, they also underlie how one imagines *any* demographically based dimension of identity as projecting one into a homogeneous, inhabitable attribute-space presupposed for collective political action, for denoting which the term "community" is in current use in the American English idiom.¹⁹

Anderson never makes clear if he is presenting a merely historical argument or a functional/evolutionary one. As a historical claim he would be contending that 'nationalism' emerged in the colonial Western Hemisphere periphery to the English and Spanish metropoles in the mid-to-late eighteenth century and that all further developments follow as mere events set into motion. The functional/evolutionary view would be that, where certain conditions are met, 'nationalism' emerges as a cultural form, a "worldview" of identity available to become linked to a political project. These conditions centrally involve the double mediation of print capitalism (or perhaps its electronic equivalents as well), aligned as both the axial institutionalization of discursive practice and a paradigmatic capitalism of production-

circulation-consumption of commodities among “the reading classes” (Anderson 1983:73, 1991:75–76). Certainly, Anderson appeals to nationalisms “genuine” and “spurious,” as Sapir (1949a) might call them. For he differentiates as phases of nationalism’s historical course a kind of dialectical movement over time: first, implementing their rational, representationalist outlook and insight, the self-liberating bourgeois movements (good guys) that, second, seem to give way, particularly in the face of dynastic and imperial nation-statist forces (bad guys), to the cynical use of the now “modularized” paraphernalia of a kind of ersatz, merely ritual(ized) nationalism, so as to yield in turn, third, to local self-liberating possibilities of newly emergent, frequently postcolonial “creole” bourgeoisies (generally good guys). Such alternating-phase periodization in Anderson’s story of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries sets up a dialectic internal to nationalist dynamics. But even this story seems to be presented as a “natural” or functionalist-evolutionary (Hegelian) dialectic of phases of the inevitable expression of “genuine” nationalism, the kind that is dependent on the functional relationships at the heart of Anderson’s Whorfian analysis, to which I now turn.

THE DISCURSIVE REGIME OF NATIONALIST DEIXIS AND VOICING

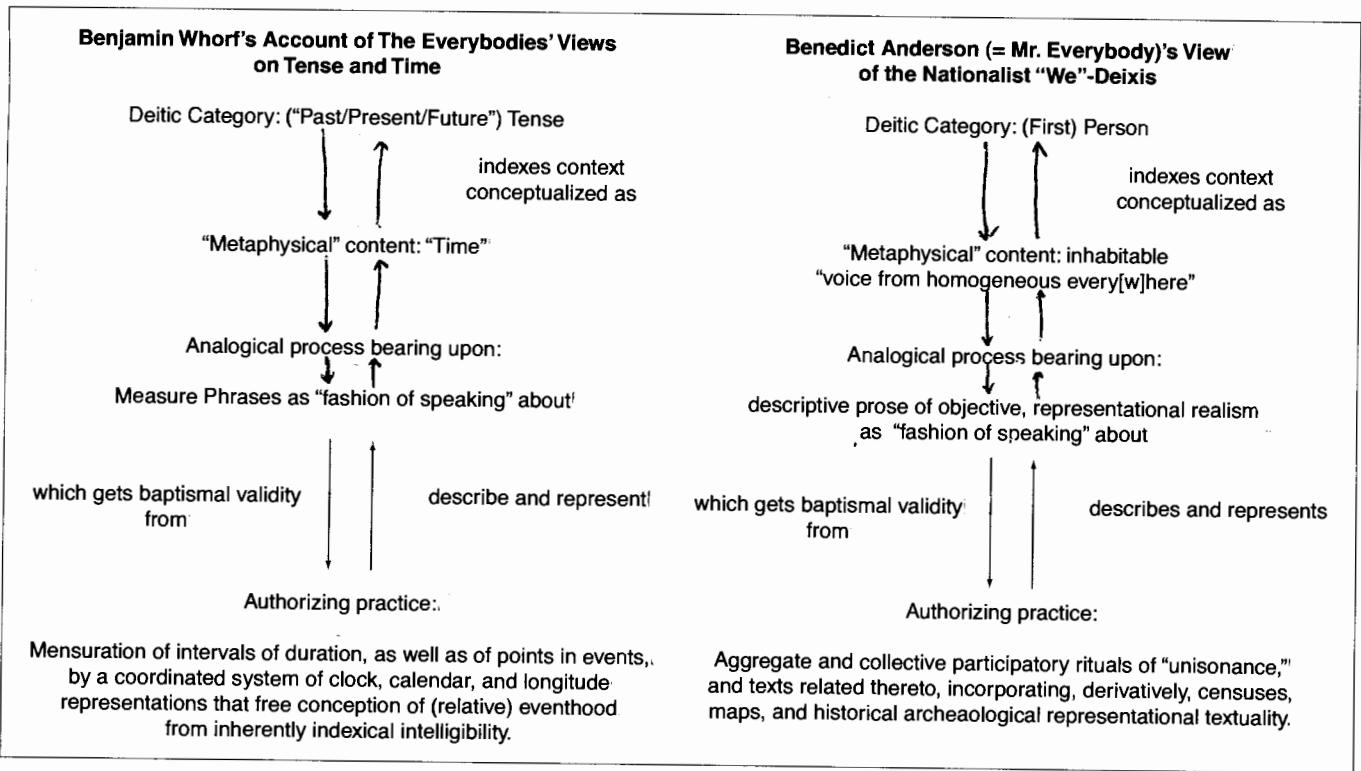
Brought back to the realm of actual discourse and language, Anderson seems to be describing an imaginative sense underlying people’s use of the verbal medium that “metaphysically”—in a term used by Whorf—presupposes the primordiality of “nationalist space-time.” Distinct from the corporeally centered space-time of mere organismal physicality, this space-time has become a new contextual framing available for a definitive, or authoritative, indexical denotation using the personal deictic ‘we’—in both “inclusive” and “exclusive” uses—and its equivalents in other languages. The nationalist ‘we’ concept differs from ones that preceded it; it emerges in particular places and spreads over the course of history.

This seems comparable to Whorf’s SAE language users, for whose intuition, he inferred, Newtonian “space” and “time” externalize, systematize, and label concepts of “reality” that are pointed to by their related deictic (indexical denotational) categories, Locative-

Demonstratives for “space” and Tenses for “time.” The Measure Phrases, or mensural expressions, of their language, by which SAE speakers denote extents of “space” and thence “time,” play a mediating role in constituting this speaker-subjectivity of deixis. As was noted above, mensural expressions enter into analogical alignments as “fashions of speaking” about realities grounded in actual human actions-in-the-world calibrated to clock-ritual. Such mensural expressions orient speakers to a particular presupposed concept of “space” and of “time” in which these realms take on the properties of ‘formless substances’—vast, homogeneous, all-enveloping. And, having indexical-denotational (deictic) categories aligned distinctively with “space” and “time,” SAE speakers come to depend on the transparency of their pointing to the intuitively (and analogically) construed experiential context they understand to be confirmed also through the authoritative use of Measure Phrases.

Observe, then, how Whorf recovers this process that generates a set of cultural “physical” concepts (which he casts as “metaphysical”) underlying deixis with categories of Tense and Locatives-Demonstratives. He seeks the denotational backing of these categories, the very shared conceptual warrants for speakers’ regular use of them in acts of referring and predication. He finds this backing in the ethnometapragmatics, the folk construal that projects transparency-to-context, of the structures implicit in Measure Phrases and other comparable expressions for talking about “space” and “time”; speakers assume this is the same “reality” determined by deictics. This characteristic speaker’s assumption of universally available transparency of these verbal forms to pragmatic context of usage we might rephrase as an ‘objective’ framing of such mensural discourse. It is a stance presumed of both sender and receiver of such discourse with respect to the “reality” one is communicating about. It is, as Goffman (1979) would have it, an inclusive and objectivizing ‘footing’; as Bakhtin (1981) might point out, it is an inclusively realist representational ‘voicing’ of factual states of affairs.

Seeing Whorf’s argument in this way, as shown in the left column of figure 3.1, we can draw the parallel to Anderson’s argument about the nationalist worldview, diagrammed in the right column. Here the deictic categories centrally involved shift from Locative-Demonstratives and Tense in Whorf’s argument to categories of Person in Anderson’s.

**FIGURE 3.1**

Schematic of B. L. Whorf's account of tense-deixis in Standard Average European, compared to B. R. Anderson's account of nationalist "we"-deixis.

In particular, Anderson's nationalist's indexical presupposition is mediated through the so-called First Person Plural, that is, the locus in the category-space of Person Number that denotes the speaker or sender of a message as the defining member of a larger set of denoted individuals: speaker plus other(s). Anderson's point is that even where such first-person plural deixis is not explicit (though in much nationalist rhetoric, of course, it is), nationalism is an imaginative sense of Bakhtinian "we-voicing" that pragmatically frames whatever is narrated in its presupposition of unity of outlook. It is a denotational backing (framework of shared conceptual warrants) for first person plural deixis where this occurs, but it emerges in and from its own kind of discursive regime, according to Anderson. This "we"-ness constructs a normative consciousness that inclusively shares with others' consciousnesses a particular, homogeneous, nationalist space-time—a set of distinct, spatiotemporal, nationality-based presuppositions within a narrator's and a narratee's intersubjective normative consciousness.

Anderson thus recognizes the foundational evidentiary role of discourse in his survey of nationalisms. His discussion points us to the communicating "voice," that is to say, to the way that discourse indexically serves to position and group communicators, those communicated to, and the persons/things communicated about ("senders," "receivers," and "referents" in a communications-model taxonomy of basic inhabitable roles) in a common, essentially spatiotemporalized envelope of inhabitable mutual positionings. With Bakhtin (1981) and Williams (1983), he can recognize narrative realism as modern nationalism's most characteristic "chronotope" of voicing.²⁰

So Anderson treats the opening passage of Jose Rizal's 1887 novel *Noi Me Tangere*, "today...regarded as the greatest achievement of modern Filipino literature" (1983:32, 1991:26), the first three paragraphs of which he quotes in English translation:

Towards the end of October, Don Santiago de los Santos, popularly known as Capitan Tiago, was giving a dinner party. Although, contrary to his usual practice, he had announced it only that afternoon, it was already the subject of every conversation in Binondo...

The dinner was being given at a house on Analogue Street.

Since we do not recall the street number, we shall describe it in such

a way that it may still be recognized—that is, if earthquakes have not yet destroyed it. We do not believe that its owner will have had it torn down, since such work is usually left to God or to Nature, which, besides, holds many contracts with our Government.

"Extensive comment is surely unnecessary," Anderson observes (1983:32–33, 1991:27–28), for

[i]t should suffice to note that right from the start the image (wholly new to Filipino writing) of a dinner-party being discussed by hundreds of unnamed people, who do not know each other, in quite different parts of Manila, in a particular month of a particular decade, immediately conjures up the imagined community. And in the phrase 'a house on Analoague Street' which 'we shall describe in such a way that it may still be recognized,' the would-be recognizers are we—Filipino—readers. The casual progression of this house from the 'interior' time of the novel to the 'exterior' time of the [Manila] reader's everyday life gives a hypnotic confirmation of the solidity of a single community, embracing characters, author and readers, moving onward through calendrical time. Notice too the tone. While Rizal has not the faintest idea of his readers' individual identities, he writes to them with an ironical intimacy, as though their relationships with each other are not in the smallest degree problematic.

The imagined community is the very envelope that "embrac[es] characters [as referents], author [as narrating sender] and readers [as narrated-to addressees]," all "moving onward through calendrical [i.e., SAE] time." This envelope, Anderson argues, has a particular and primordial (absolutely presuppositional) character under a regime of nationalist imagination. It has the character of a homogeneous, bounded, continuous, and measurable space-time in which the inhabitable frame of events of narrating (from which biographical author and readers step into the roles of sender-receivers) and the inhabited frame of events-as-narrated (where characters live as denoted referents) are not just indexically calibratable, but indeed are assumed and felt to be continuous one with another.²¹

There is thus a larger and inclusive framing of "we" out of which the

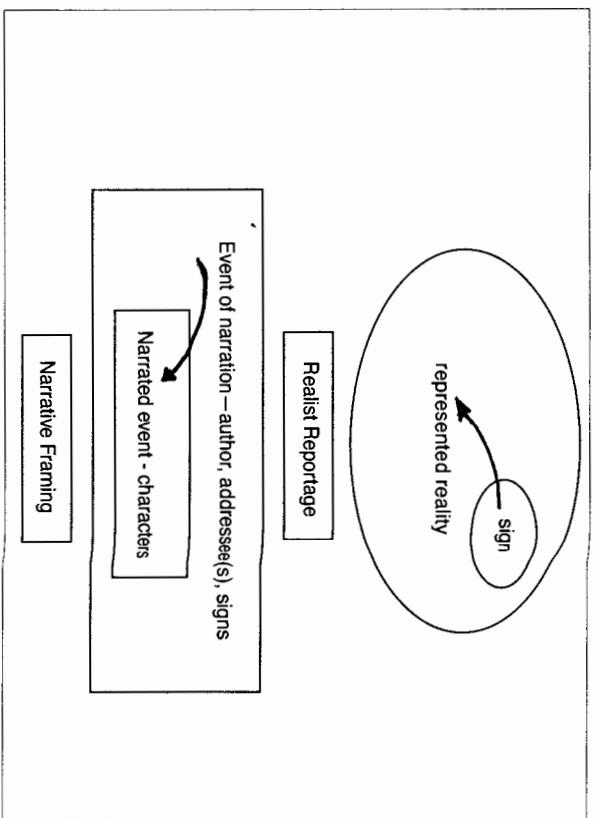


FIGURE 3.2
"Voicing" in *realist reportage*, schematically contrasted with the general role structure of *narrative framing*

explicit narrative differentiation of "I/we," "you," and "he/she/it/they" (and even of the implicit voicing alignments that pragmatically correspond) is but a momentary configuration of communicative-role contingencies against a backdrop of uniformity. Contingencies like people's reportable events happen in history; they are temporal. People's membership in the presupposed space-time envelope is primordial and, in this contrastive sense, outside of any narratable time; indeed, such membership is sacred, a point emphasized in many nationalist rituals and other essentializing moves. Anderson's "we"-envelope of nationalism is thus a double de-diachronization, an imagination that, manifesting itself in narration, synchronizes membership in the community not only for potential consociates but even across vast orders of spatiotemporal change.

It is the kind of imagination whose "voicing" is caught in one of C. S. Peirce's most splendid images of an "indexical icon": someone

using a stick in the sand of an island beach can scratch out an accurate map of that very island of which the sand and the beach are parts.²² Differentiating representing microcosm and represented macrocosm in this Peircean image, let us note that the microcosm as constituted in and by the act of inscribing the map is a text produced in an act of communication that draws for its representational matrix on the same "stuff" as is being characterized in the macrocosm. At the same time, of course, the representing text constitutes the framing macrocosm within which the represented world of events-as-narrated exists as a microcosm of the imagination. The transduction of the strongly pre-supposed indexical relation of Peirce's image into the seemingly inverted, strongly entailed indexical relation that brings a narrated world into being through language is accomplished through the magic of "we"-voicing.

As figure 3.2 schematizes Anderson's analysis, the micro-/macro-relations are constituted between two frames of events. First, there is the frame of the event of narration, for example through the production, circulation, and consumption of a text-artifact like a book with a story communicated between author and reader(s). Second, there is the frame of the "real," that is, verisimilitudinous events-as-narrated, involving characters in various situations who are plausible inhabitants of the same space-time of circumstances as the individuals recruited as sender(s) and receiver(s) to the very event of narrative entextualization. But such is the utterable or even merely voiced "we" of report—even of 'reportively calibrated' (Silverstein 1993:49–50) fiction—in nationalist realism, according to Anderson, that the narrated-about characters, even the fictive characters, might as well be the folks next door, or even ourselves.

LOCATABILITIES AND LEGIBILITIES

If this sounds like Whorf's discoveries about our culture in SAE fashions of speaking, it should. Whorf wrote about what he terms a homogeneous yet measurable "Newtonian space-time." Whatever its "truth" or pragmatic utility, it happens to be the cultural way SAE folks indexically experience their relationship to a dimensionalized physical universe about which, through acts of indexically grounded description, they can nevertheless reach a Cartesian metaphysical certitude.

Anderson's conceptualization of the nationalist chronotope adds a further, mystical dimension of homogeneous and even sometimes measurable "we"-ness to the SAE Newtonianism. It more or less explicitly locates nationalism's historical emergence in the rise of a particular kind of bourgeois consciousness in a particularly structured Habermasian (1989) "public sphere" of discursive practice, where that type of communicative "rationality" that depends on reportive calibration under an objectivizing denotational realism becomes the standard-informing linguistic usage par excellence.

Bringing self-consciousness of identities together with indexical empiricism, Anderson's rationality of reportage is seen to be an expository style of an agentive empirical intentionality. It is, in short, the speaker's imagination (metaphysical presupposition) of inhabiting objectivity from anywhere within the confines of the group who share the chronotope. It is discursively like the much-vaunted expository stance of empirical science and other democratically "revealed" truths.²³ Normally, matters of relational identity are central to problematized footing and voicing in normal day-to-day social interaction—who one is and with whom one is communicating with respect to various contextualizing frameworks of social organization that determine centers of power, lines of discursive authorization, and so on. These are erased as factors or at least relegated to subsidiary status in the nationalist worldview of the underpinnings of communicative practice.

In effect, the practical discursive activity "literally" realizable in this nationalist stance (or footing or voice) is always already presupposed and presupposable as the shared orientational norm of agentive consciousness. Even "fiction" is encompassed in this chronotope, since figurative discourse can be experienced as a development out of the other, "expository" types by presupposing that the chronotopic parameters of the latter are the basis of tropically transformed denotational effect (thus, moving from "literal" to "metaphorical" locations within the chronotope). It is therefore possible to voice fiction with respect to the same presuppositions as one does scientific reportage. It is certainly possible to read and interpret fiction in this fashion, in an unproblematically scientific approach that concentrates on indexically calibrating the denotation, without ever breaking out of the pre-supposed "unisonance" of pragmatic framing.

Indeed, Anderson characterizes the experiencing consciousness internal to nationalism, the "habitual thought-world," as it were, of the cultural phenomenology of nationalism, in compellingly vivid linguistic terms (1983:74; 1991:76–77):

The pre-bourgeois ruling classes generated their cohesions in some sense outside language, or at least outside print language.... But the bourgeoisie? Here was a class which, figuratively speaking, came into being as a class only in so many replications. Factory-owner in Lille was connected to factory-owner in Lyon only by reverberation. They had no necessary reason to know of one another's existence; they did not typically marry each other's daughters or inherit each other's property. But they did come to visualize in a general way the existence of thousands and thousands like themselves through print-language. For an illiterate bourgeoisie is scarcely imaginable. Thus in world-historical terms bourgeoisies were the first classes to achieve solidarities on an essentially imagined basis.

"[A]n essentially imagined basis," Anderson notes, "limited by vernacular legibilities." Thus nationalism became "a 'model' of the independent national state...available for pirating" by "the marginalized vernacular-based coalitions of the educated" (1981:78; 1991:81) everywhere, just as he hypothesizes was first the case in the Americas.

The achievement of "imagined" solidarities, then, depends on mutual, even fictively mutual, imagination through inscribed and legible representations in which both the similarities and the differences underlying "we"-ness could be made and ordered. The condition of Anderson's "nationalism" seems to be one of a cultural consciousness of self- and other-placement in a dimensionalized space of uniform and interchangeable membership in an (extensionally) aggregated, (internationally) collective order—the order in which it is possible to imagine everyone's individuated self in relation to an ideal one "from nowhere in particular" within it. The bourgeoisie, for Anderson, first achieve this condition, and it is interesting to see the images in this passage in which they are emblematized. It is the "factory-owner in Lille" and the "factory-owner in Lyon" who can read about each other within the chronotope of realist reportage or imagine one another in fictive nar-

rative realism, and it is that condition of mutuality through universally available literacy that seems to mediate their class interest. It is a mutuality of words rather than of things (e.g., inherited property) or intermediate people (e.g., exchangeable daughters). Note the connection drawn between the condition of being bourgeois in the regime of factory-based capitalism, and realist literacy—"f[or] an illiterate bourgeoisie is scarcely imaginable." It is a connection of necessary conditionality, literacy seeming to fuel the very institutional engine of rationalized production that defines the socioeconomic base of the class at the same time as it is the personally enabling channel of self-reflective class communication and hence class imagination.²⁴

THE IMAGED (LANGUAGE) COMMUNITY

But of course we already know in linguistic terms what kind of condition Anderson's bourgeoisie exists in: It is the order of a standardized language community (to be distinguished from a speech community; see references in n17). When a linguistic community has its norm informed by standardization, it is no longer just a group of people who can communicate by presupposing a determinate denotational code (a 'grammar' in the usual sense). Under standardization, speakers' usage of the denotational code furthermore reflects a sociologically differentiated allegiance, or at least orientation, to a norm informed by standardization. Standardization, in turn, is the imagination and explicit, institutionalized maintenance of a "standard" register—a way of employing words and expressions for reference and predication based on institutionalized prescriptions and proscriptions of various sorts—such that purportedly the best speakers and writers in the population index their adherence to all of them.

Manifested and enforced through such writing- and reading-dependent institutions as government, schooling, and so on, standardization is a modern and inclusive societal project in the classic Praguean sense (see the references in n17). One's familiarity with and ability to navigate within these various institutions becomes indexically tied to one's language use. Even outside them, one "voices" one's very identity in terms of the registers—for example, degree of standardization—that one controls and can deploy. Every speaker has a repertoire of registers that become, when used, second-order indexes (Silverstein

1996b) of class and related social positionings in modern social formations of inequality.

In this way a language community acquires what we would term a hegemonic standard relative to which variation is experienced as a pyramidal or conical space of divergence: standard-register usage is at the top-and-center, and each coherent cluster of variance is experienced as mere "dialect" (Silverstein 1996c and references therein). The standard that informs the language community's norm thus becomes the very emblem of the existence of that community, with a characteristic social distribution of strength and mode of allegiance that can be studied with some precision.²⁵ Those with the greatest allegiance to this emblem of community-hood tend to imagine the existence of the perfect standard-using member of the language community as a democratically and universally available position of inhabitance of the language community to which everyone can, and even should, aspire.

Those people with the greatest allegiance to standard-as-emblem imagine, furthermore, all kinds of good results that come to the user's mind, to users' communicative networks, and to society and its institutions as a result of inculcating the use of the standard register. Especially interesting here is the imaginative linking of the use of standard to what we might call expository rationality, purportedly evidenced in the act of making logically coherent denotational text, and the critical and empirical condition of mind this is said to make manifest. Paradoxically, inculcation of use of rigidly standard register is frequently seen as the very liberating instrumentality of fostering such a condition of mind, a kind of indexically calibrated empirical orientation as an individual subjectivity to the universe of cognizable and reportable phenomena. (The debate in educational circles of modern Western postindustrial democracies—sometimes linked to the Goody and Watt kind of reasoning mentioned in n24—is ongoing, of course.) This is, to be sure, the condition of a specific, modern cultural order of language in which we and Anderson live (see Silverstein 1996c) and relative to which, as Bloomfield long ago (1987b[1927]) pointed out, many speakers of languages in such cultural orders cannot even conceive of any other kinds of linguistic phenomena, for instance, unwritten "languages," "languages" without standards, and so on. For

such subjectivities from within cultures of standard, the very concept of "language" rests upon finding the various institutional paraphernalia of standardization, for example, literacy in relation to standard register, grammars and dictionaries and thesauruses, authoritative judgments of "correctness" enforceable in certain institutional sites of power over discourse, and so forth. Within cultures of standard, forms of language that lack these in some significant degree are relegated to some classificatory category other than "language."²⁶

Clearly, Anderson can conceive of other kinds of cultural orders of language, as for example what he takes to be the functional predecessors of national languages, liturgical and dynastic languages, "the deader the better" (1983:20, 1991:13), languages connected through their cosmic and ritual axiality-of-authority (through a liturgical imagination, or an imagination of divine right) to exemplary centers and thence to the absolute and essential cosmic "Truth" in the realms beyond empirical reality. One's very "voice" in such an order of linguistic usage is always dependent on one's position with respect to liturgical or royal authoritativeness. For Anderson the new order of nationalist languages replaces those earlier orders in essential functional respects, so that one's "voice" is a function of one's participation in the mutual "realist" imagination of identities across narrated/narrating spaces, mediated by the market form of text-artifactual commodification.

But Anderson's imagination of this functional replacement for how "voices" are authorized in discursive usage has erased the processes—institutional, sociosemiotic, ideological—by which discursive regimes come into being and by which they effloresce and take hold of the subjectivities of populaces. Of course, just as in liturgically centered and/or royally embodied regimes of authorization of discursive voicing, the emergent forms of nationalist language community (especially as centered on standardization through bourgeois institutions) rest on the same kinds of exercise of power and control that any political regimes do. Explicating Whorf's sociolinguistic and dialectical intuition about the processually emergent and "metaphysical" content to deixis itself makes clear how complex has been the struggle in multiple institutional sites so as to result in the nationalist licensing of the Andersonian "we" in any particular empirical case and the silencing of other possible deictics.

Linguistic practice (and symbolic practice more generally) under standardization is an essentially contested order of sociocultural reality. So it is a mistake for Anderson, reading from one particular resulting discursive linguistic form, objective realist reportage, with its particular deictic presuppositions, to project therefrom a whole, homogeneous cultural order of subjectivity. Since the linguistic practice at issue is centered, in effect, on the category of Person, the objective realist “voicing” at issue depends on mapping across two framings so that indexed (invoked) identities of role-relational sender-receiver-referent(s) (in the framework of narrating events) and identities of denoted characters (in the framework of narrated events) can be grouped together by reference to a kind of “standard” identity—perhaps a “standard average” identity with a view from nowhere in particular that is most specifically emblematized by the speaker of a standard register of a “language.” All of the processes of political (in)stability of (certainly hegemonic) standardization and its detailed institutional consequences—where forms of diversity must be at least effectively valorized to discerning cultural consciousness, if not outright suppressed—disappear from Anderson’s account of the revolution in the metaphysics of “we”-identity. In this way, Anderson reads the synchronic (or functional) denotational linguistic practice of the authorized and self-declaring deictic “we.” Suppressing all the contestation and social history, he in effect takes its meaning to be the straightforwardly and uniformly presupposed order of imaginable homogeneity-of-identity in the discursive-equals-discoursed-about spatiotemporal envelope of “the nation” (that is, the linguistic community informed by hegemonic standard) in which its speakers feel they reside.

Commoditized language—language commoditized through print capitalism—seems to Anderson to be the condition of experiencing that simultaneity/sequentiality with others in the imagined community of empty, homogeneous space-time. There emerges a natural “voice” of selfhood in this commoditized order, he is saying, a voice that is the cultural consciousness of self/other such as that described in Raymond Williams’s (1983) “Notes on English Prose 1780–1950” or Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1981) essay “Discourse in the Novel.” Anderson wants to extend the cultural consciousness of the nationalist imagination from Whorf’s making plausible a cultural analogy from “substance” to

“space” to “time” to yet another domain, that of our mode of inhabiting—or of imagining ourselves to inhabit—the social world of groupness with millions of others with whom we have never interacted. From a Whorfian point of view, “we”-ness is an inhabitable trope that structures our very consciousness of being individuals in a social order, but one that needs an elaborate deconstruction to reveal its sociocentric constructivity as a cultural concept.

INHABITING THE TROPE

Whorf, we should recall, contrasts two perspectives on the problem of how language (structure and discourse) mediates between thought and thing. One is the “habitual thought world” of, for example, Newtonian space-time. Whorf sees this as a complex, emergent, partly analogically driven conceptual orientation that is absolutely “real” to the people in whom it emerges. For what he terms SAE language speakers, this cultural consciousness projects a homogeneously enveloping and fixed framework, mathematically a metric space, populated by objects and happenings in determinately measurable loci. We reveal and affirm this thought-world to ourselves each time we use fashions of speaking about matter in “space” and “time.”

Such a thought-world contrasts for Whorf with what grammatical categorial analysis reveals to systematic investigation. For from this perspective, space-time is grammaticalized in terms of asymmetrically dimensionalized contrasts—‘marked’ and ‘unmarked’ values—that are, within rather elastic limits, relationally indexed and thence denoted by the use of formal categories of Locational-Directional and Temporal deixis. In each case, these categories communicate at least a binary, ‘proximal’ versus ‘distal’ distinction in a radial geometric organization of deixis about the ever-moving, ever-changing ‘here-and-now’ of the discursive event as it unfolds. Whorf’s point is that SAE language speakers in effect culturally reconstruct the universe indexed by such deictics in terms of the scalarizations of “space” and “time” that are local cultural emergents. The cross-linguistically valid deictic universe, of which the SAE grammatical systems point to theoretically permissible variants, and the processes by which the SAE cultural concepts emerge, are opaque to the typical SAE language speaker.

Whorf theorizes that such processes of production of a local

cultural thought-world constitute a complex dialectic. To characterize the dialectic moments, he seeks to demonstrate the disjunction between (1) the denotational-structural condition of language as a referential and predicational communicative mechanism in practical, institutional contexts of reasoning and general cognitive functioning, and (2) the workings of mind in those conditions that rationalize them by finding a “fit” or transparency between the trope of reality that context-specific linguistic usage suggests and licenses, and any systematically codable reality that might lie behind it.²⁷

In contrast, Anderson seems to mistake the dialectically produced trope of “we”-ness for the reality. He seems not to see that the dialectical workings of political processes that construct the sharable space of realist reportage in standardized language are the facts to be characterized and explained. He diagnoses nationalist consciousness as essentially isomorphic to and emerging from a print-capitalism-mediated regime of standardization in a linguistic community with market-rationalized public-sphere communication. He wants to project the nationalist cultural consciousness from that condition, as a now imaginable and so imagined envelope of now doubly Newtonian individuals indexed-and-denoted, via “voicing,” in their role-inhabitances we call I (we), you, and he/she/it (they).

As Bakhtin and Williams pointed out, one of the great achievements of what we may term “nationalist” literary imagination as a kind of collective self-representation is the so-called realist novel, such as Rizal’s 1887 *Noli Me Tangere*. In such a work, the presupposed perspective jumble of interests in the society realistically portrayed finds its narrative linguistic trope in the figured “polyphony” of voicing that depends on using linguistic “heteroglossia” to tropic advantage.²⁸ The “realistic” novel is like Peirce’s map of the island in the sand, a swatch of plausible reality that it both represents and gives voice to. Thus, the objective authorial voice that calls us to identify with it rather than with any of the characters becomes the voice of objective and commonplace societal observation and judgment, the voice from everywhere and nowhere, exemplified, for both Bakhtin and Williams, in Dickens. By contrast, this trope to which Anderson calls our attention seems for him not, in fact, to be a trope.

Yet how else to explain the “modularization” of nationalism

Anderson recognizes in the nineteenth-century dynastic nation-state and the official nationalisms of colonial and postcolonial orders? Ironically, Anderson (1983:122; 1991:133) warns against the “mistake [of] treat[ing] languages in the way that certain nationalist ideologues treat them—as *emblems* of nation-ness, like flags, costumes, folk-dances, and the rest.”²⁹ Yet his examples present essentially organized textuality in explicitly ritual contexts and canon-making literary forms that we now understand to be the very essence of how language and discursive voicing are authorized and warranted from their Durkheimian ritual center (in these polities, moreover, their ritual top-and-center). Here is an example of Anderson’s kind of evidence (Anderson 1983:132–33; 1991:144–45):

[O]ne notes the primordialness of languages, even those known to be modern. No one can give the date for the birth of any language. Each looms up imperceptibly out of a horizonless past... Languages thus appear rooted beyond almost anything else in contemporary societies. At the same time, nothing connects us affectively to the dead more than language. If English-speakers hear the words ‘Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust’—created almost four and a half centuries ago—they get a ghostly intimation of the simultaneity across homogeneous, empty time. The weight of the words derives only in part from their solemn meaning; it comes also from an as-it-were ancestral ‘Englishness.’

Second, there is a special kind of contemporaneous community which language alone suggests—above all in the form of poetry and songs. Take national anthems, for example, sung on national holidays. No matter how banal the words and mediocre the tunes, there is in this singing an experience of simultaneity. At precisely such moments, people wholly unknown to each other utter the same verses to the same melody. The image: unisonance.⁶ Singing the Marseillaise, Waltzing Matilda, and Indonesia Raya provide [*sic!*] occasions for unisonality; for the echoed physical realization of the imagined community. (So does listening to the recitation of ceremonial poetry, such as sections of *The Book of Common Prayer*.) How selfless this unisonance feels! If we are aware that others are singing these songs precisely when and as we are,

we have no idea who they may be, or even where, out of earshot, they are singing. Nothing connects us all but imagined sound.

⁶ Contrast this *a cappella* chorus with the language of everyday life, which is typically experienced decani/cantoris-fashion as dialogue and exchange.

Notice the weight that language in its textualized realization bears for Anderson's argument. Language is the very emblem of the over-coming of diachrony, itself looming up with no discrete boundaries out of a past of indefinitely ancient depth. We recognize this, interestingly, in the highly ritualized context of the text-sign of a funeral service in which the living and the dead are indexically connected through prosaic substances, ashes and dust, made mystical in the instance so as to summon up nationality ("Englishness") as much as spiritual continuity in the Anglican Church. Again, language is the very emblem of simultaneity of inhabitance of homogeneous nationalist space-time, the emblem of overcoming the inequalities of social differentiation, when it is realized in the discursive form of "unisonance"—making in essence one "voice"—on occasions of singing anthems or collectively reciting prayers—or, we might add, of pledges of allegiance to flags as nationalist emblems. Such ritual occasions of textuality, with all their capacity to generate participatory effervescence by dense emblematization, draw Anderson's attention to language as the very emblem of nationality. Yet his argument is really about the "we-voicing" of objective realist reportage through the market-form of print-capitalist circulation of text-artifacts.

Here we see precisely the dialectic found in a complex linguistic community such as the emergently standardized ones with which Anderson's argument is concerned. The political—and political economic!—punch of such ritualized use of language at the processual top-and-center of social formations is its ability to warrant or authorize for those in the imagined community of standardization the polar opposite of ritual text: "literal, casual, or free" use of language in the expository, everyday-vernacular mode, the mode of objective realist reportage, among others.³⁰ The regime of language on which such a dialectic depends is a frequently fragile sociopolitical order, seething

with contestation that emerges from actual plurilingualism, heteroglossia, and like indexes of at least potentially fundamental political economic conflict. Such a regime of language is, however, energized and in a sense maintained by the ritually emblematised trope of "we"-ness. It seems to have taken in Anderson, who buys the trope as a transparently imagined "reality."

Notes

This chapter, ultimately revised in 1998, has had a vigorous life in communication of one sort or another, from regular classroom use in teaching at the University of Chicago to samizdat circulation of earlier versions on special request. It began as a paper, "The Imagination of Nationalities," given on January 16, 1992, to the Midwest Faculty Seminar on the theme of "Nationalisms Old and New" at the gracious invitation of Elizabeth Chandler, now associate director of the Graham School of General Studies at the University of Chicago. The 1994 draft of this paper, discussed at the School of American Research seminar in Santa Fe, was fortunate in having Joseph Errington as its respondent. Additionally, I thank the following in particular for providing written feedback on aspects of earlier drafts that has been very useful in doing this one: John R. Bowen, Susan Gal, Michael Herzfeld, John D. Kelly, John A. Lucy, Stephen O. Murray, Richard J. Parmentier, Adam Rose, Elizabeth R. Vann, James M. Wilce, and two anonymous reviewers for SAR Press.

1. Observe that the metaphorical disease-denoting noun phrases, Whorf's disease, Whorf's syndrome, etc., would alternate with such phrases as Whorfian disease, Whorfian syndrome, etc. The possessive forms with clitic 's neutralize the grammatical distinction between naming the bearer of the disease or the diagnostician who, like an author of a work or the creator of a painting or sculpture, names it.

2. See Silverstein (1979:193–203, 1987:21–22), Lucy (1985), Lucy and Wertsch (1987), and especially Lucy (1992b) and references therein for details of Whorf's theoretical work and reasons for its apparent opacity to later writers. As more people are again approaching Whorf's actual writings, their shock at what has been represented secondhand—or at further remove (e.g., Pinker 1994:59–67)—has been manifested in a continuing series of articles (see, for example, Smith 1996). By contrast, uninformed, Whiggish treatments quarreling as adequate intellectual history still abound, for example, Koerner (1992).

3. For those of Whorf's writings reprinted by John B. Carroll in his 1956 edited volume of selected writings, the 1956 date of republication is immediately followed in square brackets by the year of original publication or, in the case of manuscripts, the year to which it was attributed by Carroll.

4. See Silverstein (1978), a lengthy review article on Charles Hockett's selected writings, for an explication of Bloomfield in relation both to Saussure and to Bloomfield's self-proclaimed followers; cf. also Hall (1987), especially the letter to J. Milton Cowan on page 29. See also Joseph (1989).

5. Compare the condition nowadays of a serious social or behavioral scientist of language, most likely trained in Chomskian formalism but of course rejecting Chomsky's speculative psychological and philosophical obiter dicta! *Plus ça change...*

6. Who can forget Bloomfield's image of such commitments—common to Boas, Sapir, and most of the latter's students (cf. Silverstein 1986)—as "shreds of medieval speculation still hanging to the propellers of science and sometimes fouling them" (Bloomfield 1987d:278)?

7. This particular intellectual engagement of Whorfian thought has not been at all clear to intervening generations. To be sure, the persisting failure to see Whorf's oeuvre in a precise context of intellectual and social history is a problem of the poor state of the historiography of linguistics. But even when Whorf's writings were—posthumously—made available for the second time through the limited 1949 publication of *Four Articles on Metalinguistics*, the intellectual climate in both official and disciplinary politics had changed enough to make Whorf's discursive purport more or less uninterpretable, even to the well-disposed George Trager, who was paying homage to his erstwhile Yale friend and scientific collaborator (Whorf and Trager 1937). For, rather than dealing with the realm of the "meta"-linguistic (in Trager's usage, a term for what lies beyond the phenomena for which ("micro-") linguistics as such and "paralinguistics" take responsibility), these reprinted articles address two of Whorf's themes from what he must have considered the informed center of late 1930s Bloomfieldianism.

Moreover, by the time that the academic and other reading publics encountered the fuller selected writings of Whorf in 1956 (entitled *Language, Thought, and Reality* by the volume's editor, the educational psychologist John B. Carroll and, ironically, published by MIT Press), post- or neo-Bloomfieldianism in linguistics and behaviorism-based experimental psychology were disciplinarily ascendant. The behavioral science world was then awaiting the formation and impact of the "cognitivist" movement at least retrospectively seen to have been

initiated by the 1957 publication of its foundation text, Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures*. The climate was so completely different from that in which Whorf had written, and in a real sense has remained so, that it is difficult for current students of language and of "mind" to see what his three thematic messages were.

8. Observe how this vision of 'extensionally equivalent' but 'intensionally nonequivalent' language structures has played a key role in the analytic philosophical tradition of Quine (e.g., 1960, 1968), Kripke (esp. 1972), and Putnam (e.g., 1975, 1987). Quine ironically sees the difficulty in the position on reference that Whorf articulates, while Putnam uses the failure of intensional/intensional transparency to suggest an essentially "cosmographical" (see Silverstein 1986:69–73) and sociocentrically based theory of reference.

9. Compare the packaging of, and the public's reaction to, news that a certain group of so-called primitive people have traditionally incorporated into their folk pharmacopoeia practical remedies containing "active ingredients" equivalent to those used in drug therapies based on "science," and you will get the rhetorical flavor of this line of missionary argumentation that Boas, Sapir, and Whorf all vigorously carried on with respect to the realm of the world's linguistic-cognitive riches.

10. Whorf's later critics (Lenneberg 1953:464–66; Weinreich 1966:166–67; and others) seriously misconstrue the nature of Whorf's use of glossing as a pedagogical heuristic for the linguistically uninitiated. They are intent on seeing him—with a certain hostility, it is clear—as truly ignorant of the distinction between glossing of and by lexations on the one hand and structurally sensitive, grammatically informed translation on the other.

11. Paraphrasing Sapir's (1949b:219) *bon mot* about denotational equivalence, Whorf was aiming to show that Ogden and the average commercial lexicographer share equally ignorant views of linguistic structure and function.

12. Boas eventually despaired even of giving a "true history" for the unwritten American languages, where he saw only areally stimulated borrowing as the central process of language history, demonstrating his ignorance of comparative-historical method and his tendency not to see the forest for the trees; see Boas (1940a, 1940b).

13. In several of his papers, Whorf lays out typologies of what he will come to call grammatical categories. He captures Boas's concern with the degree of obligatoriness of coding certain distinctions by his contrast of category-types along the cline of 'selective' to 'modulus' categories (1956h[1945]:98–99). He captures Bloomfield's concern with categories of surface segmentability vs.

categories of overall grammatical structure by the distinction between 'overt' and 'covert' categories (1956b[1945]:88–93), for the latter of which he also used the suggestive term "cryptotype." It is this dramatic last formulation—in opposition to "phenotype," possibly echoing genetics—that perhaps encouraged delegitimating mirth among Whorf's critics. In fact, it was the discovery, in his terms, of what we now call "underlying representations" in language structure, as is obvious to anyone who understands both Bloomfieldian grammatical theory and contemporary transformations of it into formal syntax.

14. For a detailed comparative account of the grammar of ' numerosity' in relation to classes of nouns and systems of Classifiers, see Lucy (1992a:23–84).

This account becomes the basis for a pioneering contrastive study in biasing effects of linguistic categorial systems on performing certain cognitive tasks.

15. In Whorf's terminology (cf. n13 above), the distributional behavior of noun stems in different Measure Phrase constructions constitutes the "reactance"—the overt, observable constructional evidence—of this relatively 'covert' (underlying) though 'selective' (obligatorily made) categorial difference among noun stems in English. A category for which there is only one observably differentiating context of occurrence is thus highly covert, and, we might say, only marginally grammaticalized in the language concerned.

16. I cannot elaborate here on the emergence of the clock as a technology and an aspect of human life in Europe, or on the institutional ramifications of clock-focused practices relating to conceptualization of event simultaneity vs. sequentiality, temporal intervals (durational and conceptual), etc., that are at the heart of Whorf's understanding of our SAE culture of temporal mensuration and its concept of "time." Various historical works that focus on measures, clocks, and the temporal organization of society (Dohrn-van Rossum 1996; Kula 1986; Landes 1983; Le Goff 1980:1–97), though useful for certain details, do not really ask the questions about *mentality* that Whorf did. Crosby (1997) does ask how "quantification" lies at the center of the conceptual and institutional transformation of European *mentality*, but instead of answering the question, the author simply compiles a chronological catalog of poorly differentiated though broadly arithmetic practices.

17. Indeed, one of the principal means of standardization was precisely the fact that vernacular linguistic forms had newly achieved access to print-capitalist text artifacts that were intertextual with governmental and other forms of linguistic usage sited in, or associated with, command institutional loci. The political economy of text artifactuality—the establishment and control of institutional

creation, circulation, and consumption of printed text-artifacts—thus mediates the very process of linguistic standardization, through which is created a model of linguistic usage with authorizing force in a community of language users. On standardization see especially Garvin (1964, 1993); Garvin and Mathiot (1968); Havránek (1964); Heath (1980); Shaklee (1980); Silverstein (1996a, 1996c); and Stewart (1968:534).

18. These two perspectives on nationalism correspond to what Anthony Smith (1983:158ff.) would term the 'ethnocentric' and 'polycentric' nationalisms evidenced in ideological views. Ethnocentric constructions of nationalism are essentializing, locating and justifying power and value in the fact of an individual's group membership. Polycentric ones, seen as more politically "liberal," are diacritic and differentiating of multiple groups at that level of conceptualization, within the "family of nations."

19. Much of U.S. ethnic consciousness explicitly hearkens back to a pre-migration ethnogeography of actual nation-states or regions of empires, a place-from-which—an *Urhjemat*—and an originary time-at-which—an *Urzeit*—a national ethnicity imagines itself to have "come from." Hence the common American question, "Where do you/does your family come from?" frequently intends to elicit national ethnicity in this sense. Of course, such *Urhjemat-Urzeit* affiliations, and the group consciousness they warrant, shift over time and social circumstances.

20. This term, meaning 'space-time', is advisedly adapted by Bakhtin on the model of Einsteinian relativistic discussions. He uses it to mean what we would call the presupposed indexical bases and *origines* in an essentially spatiotemporal framework underlying characterization and plot in literary art (see Bakhtin 1981:84–85, 84n).

21. For the concept of indexical or pragmatic 'calibration' of denoted or otherwise signaled universes with the universe in which interaction takes place, see Silverstein 1993:48–53. Both Bakhtin's concept of 'voicing' and Goffman's concept of 'footing' (1979) are special, derived effects of the phenomenon.

22. The original draft of this paper stimulated, courtesy James Wilce, an interesting interchange on the "Language-Culture" electronic list (www.cs.uchicago.edu/discussions/lc/html/archives). With help from William R. Kelley, Wilce got responses from Richard Parmentier, Anne Freedman, and Joseph Randsall, who located the Peircean construct in variants at three places: CP 8.122, 5.71, and a manuscript fragment (Robbins #637, pp.32–33). A Peircean 'icon' is a sign that represents its object by virtue of (generally preexisting)

"likeness"; a Peircean 'index' is a sign that represents its object by virtue of "real connection," i.e., spatiotemporal, causal, etc., contingency-in-frame. A sign that has both properties is an 'indexical icon' or 'iconic index'; the choice of name loosely depending on which aspect is semiotically the more salient.

23. The late Ernest Gellner (1964, 1983, 1994) conceptualized the nation-state as a social formation at the mass level that centers on and makes manifest a modern, secular, and rational sensibility necessitated and mediated by the evolution of technology and its large-scale productive and consumption patterns. Gellner clearly saw the 'voice' of objective scientific discourse as necessary to this evolutionary stage of mass-order infrastructural project and, via that mediation, to the sociopolitical formation that harnesses and gives meaning to it, the nation-state. Smith (1983:155) quotes Gellner (1964:179) to the effect that "science is the mode of cognition of industrial society, and industry is the ecology of science." By seeing that scientific discourse—theoretically axiomatized and systematized canons of denotational textuality in the realist-reportive calibration—is central to what science is *qua* "cognition," a mode of knowing—that, we see the intimate connection to this conceptualization of nationalism of intellectuals and other bourgeois intelligentsia living under institutionalized regimes of scientific-expository linguistic usage. Here is a thread linking Anderson, Gellner, Karl Deutsch (1953), Anthony Smith (1983), Craig Calhoun (1993), and many others: All worry the same ultimately Whorfian issue not unrelated to the particular empirical-rational and at the same time political-economic "we"-ness of a Lockean intelligentsia that constitutes the *origo* of nationalist phenomenal "reality" (on which see Bauman and Briggs, this volume).

24. Note that in contemporary discussions, the nature of a putatively socio-culturally undifferentiated state-of-mind termed "literacy" has been at the center of debate about the gulf between the cognitive, social, and cultural conditions of "orality" and "literacy" since at least Goody and Watt (1963); see Goody (1968), Street (1984, 1993), and the concise overview in Besnier (1995:1-17). Among other things at issue is the causal or at least enabling relationships among these realms in which "literacy" is at once a mode of mental functioning, a medium—or, better, channel—for institutions of social production and reproduction, and an essential mediating instrument of collective consciousness through textualized representations. Anderson takes a position of transparent enablement, if not out-and-out causation, in the way "literacy" is linked to capitalism (see the authors cited in n23), perhaps via the market-form commodification of text-artifacts in print capitalism; for him, "literacy" transforms individual minds who are

the recipient entextualizers as intentional consumers of the circulated text-artifacts and therefore enables the nationalist political imagination.

25. Here I allude to the whole field of what we might term "variationist correlational sociolinguistics" that has developed out of Labov's (e.g., 1966, 1972a, 1972b) numerical operationalizations of the theoretical traditions of André Martinet and Uriel Weinreich and applied with considerable success to language communities in the condition of stratified and hegemonic standardization and to some speech communities at the intersection of these. In all these studies, the "evaluative" or "attitudinal" orientation of users to the variation in form of the language being studied is essential to the project of determining the significance of the variation, and itself shows interesting second-order patterns of covariation of attitudinal and behavioral measures when viewed along demographic and other dimensions. See Fasold (1984:147-79 and references there) for an overview of "language attitude" research.

26. The contemporary presence of this cultural form can be observed in the extraordinary public policy "debate" that took place in 1996-97 over so-called Ebonics, that is, what linguists would term African-American Vernacular (nonstandard) English (AAVE). The Oakland, California, school board had resolved, in late 1996, to advocate recognizing it with realism and even perhaps toleration in the classrooms where its speakers are students. Several interestingly structured arguments prevailed among views opposing AAVE, all of which go back to the culture of standard. On the one hand, antagonists claimed that AAVE could not be a "language" because if it were, it would have a literature and be subject to grammatical prescriptions/proscriptions, but as everyone knows it is the "street talk" of the ignorant and unlettered, and consists just of "mistakes." On the other hand, admission of AAVE to any sort of use in the classroom would violate a clear pollution taboo in that only standard register can be inculcated in the sacred precincts of school classrooms and only standard ought to be written down and printed. So not only is AAVE not a "language," but to pretend that it is would clearly be a danger—perhaps even a danger to the ideology!²⁷

27. In Whorf's view, moreover, the systematically codable reality is available through the methods of the perfect, if not standard average, Boasian-Bloomfieldian linguist, ironically, for whom comparative-typological modeling of grammatical categories constitutes a key to the universe of conceptualizable and communicable distinctions.

28. "Heteroglossia" translates a Russian term used by Bakhtin (1981) to characterize the inherently variable condition of linguistic usage within a

language community, people of various demographic and biographical conditions showing characteristic differences of verbal behavior. "Polyphony," taken on analogy with the musical term, is the simultaneously in-play multiplicity of 'voices', i.e., inhabitable social perspectives on the unfolding of narratable happenings, that an author—a verbal composer, as it were—can use as an artistic device. Properly complex polyphony in a piece of narrative verbal art like a novel allows the writer, *qua* authorial speaker, to jump into the very world being described as just another person with a cluster of recognizable presuppositions of interested sociality. At the same time, Polyphony manifested by a writer's deliberate mixing of heteroglossic variance from one or more groups or categories of people in one or more communities can be used as a trope of the contestation of perspectives that—at least for the somewhat idealist Bakhtin—characterizes modern society. For Bakhtin, who put forth his discursively centered "translinguistics" as an alternative to the Durkheimianism of Saussure and all structure-centered abstract linguistics, every language community, even those with fierce standardization, is characterized by heteroglossia as its most profound fact, language being "heteroglot" from top to bottom in his view.

29. Recall that an emblem is a text that serves as a conventional iconic index of that which it represents, *qua* index pointing to its existent object by virtue of a conventional system of naturalizing beliefs about consubstantial essences shared between the qualia of the text-sign and the object the text-sign represents as a (poetic) arrangement of those qualia. Thus, the American flag is said to be built out of the essences of red ('courage; valor'), white ('candor; ingenuousness'), and blue ('faithfulness; fidelity'), the (white) stars in (blue) heaven diagrammatically superimposed, "floating," above the (red and white) cultivated land. Similarly, Athena's owl becomes over time a transparent emblem of 'wisdom' in the Western world, and any owl-like features become emblematic decorative items for visual representations of personal qualities. Observe the dynamic intertextuality of emblematization, which also gives rise to fashions of speaking that rest on the existence of the emblematic text-signs.

30. I have developed the idea of this dialectic of text ritually centered warranting or authorization of indexicality and ideologically warranted or authorized indexical value of discursive language (see particularly Silverstein 1996b, 1998; see also Silverstein 1979, 1993, 1996c). I use this dialectical model to understand many of the empirically discovered phenomena about language in sociocultural formations reported in recent literatures of linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics, several contributed by my interlocutory partners in this vol-

ume. For example, Brenneis (1984) presents striking material on how men's gossip sessions constitute a kind of anti- or counter-ritual (with emblematic language use in a maximally nonnormative form, not dissimilar to African-American male 'signifying'; see Abrahams 1974) that performatively establishes and authorizes the prospective voicings of political factionalism in an otherwise "egalitarian" small-scale society (see also Besnier 1989; see Krookstein, Jane and Kenneth Hill on "Mexicano" (Nahuatl) in the region of the Malinche volcano (Hill and Hill 1978, 1980; J. Hill 1998; see also Silverstein 1998:132–33) also pinpoints certain entextualizing occasions of usage—the very paragon of which is hyperstylized mutual greetings of *compadres*—as at least the imagined (though sometimes contested) authorizing center of a whole indexical stratification of Spanish and degrees of "pure" Nahuatl in the plurilingual community. Susan Gal (1998) has emphasized the contested aspect of ideologies that are performatively evidenced in ritual, such as state rituals like official funerals (Gal 1991). The volume on *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory* (Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity 1998) might well be read as multiple and varied exemplifications of aspects of this larger dialectic.

With regard to standardized language communities in particular, such as those in Western Europe and many former European colonies, issues of the relationship between ritualized form of participation in regimes of standardization must distinguish—as Anderson does not—between the institutional contexts of emblematization of language to nationalist ends (where even in a unilingual community ritual text becomes indeed flaglike) and those institutional contexts that more directly authorize the value of its expository prose form (whence enregisterment of genre and "style"). And note the fascinating ideological framing of San Francisco's antiplurilingual Proposition O in Woolard (1989); it becomes clear from Woolard's account that for many among the "rational" and not particularly "patriotic" left-liberal elites, the two issues—of participatory democratic patriotism (as in elections) and expository prose usage in English—came together. More generally, as is discerned by Bourdieu (1991:43–102; see also Silverstein 1996b, 1996c), the authorized standard register is endowed with the emblematically derived and ritually licensed indexes of belonging to privileged groups at the top-and-center of social formations that themselves license and control such membership. (Recall, conversely, Groucho Marx's quip about club membership!) As Labov's (1966, 1972b) and others' studies of highly developed regimes of stratified standardization have demonstrated, even the

bourgeois consciousness of how one's use of standard register indexes one's top-and-center positionality is "false," as it were, a "misrecognition" that correlates with the phenomenon of Labovian "hypercorrection"—too much manifestation by speakers of an indexically good thing—in nonhighest and not-most-central groups in the conically shaped space of stratification about a standard of usage.

Language Philosophy as Language Ideology:

John Locke and Johann Gottfried Herder

Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs

4

What is philosophy?

To ask such a basic question about one of the most firmly established categories of Western discourse might seem banal, fruitless, or even perverse. But consider what issues would be raised if the question were asked from the perspective of a critical stance toward discourse. Now the focus shifts away from a concern with content, particularly with a construction of philosophy as comprising ideas that can be grasped by interpreting the referential content of philosophical texts. Such texts can rather be read subversively as powerful means of controlling the process of producing and receiving discourse.

Poststructuralists have detailed the role of philosophical texts in constructing ideologies of science, language, literature, society, gender, sexuality, the family, and so on. As students of language ideologies, our interest lies in how these texts construct and legitimate conceptions of language that both draw on and help shape other types of representations. In discussing the work of John Locke and Johann Gottfried Herder, we hope to identify ways that key texts seek to delegitimate particular practices of discourse production and reception while promoting

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