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Speech Lost from Speech: The Cognitive Linguistics of Alienation, Objectification, and Reclaiming

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Speech Lost from Speech: The Cognitive Linguistics of Alienation, Objectification, and Reclaiming

by

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B.S. (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) 1991
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Abstract

Speech Lost From Speech: The Cognitive Linguistics of Alienation, Objectification, and Reclaiming

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Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics

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This work, combining scholarship and research in linguistics, psychology, cognitive science, feminist theories, and cultural/critical studies, is a cognitive-linguistic inquiry into the “technology” of alienative and de-alienative language, particularly along lines of race/ethnicity, gender, and sexuality in the United States. Highlighting interrelations of agency, emotion, language performance, social identity, corporeal subjectivity, and cognitive rationality, through analysis of selected research I suggest a revision of the cognitive-linguistic conception of linguistic subjectivity, allowing for alienation that inheres at once in social position and in one’s relation to language itself. The first two chapters introduce the ontological and epistemological concern of linguistic alienation, as well as the theoretical frameworks, Cognitive Grammar and Mental Space Integration, supporting this study. I examine how we might define such a dynamic sensibility as sociocultural alienation, one that is almost by definition so reflexive that it “contaminates” its own expression in that sociocultural space, removing itself from the domain of what can be meant (Searle). Not accounting for this alienation, I claim, has led to the imputation of a particularly present linguistic subject, one presumably fully
engaged in “fugual” linguistic interaction and “hypnotically” focused on the topic of discussion (Goffman), rather than vigilantly moving back and forth between the maintenance of the flow of conversation and the anxious substantiation of self. A case is made for the integrated consideration of affect with cognition. Chapter 3 investigates one of alienative language’s salient instances: objectification, here understood as a dynamic process, an often socially inscribed *distantiation* of some person or group in a representational field that constitutes a movement *away* from what they desire or would claim to possess – whether beloved persons, abstract humanist rights, conventional roles as agentive interlocutors, or cherished self-identities. Chapter 4 investigates objectification’s loose inverse: “reclaimings,” or moves aiming for symbolic self-(re)possession. Two case studies, the reclaimings of epithets “black” and “queer”, are examined historically and critically. The final chapter suggests how an interdisciplinary approach can enrich a linguist’s study of language performances that are ultimately both embodied and “felt”; at the same it proposes deeply reflexive approaches to both subjectivity and objectivity in research.
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments .......................................................................................................................... ii  

Chapter 1. Out of Speech: Alienation, Cognition, Identity, and Language  
Performance .................................................................................................................................. 1  

Chapter 2. Alienation Conceived, Cognitively and Affectively .................................................. 58  

Chapter 3. Perspective and Blending in a Cognitive-Linguistic Approach to  
Objectification ................................................................................................................................. 89  

Chapter 4. Reclaiming: Cognitive Repossessions of the (Subjective) Self ............................... 163  

Chapter 5. Conclusion: Identity on an Interdisciplinary Surface ............................................... 249  

References ................................................................................................................................... 260
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CHAPTER 1. Out of Speech: Alienation, Cognition, Identity, and Language Performance

[T]he book itself is only a tissue of signs, an imitation that is lost, infinitely deferred.
(Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author", 1977 [1968])

I am visible – see this Indian face – yet I am invisible. I both blind them with my beak nose and am their blind spot.
(Gloria Anzaldua, “La Conciencia de la Mestiza”, 1987)

To alienate conclusively, definitionally, from anyone on any theoretical ground the authority to describe and name their own sexual desire is a terribly consequential seizure. In this century, in which sexuality has been made expressive of the essence of both identity and knowledge, it may represent the most intimate violence possible.
(Eve Sedgwick, Epistemology of the Closet, 1990, 26)

Introduction: “Silence” and the Stage

On November 13, 2000, I participated in the Asian Pacific Lesbian Bisexual Queer Transgender Women’s Forum, a conference between East, Southeast, and South Asian and Pacific Islander members of these communities and a panel of the Presidential Advisory Commission on the Status of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Written and spoken testimonials and cultural performances were delivered by community members from around the country. Perhaps the most collectively poignant moment came during a testimonial by one woman who had been a longtime “out” lesbian in the Bay Area community. In addressing the panel on issues of health care, she announced that she was now “coming out” – this time not as a lesbian, but as a breast cancer survivor. She had been too ashamed to tell many of her friends, she said, pointing out the silencing role of shame in her communities of heritage and the tabooed status of women’s illness, particularly cancer, in the United States. But now she needed to make it known; she knew
she must speak about the levels of inattention to illness of racial and gender minorities in
the United States. She wept while she spoke, and many of us were evidently deeply
moved.

Her “coming out” in this sense occupies a space I feel is similar to that of
California’s recent Proposition 54, which, while defeated in the October 2003 elections,
would have prohibited the collection of racial data by state institutions — one consequence
of which would have been the loss of crucial health care information which could
highlight differential epidemiological susceptibilities to disease or tolerances for
treatments among racial and ethnic groups in California. There seemed in this case a clear
need to speak, to take a place in civil entitlement, to assure equal privileges and legal
protections.

Yet afterwards, as others came forward to speak, I could not pull away from
thoughts of her testimonial. I felt inutterably sad and this sadness came not only out of the	tabooed silencing of illness, but also out of the pain that my own speech sometimes
causes me. I knew that she was right (and, further, had every right) to speak, for it was
important at moments to be heard, and hence “visible”, rather than lost to fields of
administrative invisibility. Yet I also found myself yearning profoundly for silence at that
moment – not hers, perhaps, but that of a speaker, any speaker. How was that possible in
such an environment, one which, it seemed, was all about speech? I struggled with the
idea of taking a slot in the open-mic period that closed the forum, so that I could reflect
that our silences can cause us pain, and can be imposed conditions of women’s, racial
minorities, immigrants, and queers’ existence; yet they are also what keep us strong, and
make us beautiful (to me). In my ambivalence, and in my attempt to prepare and organize
my own speech, I did not make it to the stage. It did not even occur to me in that context of “speeching” that I could do something very simple: mount the stage for a speaker’s slot, and then ask for a moment of silence. In my frenzy to find a solution the possibility to make silence — even as I thought about it and desired it — was lost to me. Rather, I ran out of time, incompetent, left with regret and confusion. But why should I regret? Whom would silence have helped in that moment? Was it not speech, but silence, that constituted the risk here?

Later, reflecting on the complex factors producing silence among “Asians”, and native American and immigrant communities at large in the United States, I thought about what had made her speech a condition of being known. I felt - perhaps more than thought about – the contentious debates in queer politics, always culturally inflected, about who should and must be “out” in order to ensure the safety of “our” community; the logocentrist foundations of the Western epistemologies or more broadly what Derrida calls a “metaphysics of presence” undergirding dominant/mainstream United States society; the conditions of silence imposed by Western epistemologies on women’s, queer, immigrant, working class and native communities; and a quality of relative verbal reticence as cultural practice, which can survive migration or become a palpable reality precisely because of migration.

Experiences such as these, characterized by ambivalence, intensity, emotion — along with a hypersensitivity to the possibility that macrocosmic voices speak in little moments and a recognition that many of these meet too neatly with experiences of racism and other marginalizations in the United States — have drawn me quite exigently to the themes addressed in this dissertation. Despite the example’s concentration on both an
enactment of silence and the experience of a border between speech and silence in this example, I should note that the dissertation is applied not so much to exploring conditions of “literal” silence, as it is to outlining the conditions of risk in and around speech. Yet the example also makes a point: that silence can never be understood as simplistically exogenous to the discussion. By this approach, I hope to make available three additional insights about silence: that silence surrounds the area of speech’s risk; that like speech, it is and is not a “communicative device” (with its implications of voluntary choice) as it is often depicted in linguistic accounts; and that silence and speech are opposed not objectively or ontologically, but are partners in a web of significationary agents that together constitute the world as we know it – and yet, they are constructed in Western objectivist/logicentrist knowledge and experience to look and feel like opposites, and as such do a particular violence, such as I felt in trying to make an excruciating choice between them that day: speech was uncompromisingly equated with the stage; silence came with indecision, the experience of risk, and the condition of being “offstage”.

In this work I trace a series of relations out of the terms of alienation, identity, language performance, and cognition. An overarching conception of linguistic alienation underlies the study of two alienative and de-alienative movements: linguistic objectification and linguistic reclaiming. Though objectification and reclaiming employ different means and appear in diverse discourses, they might be understood to function, socially and cognitively, as loose inverses of one another. While this study traces the dynamic involvement of cognitive structures in a given experiential context, such structures are not construed in isolation: I extend the theoretical resources of cognitive science and cognitive linguistics to address what have so far been somewhat peripheral
matters of *identity* — a preeminent constituent of analysis in disciplines like cultural studies, literary studies, sociolinguistics, (social) psychology, anthropology, and sociology. I suggest that what we consider to be "cognition" is more expansively present in the condition of our being than traditionally thought. In so doing I address the restrictiveness of a uniquely ideational and/or physicalist perspective on cognition. Hence cognition, in my view, includes not only some aspects of the "unconscious" as in at least some of its disciplinary or discursive instantiations, but it also *lives by* affect, rather than stands independent of it.¹ It is also, as Merleau-Ponty and others have attempted to show, but one element in the orchestra of the (situated) body. But particularly in highly categorizing societies, and places with elaborated and complex layers of discourse structure, cognition achieves a special place within the body: it can alienate *from* the body when it is a site of confusion, ambivalence, and ambiguity. And cognition itself has the capacity to register *within* it the terms of power (Hawkins 1997), whether that power be envisioned as force or consent: dominance hierarchies, conditions for speech, forms of authority, sameness and difference, are all encoded in cultural frames, many of which operate directly in the background as we live and act, forming the conditions for our linguistic selves from one moment to the next.

But with so much expansion of what is meant by "cognition," does the former, less-elaborate cognition retain any usefulness? Enough, I hope, to show its force — in combination with linguistic, social, cultural and intercultural structures — as a coercive and rehabilitative tool. Certainly, cognition so often works as an integral part of the social

¹ For more on this perspective, see Antonio Damasio’s work on cognition, emotion, and the self, in particular Damasio 1999 and Damasio 1994.
orchestra, enabling not only everyday performances of moving through familiar spaces but also participating in harmonic engagements among people. In its most critical and, to me, most intriguing capacity it is, I would suggest, an instrument of cohesion – of self with other, of one of my selves with another of my selves; and at large, of novel or unfamiliar elements with conceptual worlds. Yet this cohesion can equally function as a tool of fracture – of, for instance, self against unrecognizable, fragmenting other; or of a delimited other against an authorial, travelling self.

Many central inquiries are engaged in the course of this work, the overarching question being, what is it about language that has the potential to prompt alienation into being? Which linguistic processes are related to the enforcing of, or relief from, given alienations? How does alienation manifest in conceptualization and affect, both of which are intimately bound to language; and how may we treat the epistemological and ontological mediations that in some ways define alienation? And if, following several traditions of thought, we regard alienative processes as potentially harmful operations over human beings, then how might we define the contingency of injury on acts of language? How do these discussions then bear on the modeling of linguistic intersubjectivity in a cognitive perspective? Finally, in what senses do these questions bear on constructs of identity? Under certain conditions, identity becomes relevant under appeal to a “self”; and “self” may be, not only the individual or affective object of injury, but what may also potentially respond to injury by way of reclaiming or other forms of linguistic action.

To ask what is meant by alienation is also to ask what is to be counted in the domain of inquiry. For the moment I define it generally thus. Let us take “subject” and
“object” to provisionally denote two conceptual elements. In a cognitive framework, the most general and direct characterization of alienation consists of an event of conceptual differentiation (non- or dis-association, distinction) between this “subject” and “object” in a situation where there exists some cultural, societal, personal, or other2 motivation for them to retain connected (associated, assimilated), either on the part of a judging observer or an experiencing self-alienated subject. In the subcase of self-alienation, both of “subject” and “object” conceptual elements are those with which “a self” may be identified.

This provisional definition is admittedly highly underspecified. It leaves open a number of critical questions that will undergo discussion in the course of this work. Among them are: What underlying samenesses are cast out in the name of difference? What underlying differences are cohered as sameness? Ultimately, such conceptual dynamics, when they concern a social relation, are always to be understood as never “pure” and unmediated. They can be understood as strategic, even when there are real limits on perfect agency. And they are never culturally isolated. Rather, they must always relate to – and potentially reenact – one cultural scheme or another. Finally, left in question at this point in the discussion is whose desire is at play or at stake; and who is doing the “alienating”.

While it might be argued that the present study simply continues the tradition of “confusing” many “kinds” of alienation with each other, rather than selecting one kind and adhering to a specific disciplinary methodology for its treatment, I would reply that

2 Goffman implicitly makes similarly relativistic appeal to frames of social organization, conduct, and value, in a passage discussed in the following chapter.
such an approach, while certainly judicious, should be balanced by one that investigates
the possibilities of alienation’s capacity to travel. I am trying to make the point that one
fact – that studying the highly polysemous semantics of the word “alienation” reveals a
rather unsurprising conceptual kinship among its senses – is not unrelated to another fact
– the observation that experienced alienations travel. That is to say: One alienative act is
“returned” by an integrative act in another modality; a single conceptual act of alienation
for an individual has implications that carry into the territory of cultural identifications;
an expert diagnosis of alienation risks taking its authority from a condition of dis-
identification from the subject understood as undergoing the act of alienation.
Alienation’s very conceptual undefinability or breadth of travel within experience and
within expert is one unacknowledged reason for its uncertain treatment in critical thought.

For all the above reasons, then, a proper study of alienation must, for independent
reasons, include not only “what is alienation” but “what is called alienation” and “what is
said about alienation.” Above and beyond its conceptual definition, then, “alienation” is
thus a school of terms that constitutes both a set of scholarly points of departure for a
theoretical characterization, as well as an empirical database. Let us begin with a few
instances from this database. The following six excerpts render “alienations” in
(sometimes characteristically) different ways; italicizations demarcate definitionally
significant aspects of the excerpts.

(1) Taking joint spontaneous involvement as a point of reference, I want to discuss how this
involvement can fail to occur and the consequence of this failure. I want to consider the
ways in which the individual can become alienated from a conversational encounter, the
uneasiness that arises with this, and the consequence of this alienation and uneasiness upon
the interaction. Since alienation can occur in regard to any imaginable talk, we may be able
to learn from it something about the generic properties of spoken interaction. (Goffman 1967: 114)

(2) Writer of color? Woman writer? Or woman of color? Which comes first? Where does she place her loyalties? On the other hand, she often finds herself at odds with language, which partakes in the white-male-is-norm ideology and is used predominantly as a vehicle to circulate established power relations. This is further intensified by her finding herself also at odds with her relation to writing, which when carried out uncritically often proves to be one of domination: as holder of speech, she usually writes from a position of power, creating as an "author" situating herself above her work and existing before it, rarely simultaneously with it. Thus, it has become almost impossible for her to take up her pen without at the same time questioning her relation to the material that defines her and her creative work. As focal point of cultural consciousness and social change, writing weaves into language the complex relations of a subject caught between the problems of race and gender and the practice of literature as the very place where social alienation is thwarted differently according to each specific context. (Trinh T. Minh-ha 1989; italics are those of the author)

(3) On the one hand, the objectification of their labour-power into something opposed to their total personality (a process already accomplished with the sale of that labour-power as a commodity) is now made into the permanent ineluctable reality of their daily life. Here, too, the personality can do no more than look on helplessly while its own existence is reduced to an isolated particle and fed into an alien system. On the other hand, the mechanical disintegration of the process of production into its components also destroys those bonds that had bound individuals to a community in the days when production was still 'organic.' In this respect, too, mechanisation makes of them isolated abstract atoms whose work no longer brings them together directly and organically; it becomes mediated to an increasing extent exclusively by the abstract laws of the mechanism which imprisons them. (Lukacs 1968: 90)

(4) Up to now, we have considered the estrangement, the alienation of the worker, only from one aspect — i.e., the worker’s relationship to the products of his labour. But estrangement manifests itself not only in the result, but also in the act of production, within the activity of production itself. How could the product of the worker’s activity confront him as something alien if it were not for the fact that in the act of production he was estranging himself from himself? After all, the product is simply the resume of the activity, of the production. So if the product of labour is alienation, production itself must be active alienation, the alienation of activity, the activity of alienation. The estrangement of the object of labour merely summarizes the estrangement, the alienation in the activity of labour itself. (Marx 1992 [1844])

(5) I frustrate me.
I am too much of everyone and not like anyone, and it's frustrating sometimes.
I can honestly say that the clothes I wear, the music I listen, the things I think are all for ME.
The problem that I'm having with that is that I am from so many different backgrounds that no one can identify with my outside...and not many people are willing to look at your inside if they think they got you figured out from your outside.[...]
I guess tryin to be the real true me is making me feel alienated from everyone. and I guess the side of me that understands people TOO well is making me feel alienated too. Or maybe it's the fact that I've moved from one group of people to another since birth...but have been with ALL of them ALL the time....
But then again, I'm attracting people just like me, and even though they're scarce, it ain't a bad thing at all.

("Inez" 2002) 

(6) Consciousness knows and comprehends only what falls within its experience; for what is contained in this is nothing but spiritual substance, and this, too, as object of the self. But Spirit becomes object because it is just this movement of becoming an other to itself, i.e. becoming an object to itself, and of suspending this otherness. And experience is the name we give to just this movement, in which the immediate, the unexperienced, i.e. the abstract, whether it be of sensuous [but still unsensed] being, or only thought of as simple, becomes alienated from itself and then returns to itself from this alienation, and is only then revealed for the first time in its actuality and truth, just as it then has become a property of consciousness also. (Hegel 1977 [1807]: 21)

It may be further tempting to organize a priori these alienations into “lay” and “expert,” or perhaps judge one category as historically prior and the other derived. Given that the topic is just being opened, however, perhaps it is best at this stage simply to note that these “alienations” share some rather complex and incidental historical paths of academic, professional and vernacular discourse, amounting in a sense to family resemblances. While a genealogy of alienations, a study of family resemblances, is certainly not the goal of this work, maintaining an awareness of these many forms can allow theory and practice in the determination and in the reading to converse as fully as possible; it is also to suspend the ready commensurability of meaning. In this process, the commitment not to a priori distinguish “expert” alienations from “lay” carries a signal importance; in so doing we may stay the temptation to see the expert disciplines of knowledge as either free from alienation or in a perfect alienative state that facilitates the ideal research perspective, and practice the intuition that lay and expert theories are not always so easy to distinguish. Such distinctions are also burdened by differential social values; of the notion of “popular speech” Bourdieu writes that it “is one of the products of


10

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the application of dualistic taxonomies which structure the social world according to the
categories of high and low” (1991: 93).

By strategically asserting a commonality both to the notion and to the experience,
this work hopes to benefit existing scholarship in two ways: to enable self-critique from
the point of view of theory; and to motivate the appearance of the sign of alienation,
whether in lay or expert discourse. Certainly there are risks in widening the categorizing
reach of a psychological description. Mageo and Knauf, surveying scholarship on
relations between “power” and “the self,” suggest that “... psychological theorizing that
ignores power relations is liable to take human oppression for human nature”.4 Indeed I
should say here that my own struggles concerning my multiple situatedness as an
objective and subjective scholar of “my own kind(s)” and of “others”, and writing in
language about others’ language, and writing from a descriptive distance about
alienations, were both unpredictable and profound. Such reflexivities were somehow
entirely relevant to my pursuits, and yet threatened to come so close as to make my
studies feel impossible – the challenge was to keep my own gendered, sexualized, and
raced identifications in the balance (but not remote either) while I remained in language –
writing, thinking, and speaking in the everyday.

While perhaps I was “too” sensitive in my fear that I would overrun or violate
others’ representations, sincerities, interventions by characterizing them in my own terms,
mine is also clearly not a unique experience of scholarship. I explore the role of this
reflexivity at length in the final chapter, for I feel it has strong implications for work that
slides into the personal (insofar as it becomes subjective), and for work that straddles
disciplinary boundaries, and the dissertation would not be whole without this reflection, I think. When legitimation and the authority to speak matter, questions flower out of the recognition that one is doing not one’s “proper” work (interdisciplinarity), that one is not doing proper science (linguistic methodologies), that one is studying an improper subject (which cannot be close to oneself), that one should feel ashamed to flirt with ignobility. I am reminded of Trinh Minh-ha’s comment on the intensities that accompany scholarship about marginality when one has migrated: “Perhaps vindicating and interrogating identity takes on a peculiarly active significance with displacement and migration.... For those who feel settled at home in their land (or in other lands) where racial issues are not an everyday challenge, perhaps self-retrieval and self-apprehension are achieved without yielding to the urge to assimilate, to reject, or to fight for a space where identity is fearlessly constructed across difference.”

It is precisely because I never felt quite settled as an American, as a linguist, a scientist, as an Asian, a woman, and a queer — that the boundaries threatened not to let in the “other” but simply to explode in my face.

There are further demands for a nuanced approach to the application of theoretical categories. To place an a priori lens on the description of alienation in speech, as might be a linguist’s reasonable approach, will certainly fail in this case — it is to apply a discipline-or society-cultivated demand for presence in an act or a way of being which partakes of absence, of kinds of awayness. For it may be forgotten at times that speech itself can be dangerous: often, the impulse to speech is a commitment, to involvement, membership, or identification; and in potentially hostile settings it can constitute a risk. Furthermore,

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4 Introduction, Power and the Self, 1.
5 Trinh T. Minh-ha, “Bold Omissions” in When the Moon Waxes Red, 156.
alienation that occurs in acts of speech may well require someone who is not the speaker, but the addressee, to be the one who is alienated; and the possibility of traumatic speech (a “shattering” in Butler’s terms) may further the conditions for that alienation never to be explicitly expressed in speech, but perhaps still deferred to another modality, to another time or place. Indeed (conversely), the alienations we have seen in each of the preceding excerpts are precisely non-present alienations. They are a present self reporting on a past or generalized experience of alienation, in the case of Inez; they are a judgment of description of a presumably universal, psychic inner experience, in the case of Hegel; they are a meta-societal, economic view, in the case of Marx.

To allow, then, for the mysteries of presence and absence to survive in a matter so delicate, calls for a wider sweep and, no less, a critical approach to the customary demands of a discipline and set of methodologies that are presentist in the precise sense that they require “material” speech, evidence of speech that is, at the least, visibly or audibly detected. The result is that within this work are sketched a number of cognitive characterizations of alienation which, though far from being universal, have explanatory potential not only for a number of linguistic phenomena that have thus far not been understood or characterized as alienative, but also for a number of non-linguistic phenomena.6

Within linguistics, cognitive linguistics is positioned in at least two senses: first, a certain vocabulary of linguistic categories is shared at least superficially with the rest of

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6 In so doing, we may organize, rather than risk artificially delimiting, the diffusion of the sign of alienation in such a way that secondarily may enable our reflections upon where, how, and even why the sign of “alienation” appears in a great number of disciplines.
linguistics, and second, like phonetic science, it is committed to adherence to what is empirically discovered about the materialities of the body – in cognitive linguistics, this tends to be the neural structure of the brain; in phonetics, this is the physiology of the vocal tract. In cognitive linguistics, the linguistic objects of study – nouns and verbs, tenses and moods, while being challenged as to their underlying nature (cognitive, neurological, or formal) or having their boundaries blurred or redrawn, tend still to categorize largely the same literal tokens as the rest of linguistics (grammatical objects are still grammatical objects; middle voice remains middle voice; and a noun - with some exceptions - remains largely a noun). But claims concerning the status of these categories sharply differ from those in other subdisciplines of linguistics. They are based on a cognitivist epistemology, which draws less from linguistic structuralism, formalist linguistic theory (which makes few or no ontological claims) or the philosophy of language, but rather more directly from psychology, which has its own philosophical inheritance.7

7 In a conversation a fellow student (himself a formal phonetician) described my project, quite disparagingly, as “one of those touchy-feely cognitive dissertations” in linguistics. I don’t even think he knew much about my dissertation except that it had something to do with social theory, but I could not help but see gender everywhere in his comment. It intimated what constituted proper linguistic research and where “women’s stuff” must stand in relation to it – as women are supposed to deal with feelings. It further seemed to me that for this student, the integrationism of the cognitive perspective was itself suspect. Cognitive linguistics openly deals with embodiment, and its entertaining of the body’s involvement in behaviors that might be explainable by intellection alone might as well be seen as a “feminist dalliance”. Ultimately, perhaps his evocation of touch and of emotion was apt, since I do see this work as an attempt to follow the touch between ostensibly “different” bodies and elucidate their sympathies, as well as an effort to rehabilitate emotion into the linguistic discourses; by tracing relations among the terms, I hope also to reveal how they are dialogically constituted.

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Thus, cognitive linguistics brings psychological considerations\(^8\) to bear on the study of traditional categories of language as they are maintained in the rest of linguistics. A linguistics-psychology pairing is particularly apposite to this work. Alienation, in all its variety, is best describable in terms of conceptual subject and object rather than, say, in the terms that might be readily snapped up out of linguistics proper: the highly restrictive grammatical designations of subject and object, whose relations to conceptual worlds are by no means self-evident (consider the sentence “I hit my friend Larry”, perhaps easy to analyze, versus the more elusive “The moon took on a luminous hue tonight”). Thus, rather than engaging syntax as a point of departure, I introduce two cognitive-psychological concepts here, both of which I see as applicable to the schematic instrumentality of alienative movement: the Cognitive Grammar rendering of the subjective and objective dimensions of a given conceptualization; and the Mental Spaces account of blending, which I believe can effectively represent important particularities of both objectification and reclaiming processes. At the same time, I will use the opportunity to introduce the frameworks themselves.

In Cognitive Grammar (hereafter CG; for fundaments see (Langacker 1987a, 1987b, 1991), “language” is related to “mind” in a specific way. The theory, not unlike most linguistic theories, assumes a structured relationship between phonological form and conceptual meaning, and the ensemble of such relationships makes up grammatical knowledge. The approach is distinguished by several defining traits: (1) its locating of meaning in conceptualization rather than in disembodied, formal systems: “language is

\(^8\) Cognitive psychology, in particular, examines such themes as information memory capacity; perceptual and cognitive imagery; and information processing.
neither self-contained nor describable without essential reference to cognitive processing”; (2) its view that any form-meaning correspondence is always defined relative to a specific cognitive domain; and (3) its insistence that grammatical structures function as a kind of organizing faculty “for the structuring and conventional symbolization of conceptual content” (Langacker 1991:1). Presupposed in this perspective is a more general assumption within cognitive linguistics: that engaged human minds would simply not function effectively or quickly (socially, communicatively, and otherwise) without recourse to generalizations; and grammatical language, as a site of daily “doing,” falls within that which must undergo generalization. Hence Langacker’s introduction of schemas, which generalize from specific structures (again as a given cognitive faculty) and enable “symbolic” structures to exist at varying levels of abstraction. These may then be used as resources to generate novel expressions (1991:61). In sum, grammar serves at once as a symbolic “register” (I use this to avoid the implications of the term “store”) for kinds of meaning that are linguistically mediated, as well as a fount for the (re-)production of language.

Langacker writes: “Semantic structures (of any size) are referred to as predications. They are characterized relative to cognitive domains, some of which are basic in the sense of being cognitively irreducible (e.g. our experience of time and space, or fields of perceptual potential such as the range of possible color sensations), while others involve cognitive structures of indefinite complexity. Any cognitive structure – a novel conceptualization, an established concept, a perceptual experience, or an entire knowledge system – can function as the domain for a predication.” (CIS 61)

Note that Langacker’s use of “symbolic” is quite unlike Lacanian psychoanalytic use; indeed the same could be true of the other word “image” of the book’s title. By the word “symbol” Langacker means that grammatical structures may always be said to have both conceptual and phonological meaning. “By their very nature, grammatical structures impose specific images on the conceptual content supplied by lexical items and provide a way of symbolizing (i.e. signaling phonologically) the construals thus effected.” (CIS ix)
CG is often represented in a language of diagrams that reflects (and sometimes risks over-representing) its claims about how language is symbolized in *images*. “Images” reflect cognitive structures that are recruited to handle physical, social, and other tasks, of perception, manipulation, connection, expression, and so forth. Just as textual description itself, however, such graphic description should be understood to approach in some indirect sense, but likely not in fact *represent*, the phenonema in question. So understood, it would be useful to introduce some of this “graphic vocabulary” here as well. As intimated above, for every symbolic instance, two coordinated poles are proposed: a phonological pole, comprising a phonological description (note that this “phonology” may equally be an auditory phonological sequence or a description of a gestural sequence in American Sign Language), and a semantic pole.\(^1\)

Fig. 1. Cognitive grammar “symbol.”

Note that while this representation schematically resembles Saussure’s bipartite depiction of a sign (to be encountered later in this chapter), Langacker’s theory is cognitively elaborated. Each relational semantic structure (called a predication), for instance, is internally organized; each includes a *trajector* (alternatively, “figure”) as well as a

\[^1\] The “connection” to the “extensional world” is found here in the embodied mind, through neurological entrenchment and the ways that abstraction and generalization “keep” experience in the mind and body.
landmark ("ground") in reference to which the trajector is defined. Below, for instance, is the semantic schematics for the English preposition “below,” in which the trajector is defined as “below” with reference to the higher landmark. At left is a generic phonological description, given in IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet):

Fig. 2. Cognitive-grammar schematics for “BELOW”.

Thus Langacker’s project could be described as an effort to provide a framework for rendering language phenomena and systems in a fundamentally symbolic fashion, in such a way that language and conceptualization are intimately related. What may not be clear at this point is that such pairs are not ubiquitous — they are gradually “entrenched” with experience, and hence “exist” more or less robustly depending on their use (this has consequences for the ways that normative and/or dominant structures can impede linguistically revisionary efforts, to be discussed in Chapter 4).

One notable point of departure for Langacker’s understanding of linguistic conceptualization is perception, in the sense that he develops an understanding of the

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12 For Langacker (1987a) the “trajector/landmark asymmetry is one linguistic instantiation of figure/ground alignment” (231-236).
language-related mind on the basis of principles that guide the presumably narrower structures of perception. The implications on his theory are significant: his understanding of the subjectivity and objectivity of language-related conceptualization are effectively founded on this perceptual analogy. In his view, any given conceived entity may be relatively *more* or *less* subjectively construed. With any change towards more or less self-reflection, that given entity is correspondingly more or less subjectively construed. Thus, subjectivity and objectivity for a given conceptualized entity are *mutually exclusive*. Langacker’s primary example for demonstrating this mutual exclusivity employs an example of perception of physical objects:

Consider the glasses I normally wear. If I take my glasses off, hold them in front of me, and examine them, their construal is maximally objective, as I will understand the term; they function solely and prominently as the OBJECT OF PERCEPTION, and not at all as part of the perceptual apparatus itself. By contrast, my construal of the glasses is maximally subjective when I am wearing them and examining another object, so that they fade from my conscious awareness despite their role in determining the nature of my perceptual experience. The glasses then function exclusively as part of the SUBJECT OF PERCEPTION – they are one component of the perceiving apparatus, but are not themselves perceived.

(1991: 316, emphasis by the author)

One caveat that Langacker never makes is the limited extent to which idealized, absolute subjectivity or objectivity may be true at a given moment for any human conceptualizer. If we assumed that a perfect objectivity were possible – whether limited to the percepts or otherwise – such exclusivity rests on a dubious segregation between any subject and object. At this point, however, in order to sketch the outlines of a cognitive-grammar account of alienative language, it is worth preserving the *dynamics* offered here as a metaphor for movements towards *relative* subjectivity and objectivity, keeping in mind that subjectivity and objectivity are always defined in cultural context and with particular
Alienative language: that which prompts or maintains a separation between “subject” (in the case of other-alienation, the speaker/other-conceptualizer) and “object” (in the case of other-alienation, the hearer/self-conceptualizer).

Existing accounts of subjectivity and perspective in cognitive linguistics offer useful definitions of subjective and objective language\textsuperscript{14}: in such accounts, subjective language may only be attached (in detectible language) to the referents of (or, more broadly, those language entities in a referential relation to) the subject; it may not, on the other hand, exist in attachment to the referents associated with the object. Such accounts make limited gestures beyond strictly grammatical notions of “subject” and “object”, but do not elaborate; they also need to be revised to allow for non-literal language acts and structures. By extending these accounts, we can reach an adequate account of subjectivity and objectivity in relation to alienative language performance as well as grammatical constructs, insofar as relatively subjective or objective viewpoints can get grammaticalized or conventionalized. This will be explored in greater detail in the following chapters.

Mental Spaces (hereafter MS), the second major framework used here, is a general theory about conceptual structure which postulates the dynamic change of conceptual structure in concert with a conceptualizer’s interactions with “entities in the world,” whether or not such interactions involve language activity.\textsuperscript{15} The theory is highly

\textsuperscript{13} An extended critique of this analysis appears in Chapter 3.
\textsuperscript{14} such as that offered by Wilbert Spooren and Ted Sanders (1997)
compatible with CG, though it has different ends and explanatory capacities; one of its major advantages is that it schematically facilitates, and theoretically emphasizes, the human primacy and importance of *grouping* diverse kinds of information together (consider the kinds of elements of knowledge that coalesce, for example, when one recalls a scene of a movie or a childhood memory), and it further allows us to readily visually schematize these relationships. While both MS and CG are highly useful for analyzing conceptual developments in correlation with a stream of discourse, MS allows for the more systematic inclusion of *contextual* information, such as is the concern of pragmatic analysis; indeed, context is understood here as integral to cognition. It has also offered advantageous explanations for a number of classic pragmatic-semantic problems. Evidence for at least some aspects of mental spaces' psychological reality is growing (see e.g. Coulson 1997, which compares processing times for relative complexities of mental-spaces manipulations), and yet the theory has been shown to satisfyingly explain a diverse number of socio-cognitive linguistic phenomena, including garden-path jokes, counterfactuals, word-compound blends, and complex narrative structure, thus showing a relatively strong predictive purchase.

A familiarization with some features of MS theory will help to lend expository capacity to the ensuing blending example. While MS theory, as a generalized theory of cognition, is not technically limited to language processing - a growing number of analyses today are being applied to non-linguistic pictographic images and gestures - language, as a particularly widely and explicitly available manifestation of human (social) cognition, is seen as a primary source of elaborated evidence for general cognitive activity. The implicit assumption is that language is in some sense opportunistic on
cognitive structure. The below example introduces some schematic conventions for the framework.

Fig. 3. Two mental spaces and their configurations, corresponding to “Sangeeta thinks it’s raining in Bombay.”

As seen above, the primary theoretical objects for MS are mental spaces, understood as the preeminent conceptual bodies of cognition; and their component elements, which may exist within or be shared among spaces. The mental space, distantly related to classical semantics and objectivist philosophy’s “possible world,” represents any packaged organization of information in cognition. MS’ conception of “elements of meaning” avoids the compromise of some older semantic schemes, such as semantic features (see G. Lakoff 1987, Fauconnier 1994), since mental-spaces elements of meaning – objects, associative links, and connotations – are clearly more than a medley of “properties”; necessarily and inherently, they have relations among themselves.

At left in Figure 3 above, the speaker’s immediate reality is depicted as groupings of elements the speaker counts in his or her reality, loosely assembled into the speaker’s “R” space (and epistemically distanced from other belief states). Sangeeta, an individual in the speaker’s R space, is conceptually assigned her own belief-space at right, a Sangeeta-reality of Bombay that possesses some independence (though not
necessarily differing) from the speaker’s R space; in this Sangeeta-reality it is raining. Clearly we cannot know whether mental spaces exist as they are drawn schematically; and they certainly do not represent outright segregations of information; Sangeeta, for instance, “exists” in both the left and right spaces (though for simplicity’s sake I did not represent Sangeeta in the belief space); what is different about the entities is whose perspective or status of reality shapes them. At left, Sangeeta is objectified for the speaker; at right, Sangeeta is presented as her self. What is relevant about the segregations of spaces here, divided by the connector “THINKS”, is that their schematic distance, when spanned by epistemic connectors, represents some kind of relative epistemic distance that has consequences: it plays a part in linguistic reasoning about who has had certain experience or knowledge and is therefore likely to behave accordingly, in a given cultural context.

It is believed that many of these spaces play highly important roles in everyday cognition, whether linguistically or physically practical. If we accept the main assumption of mental spaces – that there is some condition of “working reality” with which each of us functions at an everyday level, certainly itself imbued with imagination pervaded by structured “human artifice” and yet also practically assisting us in our everyday physical and social negotiations – then this “working reality” forms the basis of what we maintain as immediate reality, and often further actively cohere as “truth”. Socially engaged conceptualizers at minimum would then maintain in their R spaces the current locus’ participants and relationships (if they are available). At large, whether an individual is, say, entering the turnstiles to commute to work, or completely absorbed in an imaginary scene, such as a particularly engrossing story or film, the R space is always there, though
not necessarily the focus. It functions as an “everyday” space in that it has the special status of always having positive epistemic value, and enjoys the great majority of a conceptualizer’s less-aware attentions. Initially schematic or skeletal spaces, such as Sangeeta’s belief space at the beginning of the speaker’s narrative, develop and become enriched and particularized by contextual elements and cultural frames.

When language is involved, mental spaces or their elements are alerted by the flow of discourse, either explicitly (by space builders, or explicit references like names) or implicitly. Utterances thus constitute streams of cues for biased conceptual development.¹⁶ For example, the linking verb is cues a conceptualizer to revise a current, or focus, space, believes prompts the creation of a new belief space, temporal modifiers like was and before create past-time spaces; and, in a normal sequence of discourse, anaphoric or other pronominal references (she, that cat) either make use of existing correspondences between spaces’ elements, or generate new ones. Such cues are not wed one-by-one to any given linguistic construct; they therefore do not “perform” sequentially according to the temporality in which language is delivered. Nevertheless, some likely processing temporalities can be suggested. As listeners encounter an utterance, then, they use their corresponding versions of the imaginary worlds, frames, cultural models, and contextual information, prompted by mental-space cues, to construct corresponding meaning interpretations.

¹⁶ “Biased”, not “determinate,” since linguistic norms – biasing forces – are neither regularly distributed nor perfectly mastered by anyone; and no interpretation may be separated ultimately from the history, experience, emotivity, and positioning of the conceptualizer.
Frames, one of the major constituents of MS, represent abstract cultural models, and are defined variously by (Schank and Abelson 1977), (Fillmore 1982, 1985), (G. Lakoff 1987). They are indispensable compact abstractions of frequented social, cultural, and physical knowledge. As such they could equally well (and as will be seen in this work, do indeed) serve as Langacker’s “cognitive domains” against which grammatical structures are defined. To take two of the most frequently cited examples – interestingly, one that encodes normative expectations about gender and age, and the other, about the normative exchange of capital or services – Fillmore shows how word definitions such as bachelor only make sense when defined against a specific (dominant) cultural background, a schematic “frame”: one about male growth, in which Western males are expected to marry when within a certain age range. In subcultures using this term, bachelor therefore simply does not “make sense” – does not interpretively flow – when applied to a boy of ten. A second example is a “sale frame” against which both “sell” and “buy” are defined, and which crucially includes two roles: seller and buyer; and a medium of exchange, such as the British pound. But it also includes expectations about the sale, such as what a person in each role would consider to be a satisfying sale. Schank and Abelson define a frame as a kind of cultural script, with not only roles and objects, but also prescribed sequences to apply to them. Their example of a restaurant script includes waiters, customers, checks, and dishes; the expected sequence is the ordering, delivery of the dish, eating, delivery of the check, and payment.

These are bland facts about the taken-for-granted ordinary operations of ordinary language. Yet here arises a general fact true of both situations, and which is essential to a critical understanding of the linguistic renewal of elaborated genders, social roles, and the
ideologies encompassing them. Through such frames a certain normative viewpoint is semi-coercively written into language, into "ordinary" words, as part of the communicative contract: if you want to understand, you would do well to have this elaborated normative knowledge solidly inscribed, so that you can know what we are talking about, so you know how to get along.17

MS theory is a dynamic theory of meaning construction; individual mental spaces may come together to form meaning blends, an operation necessary for every processing task, since every mental space is inherently underspecified. It is thus through blending that a space can be used in real-life situations – that is, in context. Unlike some other frameworks of linguistics constructed such that “culture” is treated as exogenous, mental-spaces theory takes as a given the blending of cultural models, including cognitive frames, with the present context of the utterance or, more generally, of the (linguistic) act. Furthermore, since much cultural knowledge depends on other knowledge, many standard (pre-packaged) frames we use are themselves composed of blends; for instance, marriage frames in most cases implicitly depend upon heterosexual mating frames. In MS theory, these ready-made blends are called conventional or entrenched. There is plenty of evidence of this form of conventional blend in everyday cognition; it is the best representation of certain kinds of memory that enable one to know what to do in novel situations (Fauconnier and Turner 2002).

17 The discourse of rights operates by presence, by ready articulation, by embeddedness as already the kind of subject that would enjoy such rights. Command of language, and the conceptual readiness of linguistically normative frameworks, are essential to this presence; they are a precondition for all versions of the announcement “Here I am!” For more on this, see Slobin 1996, which discusses the kinds of thought.
On the other hand, those blends that are novel, or on-line, can be brought about either by the explicit structure of an utterance, for example conditionals or counterfactuals ("If Grace weren’t running circles around her sister then she wouldn’t have tripped")\textsuperscript{18}, or by one of many possible contradictions (grammatical, epistemic, etc.) implied or evoked by an utterance.\textsuperscript{19} Such blends can be particularly useful in describing the experiencing of inchoate events, events that are in some sense unknown or surprising; blends may describe what happens in a moment that one attempts – if one wishes, and one is often obliged – to grasp something. At the same time, only certain unknowns are subject to living freely in indeterminate suspension. Amidst the surprise and the novelty (and the pleasure of curiosity), there often exist (cognitively) easier or more immediate ways (and motives) to explain or resolve questions; certain elements are privileged, and come forth to participate in the interpretation; as might be imagined, these are very often normative. This is both the boon of ease-with-unfamiliarity, and yet also the bane of cultural contiguity, which as it promotes cultural cohesion also perpetuates structures of dominance and unjust privilege.

To take an illustration, one online blend is represented, in extremely schematic form, by Figure 4 below. How might one parse – and lend meaning to – the phrase "lesbian marriage"? Notwithstanding those who have already conventionalized the blend, the strangeness of the phrase to most speakers, at least until recently, is mostly due to an ill fit (from a normative point of view) between lesbian partners and conventionally necessary to perform and function linguistically; he addresses these issues in the context of a larger discussion on questions around Whorfian linguistic determinism. \textsuperscript{18} See Dancygier and Sweetser 1996 for a detailed treatment of conditionals, epistemic distance, and choices between alternative conceptions.
married couples: in addition to having a unique claim to legality, conventional marriage assumes heterosexuality and procreative sex. Note, in this case, the necessity to look beyond the standard view of grammar: this ill-fit represents an implicit contradiction, not an explicit grammatical one, since adjectivization and compounding are particularly productive and flexible processes. In order to conceptualize “lesbian marriage,” then, one forms a blend, using as contributory inputs: one’s understanding of lesbian as a category (1a), and one’s understanding of the conventional marriage frame, (2).\textsuperscript{20} Note also that the “novelty” of lesbian marriage is at least partly conditioned on the mythic “normalcy” of all other unions, whose legality seemed secondary to their cultural interpretability, indeed whose acceptability seemed overwhelmingly determined by their fit to heteronormative gender asymmetry: celibate unions, non-loving ones, polygamy, common-law marriage, and so on.

In many cases where it may be conceptualized at all (that some conceptualizations are novel, creative, or less instantaneous does not invalidate their having been formed), the blend “lesbian marriage” takes what is acceptable of the marriage frame in (2), neglecting to import the opposite-sex identities of the marriage partners; and imputes the nominal category of lesbians, (1a), with all of its properties, as each of the two partners in the blended marriage concept. It would seem, however, that such a blended concept cannot resist \textit{heteronormativity} wholesale; by engaging “marriage,” a concept very much defined as a heterosexual institution and buttressed by multiple heteronormative frames of reference, “lesbian marriage” risks importing not only idealizations of notional and

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item A broad range of examples are explored in Fauconnier 1997.
\item See Fauconnier and Turner 1996.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
actional oppositeness, but potentially long-standing unequal power relations and the
domesticity of women, held as the norms in conventional marriages. I address cognitive
linguistic aspects of the engaging of dominant concepts at length in Chapter 4.

Note, however, that given the flexibility of compounding in English, this is only
one of several interpretations. The first element of a two-word compound is not restricted
to grammatical noun categories, as seen in "dolphin brain" or "kitchen sink." It may
equally be adjectival, as in "white house" and "sad sack." Along these lines, the word
lesbian, which has the flexibility to be conventionally understood (and can grammatically
conventionally function) as either noun (identity category) or adjective (relational), can,
as adjective, function primarily as a relational description, furnishing the relationship
inherent within the nominative conceptualization marriage with properties of identity (as
does the concept of "homosexual"), and secondarily embellishing the participant roles
with femaleness, to a degree that is open to the interpreter/conceptualizer. In this case,
then, the adjectival reading of lesbian, represented as (1b), can be understood to
contribute "more" conceptual content (by way of contributing both property and relational
information) to the resultant blended mental space representing the compound, than does
the nominal reading of lesbian (which contributes only property information; relational
information is largely supplied by the marriage frame itself).

21 The first element is not limited to nouns or adjectives, since the effort of
interpretation is ultimately semantic. I agree with Fauconnier and Turner (1996)'s claim
that a great number of word-class combinations in a compound are quite interpretable,
above and beyond the "rules" of compounding suggested by formalist studies.

22 By no means, however, is any of this predetermined, making any ultimate
attempts to quantify relative contributions to the blend irrelevant except perhaps if
investigated statistically. A nominal reading of lesbian may still capture, and hence
contribute, some relational information, depending on the interpreter.
slides between a modifying adjective and an equal participant in a compound noun, influencing meaning ambivalently.

Fig. 4. Example of an online conceptual blend alerted by the phrase “lesbian marriage.”

In May 2000, in Berkeley, California, I overheard a speaker ask, “Did you know they’re married?” in reference to a female friend she knew and the friend’s female partner. This usage, given without any apparent sign of the awareness of the code (such as emphasis or other “special” prosodic treatment), suggests that some revising - perhaps a further abstraction - of the meaning of “marriage” itself may have been a result of a backward
revision of the blend “lesbian marriage” and/or “gay marriage” to the marriage frame itself (a possibility most probably reinforced by many other backward inferences to the concept of marriage and/or partnership). So while novelty sometimes only reinforces the strength of the normative frames against which the novelty is defined, there are instances where that normative frame itself may undergo modification. There are certainly conditions under which this may take place; one such condition to which I have already alluded is that there exist adequate supporting frames for the novel readings, or that they be somehow constructible at the moment.

Alienation’s Invitations To “Meaning” And “Affect”

As suggested earlier, alienation seems in its essence always to resist a straightforward implementation, calling for further discussion in this and the following chapter. For instance, with meaning and grammar defined as they are in CG, there would then seem to be no a priori reason why we might not explore alienation as a schematic meaning in the conceptual domain, one that materializes in elaborated instances as might any conventionalized mental space, and which has a set of potential reflexes in the form domain. And yet, in what sense does alienation count as a meaning? Indeed, substantial care would seem necessary around such a notion as alienation, existentially mediating as it does between presence and absence, speaking and silence.

A passage from a written and visual work by Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Dictée, vividly exemplifies this in-betweenness. I quote it at length below:

She mimicks the speaking. That might resemble speech. (Anything at all.) Bared noise, groan, bits torn from words. Since she hesitates to measure the accuracy, she resorts to mimicking gestures with the mouth. The entire lower lip would lift upwards then sink back to its original place. She

23 These reflexes appear in a diversity of modalities, as will be seen.
would then gather both lips and protrude them in a pout taking in the breath that might utter some thing. (One thing. Just one.) But the breath falls away. With a slight tilting of her head backwards, she would gather the strength in her shoulders and remain in this position.

*It murmurs inside. It murmurs. Inside is the pain of speech the pain to say. Larger still. Greater than is the pain not to say. To not say. Says nothing against the pain to speak. It festers inside. The wound, liquid, dust. Must break. Must void.*

From the back of her neck she releases her shoulders free. She swallows once more. (Once more. One more time would do.) In preparation. It augments. To such a pitch. Endless drone, refueling itself. Autonomous. Self-generating. Swallows with last efforts last wills against the pain that wishes it to speak.

She allows others. In place of her. Admits others to make full. Make swarm. All barren cavities to make swollen. The others each occupying her. Tumorous layers, expel all excesses until in all cavities she is flesh.

She allows herself caught in their threading, anonymously in their thick motion in the weight of their utterance. When the amplification stops there might be an echo. She might make the attempt then. The echo part. At the pause. When the pause has already soon begun and has rested there still. She waits inside the pause. Inside her. Now. This very moment. Now. She takes rapidly the air, in gulfs, in preparation for the distances to come. The pause ends. The voice wraps another layer. Thicker now even. From the waiting. The wait from pain to say. To not to. Say.


(Cha 1995)

Searle’s *Principle of Expressibility* is taken as a hard-bound, premier principle of linguistics (one which might seem to, paradoxically, legitimize a conceptualist approach to linguistic science). In essence, it is the promulgation that “whatever can be meant can be said”:

...often I am unable to say exactly what I mean even if I want to because I do not know the language well enough to say what I mean (if I am speaking Spanish, say), or worse yet, because the language may not contain words or other devices for saying what I mean. But even in cases where it is in fact impossible to say exactly what I mean it is in principle possible to come to be able to say exactly what I mean. I can in principle if not in fact increase my knowledge of the language, or more radically, if the existing language or existing languages are not adequate to the task, if they simply lack the resources for saying what I mean, I can in principle at least enrich the language by introducing new terms or other devices into it. (Searle 1969:19)
Notwithstanding the temporal contingency of this claim (the possibility for a future sayability), Searle’s optimistic implication is that if one thinks “something,” presuming communicative competence, then it should always be possible to find some way, possibly creatively, to express this “conceptual” experience. Yet if we were to assume, as suggested in some way above, that alienation could be thought, or meant, then expressed in this way Searle’s presumption would seem to careen dangerously over the complexity and multivocality of alienation. A claim that whatever can be meant, can be said, implies the possibility of perfect intent, and hence the perfect translatability into linguistic form of a conscious conceptual state.

Clearly, if we are to adopt this premise with regard to the study of alienation we are in a severe bind; we risk crushing it just as we move to study it. In the passage from Dictée, what is being thought by the unnamed narrator is, so it seems, absolutely inarticulable, as she recounts. And yet it, whatever “it” is, has been articulated, in the text, though not with the same addressee – the readership “receives,” apprehends, experiences, rather than whoever is depicted as present in the alienative scene; nor is it in the same modality as where the alienation was felt – the expression is textual rather than verbal. At the least, we might say that the alienation seems to undergo a change in context in order for “its” articulation, or report, to occur. In a sense its expression is deferred; what “is” becomes not only what “was” – it must further be displaced as a condition for its being read.

What is to be done with this rather lateral departure from presence and absence alike, this “there and not there”; and how does one analyze passages such as that in Dictée which express non-expression? The cross-modality exemplified by that passage, this

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abstract “shiftiness” of alienation to something “other” than the “center” where it is created, is crucially, I believe, characteristic of the phenomenon itself. A modal “center” would seem to open an “alienated” modality for the alienation to express itself. This is different from what Searle implies, not least because he presumes a singular, monolithic kind of verbal expressibility and, barring his provision for the inequalities of foreign-language competency, equal playing grounds for expression. Indeed, in Searle’s view, would not the narrator of Cha’s passage be “silent,” and would she not have chosen to be so? The notion of silencing itself, while it may accurately capture the force of an act which deprives someone of speech, has limitations as a metaphor since it risks obeying the two-dimensional asymmetry of a power-vested vision: the “silent” one is the one who is silenced by the powered speech, that is to say, silenced in the very modality in which that injurious speech was launched.24

To return to the Searlian opposition between “meant” and “said,” then, within contemporary linguistics it is in cognitive linguistic frameworks that I perceive the

24 The two-dimensional understanding of silence can be seen in many sources, including those bearing the influence of Western logocentrism. But such a monolithic understanding can also be exploded if it is contextualized: King-Kok Cheung’s monograph of literary criticism, *Articulate Silences*, at once exemplifies silence’s multifacetedness – hence perhaps (just as “alienation”) its underspecification as a term – and its limitations as a culturally-bound diagnostic, particularly as it has been used in twentieth-century Western feminism. The book studies the broader categories of “rhetorical,” “provocative,” and “attentive” literary silences. “Like language, silence has many ugly faces. But even what I construe to be undesirable silences – the speechlessness induced by shame and guilt, the oppressive or protective withholding of words in the family, or the glaring oversight in official history – have all too scrubable motivations. Far from being pure Asian attributes, moreover, they are often overdetermined by both ancestral mores and exclusionary forces in North America. Then there are the enabling silences, such as the listening in Kingston, the elliptical telling in Yamamoto, and, above all, the breathtaking rendition of soundless but “accurate and alert knowing” in Kogawa.
possibility to exist for a greater gap between “meant” and “said,” for the readier definition for this pair would be “conceptualized” (and felt) and “expressed” (in such a way that intent is not so readily prioritized, nor the presence of speech, for silence may be expressed but not said). Within cognitive linguistics, what is acceptable as “meaning” – even if conservatively limited to “what is able to be conceptualized/felt” – remains quite open, since there is no accompanying condition of conscious awareness or verbal expressibility – crucial for a state that would seem to be so deeply inarticulable as alienation. Yet a cognitivist or conceptualist conception, certainly, bears its own risks; and it is there that I make use of a number of anthropological accounts of culture and post-structuralist accounts of language, both bearing some different relation to semiotics than contemporary linguistics, that make significant allowance for “non-speech” and “non-thought.”

To address one of the risks of a limited conceptualism, alienation, by nearly any articulation except the meta-individual, purely structuralist or economic ones, seems to inhabit a blurry territory, not only of cognition, “thought,” or even “conceptualization,” but also of feeling; as experience, alienation seems to be as rich in affect as it can be characterized cognitively. Affect permits a further subtlety against the ideational positivism of cognition, which is, in many interpretations, the seat of information management. Some would even say that affect is, in some ways, both less and more than thought; it therefore resides in some sense at a distance from thought. As attempts to engage affect now extend beyond the psychoanalysis of literary criticism to include

These silences, demanding utmost vigilance from writers and readers alike, are the very antitheses of passivity.” (20)
approaches such as neurobiology, affect already seems to have an irregular presence vis-
a-vis thought that sometimes seems indigenous, at other times componentially separate, and at still others, orthogonal. This relationship is one that the discipline of cognitive psychology is only beginning to address, but still with a great formalist, if experimental, emphasis on information management (consider such a term as “personality trait,” which remains a flagship object of study in social psychology). Many social psychologists give both derivational and orthogonal status to affect as if it were an independent variable with various effects on information management.

Affect terminology has varied substantially across the disciplines. Of course, the specialized term, affect, bears a historical relationship to Freudian psychological tradition. This term refers to emotion management systems, subsuming emotion, feeling, and possibly the unconscious, for instance as involved in repression. The linguistic term affect, however, is defined quite differently. Rather than being an implicit presence, and not necessarily available to direct apprehension, Ochs and Schieffelin (1989), again on the speaker side, define affect as ‘linguistically expressed feelings, attitudes, moods, and dispositions.’ Of all these terms, emotion is generally seen as more available to consciousness, enabling self-reporting. Neurobiologist Antonio Damasio (1999), however, distinguishes emotion from feeling by posing the latter as more available to higher consciousness; emotions, in his scheme, as fundamental affect, have a biological, homeostatic purpose: they function both to produce an immediate reaction to an inducing sensation as well as to induce the biological regulation of the “internal state of the organism” to facilitate that reaction; on this account, feelings are then the awareness-accessible “images” of emotions. In an anthropological view, emotions are ‘social
practices organized by stories that we both enact and tell' (Rosaldo 1984). Edwin Hutchins writes that '[w]hen we turn to the complexities of cognition in real-life settings, distinctions between the realm of the cognitive and the realm of the affective begin to melt away.' (1987) Arlie Hochschild's (1979) work on feeling rules posits social humans as feeling managers: that is, in a social context, upon certain events, certain feelings are privileged as more appropriate to a situation than other feelings, and we are motivated to 'have' the 'right' emotions. These cast doubt on any universalist theory of emotional experience (see Lutz and White 1986). Other related fields which contribute in diverse ways to the emotion-cognition scholarship include cognitive stylistics, literary and discourse studies, nonverbal communication studies, cognitive psychology, and neurobiology.

Since CL is, on the one hand, committed to the experiential and developmental basis of much conceptual makeup - hence also to the corporeal basis of cognition - and on the other hand, engaged in developments of models of cognitive subjectivity (e.g. G. Lakoff 1987, Fauconnier and Turner 2002), CL has been well situated for the study of emotion, understood as both a bodily and subjective entity. But while cognitive linguistic theory includes emotion both explicitly and implicitly in its models, it has largely given emotion only secondary and passing treatments in its considerations of the concerted workings of the multiple aspects of subjectivity. More importantly, emphasis has rested heavily on “expression” rather than “experience” or “interpretation.” (Recent examples include Kövecses 2000; Lakoff and Kövecses 1987; Athanasiadou and Tabakowska 1998; Harkins and Wierzbicka 2001; Goodwin and Goodwin 2000; Goodwin, Goodwin
and Yaeger-Dror 2002; Niemeier and Dirven 1997.25) With the exception of the Goodwin studies, these approaches mainly consider emotion on the speaker’s side—that is, emotion presumably ‘in’ and ‘of’ the speaker showing traces in the speaker’s utterances; the emotion that can be intentionally expressed by a speaker; or the emotionality that the speaker offers by way of social negotiation. Finally, in mental-spaces theory, emotion is seriously dealt with only as emergent structure that results from a particular conceptual occurrence; that is, emergent structure is that which later develops out of the cognitive structures (frame elements and relations) that have initially been projected to a given mental-spaces blend.26

Yet “speaker” and “hearer” are themselves idealized vis-a-vis one another within many descriptions of communication. For one thing, these entities are not temporally separable, except, at most, in Anglo-Western modes of communication, where “gap” is normatively maximized and “overlap” minimized. Further, as Benveniste (1971 [1966]) has shown in a linguistic capacity, “speaker” is in essential need of “hearer” as “other” for the constitution of its very own subjectivity in discourse. From another direction, neurobiological research has shown that many animals, including humans, possess


26 Describing an imagined competition between a 1993 ship sailing a route that was first traced in 1853 by another ship, Fauconnier and Turner describe the emergent structure as follows: “The blend has rich emergent structure... the boats are now in a position to be compared, so that one can be “ahead” of the other. The scenario... fits into an obvious and familiar frame, that of a race, which is automatically added to the blend by pattern completion... Another noteworthy property of the race frame is its emotional content. Sailors in a race are driven by emotions linked to winning, leading, losing, gaining, and so forth.” (The Way We Think 63)
"mirror neurons" which mimic neurologically (that is to say, short of full-out mimetic physical performance) the actions that these animals perceive; hence one could even say that there is, in a minor sense, an internal "copy" of, say, the acting (observable) "speaker" "in" the "hearer". Finally, it would seem that one "speaker"'s preferred conceptualization is supposedly, at least objectively, to some degree shared by the "hearer." However, this is a misleading selection of the entirety of what happens in discourse, since information can never be taken objectively, outside of cultural context, nor outside of an individual's active role in constructing what is "taken in". As we trace such fissures running across the idealizations of the speaker-hearer relation, as the differences between "production" (on the speaker's side) and "reception" (on the hearer's side) begin to break down, certain crucial observations emerge.

Take, for example, an act of hate speech, one in which an individual is characterized to her face by a malevolent speaker as a type of socially-debased animal. If the conceptualization of that linguistic act – the information or image promulgated by the templatic speaker, and "processed" by the templatic hearer/receiver – may be similar in form, then perspective, and affect, must even more certainly differ, for only one person means to hurt, and only one person is meant to experience the vulnerability of dehumanization. Indeed, to treat emotion as a matter of expression, and as a matter-of-fact "possession" of the templatic speaker, leaves emotion in the domain of the visible/sensible, the distinctly performed, and the observable/sensible spectacle. Once it

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27 This was an insight discussed in a U.C. Berkeley seminar in 2001 led by Eve Sweetser. On mirror neuron research, see e.g. Rizzolatti et al. 1996, which reports on the discovery of specific neurons that fired both when monkeys performed specific motor...
may, however, be “possessed” by a hearer, it becomes less easy to assume perfect intentionality, much less the fugual interaction of which Goffman writes. How is affect working, indeed how is it “worked,” in concert with established power relations? And in what sense does discomfort emerge as a determinative factor in the experience of a linguistic engagement?

Emotions should indeed be integral to the metaphors ‘we live by’ (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), and they are lived significantly by being engaged through perspective. Studies in narration and gesture reveal how affect is engaged perspectivally, how emotional reactions are incited in the mind and body. Fictive motion scholarship suggests that linguistic input is converted into a mental simulation based on structures grounded in the body.\textsuperscript{28} Katharine Young’s narrative study suggests that when one takes on, or embodies, a perspective, one is, in her words, ‘transported’ to a place wherein he or she feels the emotions that accompany the perspective (2000). Finally, Michael Bamberg discusses the presence of a distinct moral order in first-person accounts which is ‘washed out’ in those that are given from an outside perspective of a ‘generalized other’ (1997). Thus, perspective emerges, as one might expect, as one of the most important factors in alienation’s linguistic process. It is an anchor for emotion and identification, and as such, it segregates, indeed polarizes, speaker from hearer, insulter from insulted, writer from written.

\textsuperscript{28} For more on this topic see Talmy 1985, Talmy 1996 and Matlock 2001.
Identity, language performance, and cognition

The chapter's opening states that this dissertation explores a series of relations among alienation, identity, language performance, and cognition. As we have seen, alienation is here construed always as a cognitive and affective process. The remaining two elements are identity and language performance, both construed here as ultimately residing in "acts," and serving as fulcrums, points of convergence, for a diversity of other social and cognitive processes. In some sense then they serve as primary loci of agency and subjective action, and as such, they provide the means of movement toward or away from given states of alienation.

Although we might consider any human act to implicate identity in some way or another, I adopt Stuart Hall's more precise definition, in that I consider an act to be aligned with processes of "identity" as soon as it activates any structure relating to "available identities" in the popular mythologies, or to the political, social, or individual structures that produce them:

I use 'identity' to refer to the meeting point, the point of suture, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpellate,' speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken.' Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us.

(Hall 1996)²⁹

²⁹ Hall's term "suture" bears Lacanian psychoanalytic underpinnings and also relates to the Althusserian theory of interpellation; it is a major concept for contemporary film theory. Suture is understood as a means of identification in the formation of the subject, and as a way that subjects may be "tied into" a system of signification, one that cannot naturally integrate human subjects, but only serve to interpellate them as particular kinds of subjects. In mainstream cinema, which can be understood as one of many institutions that procure the subjection of the masses, the camera, taking the place of characters in the film, serves as the subject of enunciation through which spectators are interpellated as subjects in film, and are thereby made "subject" to ideological structures that play
Such a view of identity, one which might be described as post-structuralist, already assumes that identity cannot be a fixed, monolithic, whole which is duratively attached to one person or another. It allows for the fact that individuals shift in adopting one subject position to another, and further that they embody in some sense – if not directly apprehend in consciousness – a kind of identitarian multiplicity. Thus it should be clear, under such a view, that identity-based linguistic acts (such as, for instance, objectification or reclaiming) work at the level of singular myth more than that of hidden multiplicities; they manipulate believed myth in the name of truth. Viewed in the context of the “circuit of exchange” of symbols, it becomes clear that either objectification or reclaiming is simply a creative act – a claim, that in some cases looks originary, and that in other cases looks like a recovery.

In some poststructuralist scholarship identity has been depicted as a vastly complex process with points of attachment that can be readily drawn to nearly any level of structural description that exists today – from gender to sexuality, from discourse to psyche, from economy to governmentality. With a burgeoning of critiques of identity politics in the early nineties, scholars have in some domains retreated from identity as a topic amenable to close study. And yet within linguistics, within which the study of such an open social process as identity would seem to signal immediate caution, discovering themselves out in the film. Suture’s relevance to linguistics is that the linguistic form through which persons may self-identify – the pronominal “I” – and the linguistic subject (of enunciation) – vis-a-vis what is understood as a (dominant/dominating) system of signification, language, can serve as at least a loose analogy to cinema’s camera. Here one can also refer to Lacan’s mirror stage, as an entry into subjecthood at least in part through language. For more on the linguistics of pronominal subjectivity and subjectivization, see Benveniste 1971 [1966].

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identity's breadth of influence would still seem to call for more inquiry rather than less. It remains clear that when we speak, and perhaps more often than is recognized, we engage in a necessary "everyday positionality" of "speaking as" and "speaking for" – or certainly in relation to the potentiality of speaking as and speaking for, such as "speaking as almost" and "speaking as not." 30

Acknowledging these possibilities is, in fact, essential to our ability to conceptualize alienation linguistically. Indeed, we must not abandon the question of identity at a time when it continues in so many domains to be a primary category and mechanism by which people (are either forced or consent to) go about their lives. Rather, we should direct our questions about identity to something like: When is it that people are cognitively "called forth" to think about identity; when is it that people are called upon to do identity; when is it that people must deal with identity, even if it is not positively available? A concomitant question is, how does the conscious apprehension of one's own identity interact with the unconscious machinery that bears intimate relationships to identititarian structures? While sociolinguistics' conversation analysis and critical discourse analysis have explored some of these questions significantly, particularly from the vantage point of subject positions, I believe a cognitive-linguistic approach can shed new light on these questions by focusing on questions of grammar and embodiment. In a cognitive linguistics, there are direct relations between grammatical structure and lived

30 Judith Butler's term "disidentification" refers to a disavowal of one identity in favor of another, where the thing not identified with is held up as a refused object: "Or it may be that certain identifications and affiliations are made, certain sympathetic connections amplified, precisely in order to institute a disidentification with a position that seems too saturated with injury or aggression, one that might, as a consequence, be
embodiment; the idea is that in some sense grammar is derivative of (and participates in) the very cognitive structures that foster the most basic physical processes of everyday movement, grasping, holding, sitting, standing. In essence then some degree of the same structures are invoked, whether literal movement is engaged without language, or grammar relating to that movement is processed. This has profound implications for “linguistic criticism”, for in a cognitive linguistics, grammar and embodiment may together be seen as unquestioned conditions of consent to which subjects are effectively forced to comply if they are to participate (one is reminded of Althusser’s “hail”: “Hey, you there!” which provokes a turning around of that one being hailed and revealing, in that very act, subjection to a position articulated ahead of time for the police and the individuals who must comply31).

Finally, language performance, represented in this work as the “mover” of cognitive-affective states of alienation, requires further explanation. By “performance” I mean to indicate that when language is spoken, it is much more than a “transmission” of some ideational content in the form of a “proposition,” passed unidirectionally from one speaker to one receiver, and perfectly encoded into a concrete linguistic package absent of gesture or context, as has been the representation wielded by the most naïve critiques of the language sciences. Rather, a linguistic utterance is enacted: and the “act” may or may not be a performance in a theatrical sense; it is inextricably tied to the one who speaks and the ones who listen and the social, physical, and cultural arena in which it is rendered; it is delivered at various degrees of engagement, it may or may not be self-

[Note: The text continues.]
conscious, and it may implicate various levels of societal structure which may or may not undergo formal changes as a result of its utterance; and yet, it is still linguistic; that is, it emerges as a concrete linguistic form, whether silence, speech, or gesture. I refer by this term “performance,” then, to the related term “performativity” for which originary responsibility is assigned to J.L. Austin, a philosopher of language known for his contributions to speech-act theory, and which has been itself taken up in a great number of disciplines devoted to the study of society, behavior, and culture (see, for example, the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Jacques Derrida, and Judith Butler). Below I introduce the framework Austin has offered, and trace a few of the challenges to this framework. Then I write why I think it is a highly appropriate frame of analysis for a study that attempts to view social activity and linguistic acts as part and parcel of the same general phenomenon.

Austin’s *How to Do Things with Words* (1955) consisted of a series of lectures, progressively developing from a naïve definition of the performative – utterances with main verbs in specific finite form – to a more sophisticated one: a tripartite typology of acts that not merely explicit performatives, but all utterances, would involve: *locutionary content* (an uttered form); *illocutionary content* (a conventional purpose); and *perlocutionary content* (added effects upon hearers, consequences of the success of the illocutionary act). In an early lecture, working off a basic definition of the performative as an utterance with a main verb in 1st person present singular indicative active form, Austin defined the explicit performative’s necessary conditions as follows: (“Suppose we try first to state schematically... some at least of the things which are necessary for the smooth or

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31 Althusser (1971: 118).
'happy' functioning of a performative (or at least of a highly developed explicit performative...)

a1: There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further,
a2. the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.
b1. The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and completely.

L1. Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the party of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves, and further
L2. must actionally so conduct themselves subsequently. 
(Austin 1955, 14-5 my emphasis)

These felicities presuppose, it would seem, that “correctness,” “completeness,” and “appropriateness,” as well as “thoughts” and “feelings,” can themselves be correctly diagnosed such that an utterance may be judged to be felicitous or not. We can also discern certain “normal” features in the Austinian performative prototype. Austin’s four initial examples of performatives (later called illocutions), naming, bequeathing, marrying, and betting, were given central status and defined as social ritual. Furthermore, performatives in Austin’s view were to be counted only if they were used in “ordinary circumstances,” which he never quite defined (1955: 22). Austin’s model is also premised on the assumption that communication is “normally” good-willed: “one might... say that, where there is not even a pretence of capacity or a colourable claim to it, then there is no accepted conventional procedure; it is a mockery, like a marriage with

32 I would claim that even if Austin here qualifies these felicities as applying only to the explicit performatives, they must also apply to any of the illocutionary acts, the verbs corresponding to which occur in English, according to Austin at a later point in the book, on the order of 10^3 (Austin 1955, 150).
a monkey.” (24). By the end of his chronologically arranged book, however, Austin, crucially to the present work, gave up on one of his “normalities”: the explicitness criterion. He relegated the initial four performatives from central, exemplary status to "peculiar and special use" status. Warnings, he wrote, are much more typically expressed as "This bull is dangerous" rather than "I [hereby] warn you that this bull is dangerous."

With “explicit performatives” thus contextualized, Austin made a more precise statement about their particular speech-act advantage, which is why they are a standard in legal discourse: 1) the "I" who is doing the action does thus come essentially into the picture"; thus the agent is made explicit; 2) the action is made explicit by the performative verb (in either the active or passive mode). Thus, in the normal case agents and the actions are implicit.

A number of critiques pointedly question the “givenness” of a number of entities which happened to serve as many of Austin’s central operands: convention, ritual, agency, intention.3 4 To return to the “marriage with a monkey” example: Austin was referring to a level of mockery that was outside the (stable) system (in Austin’s case, the set of social and linguistic conventions that affords power and effect to performatives) and thus ineffectual. And yet, what is paradoxical about his statement “there is no accepted conventional procedure” is that clearly, there is a shared convention, which the

33 Again, I assume the rest of the 10³ illocutions corresponding to English verbs, too, had the status of social ritual or convention.
monkey marriage mocks and hence refers to. In other words, Austin misses remarking that the monkey marriage is after all a systematic deviation from the norm, which has, as its own kind of performative, an interdependent (not merely parasitic) set of normative, constitutive, and reality-influencing rules. In the case of irony or parody (which monkey marriage might qualify as), to be sure, a greater likelihood exists that the

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35 In “Signature Event Context,” Jacques Derrida famously identified certain untenable distinctions set up in Austin’s lectures, including the fact that “citation” was in fact structurally inherent to language rather than a practice exterior to the performative. “For, finally, is not what Austin excludes as anomalous, exceptional, ‘non-serious,’ that is, citation (on the stage, in a poem, or in a soliloquy), the determined modification of a general citationality – or rather, a general iterability – without which there would not even be a ‘successful’ performative? Such that – a paradoxical, but inevitable consequence – a successful performative is necessarily an ‘impure’ performative, to use the word that Austin will later employ or when he recognizes that there is no ‘pure’ performative.” Later, Derrida alludes to the kind of tendency that aroused my own concern vis-à-vis Searle’s Principle of Expressibility: “And if it is alleged that ordinary language, or the ordinary circumstance of language, excludes citationality or general iterability, does this not signify that the ‘ordinariness’ in question, the thing and the notion, harbors a lure, the teleological lure of consciousness the motivations, indestructible necessity, and systematic effects of which remain to be analyzed?” (102-103; 105)

36 I was particularly drawn to engage the marriage with a monkey example – “...a mockery, like a marriage with a monkey” because in a painfully obvious way I identified with the monkey. Here, and elsewhere, the “monkey” – notwithstanding other “animals” – stands in for that creature with limited identifiability (except the superficial one), grammatically determined only by an indefinite article, “a”; even further expelled to use in simile, simile’s backgrounded comparator; object to be compared against; and it is the example which serves as an example precisely because it is self-evidently extreme. Several places in this dissertation exemplify or suggest the vivid links, whether live or longstanding, drawn between immigrants, people of color, laborers and working class subjects, colonial subjects, women, and animals – by this is meant, not the class of creatures that includes humans but quite conversely, the class against which the (often rational) human with inviolate and full subjectivity is defined. This latter characterization is telling, for it exposes why animals have been so useful as figure; they stand in for the intermediary zone between human and non-human status, and for the field of debate as to the appropriateness of humane and inhumane treatment (that the debate should be appropriate at all is accepted as self-evident). Fanon writes of the images that, because they serve to construct a world in which he is forced to participate, also must in some way structure his own world: “My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted,
normative structure of the performative stands (or is to be taken to stand) intact – but this
is not by any means a certainty. It depends also on the uptake, and the pragmatic reading,
of the receiver of the utterance.

Pierre Bourdieu has argued that a French government figure’s use of a village
patois while speaking to its denizens may appear to upset or transgress normal
conventions of official language use, but rather does quite the opposite of what it
announces; in fact it restabilizes and reifies the barriers of distinction, and is therefore
better described as “a strategy of condescension” (1991: 68). If we agreed with Bourdieu
that this was the case, then where in Austin’s theoretical delineations would such a
simultaneously norm-traversing (he did not speak as he was supposed to speak), and
barrier-reifying (he reminded villagers of the aberrational quality of this act, and thus
reinforced normative divisions of “high” and “low” speech), kind of act fall? Such
elements do not seem to merit dismissal because they are ones that are “not serious, but
in ways parasitic upon... normal use” (Austin 1955: 22). They promise not only to inform
a study of the prototypical “normal” performative by a study of their distance from it and
their partial partaking of it. They also reveal the social circumstances of a partially or
metaphorically performative utterance and the distinctively structural quality of that
performative.

Indeed, another way of asking whether Austin’s “mockery” itself has non-
exceptional status is to ask in how many cases, even among the “ordinary” and “sincere”
one, intention, convention, agency, and uptake are truly stable (known, shared,

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recognized, etc.). What is, and isn’t, social ritual? When is agency perfect, and the “I” whole? What are “ordinary circumstances”? What rituals are accepted as such by all relevant people in the community? And very importantly: Can we easily differentiate between zero epistemic distance (in Austin’s words, “indulging” in it) and some quantity of distance, if Austin’s example is the staging of an utterance (“an actor on the stage, or ... in a poem... spoken in soliloquy”)? Cultural and critical theory’s revisions to performativity include the assumption of “imperfect” or “unsourcable” agency in the normal case, as well as the many degrees and natures of staging and imitative or mimetic “performance” that all forms of utterance involve. Hence, the marriage with the monkey cites the structure of marriage, and as such it cannot be wholly expelled from marriage.37

In a broad sense, language is inherently performative. If we extend Austin’s strict definitions outward, toward a more graduated view of ritual (normative conventions of language) and intention (to include sinister, structural agencies, in the form of, for instance, controlling ideologies that lie outside of the individual), then at the moment that an individual speaks, changes are brought about in a number of domains, some of which are aligned with the individual’s intent, if such can be found, and others with, say, in a Marxist perspective, the interests of a dominant class that inhere in discursive conventions of language. If, as linguists commonly understand the role of language in social living, language is “what we do”; if we speak to each other because we desire something; and if the great part of the language “that we do” is not self-aware, there nevertheless “remains” much of this “we” to be explored, and learned, in relation to

places on the social map whose language practices cannot possibly be spoken for by such a representation. We must therefore stay the idealist presumption that every language act brings about what is desired, or even that every language act is in ideal alignment with the desire that brings it about.

My interest here, then, is to explore the possibilities for agency as it relates to linguistic acts: what kinds of changes with regard to alienation and de-alienation may be realized by linguistic performance, whether “conscious” or not, whether explicitly intended or desired. In this work, then, I critically examine given linguistic definitions of agency and intersubjectivity, as well as of identity, promulgated in some mainstream linguistics and some cognitive linguistics, by looking at alienative language acts in an analysis informed by performativity. At the same time I will show how cognitive-linguistic theory must consider identity’s affiliative and affective workings in concert with language acts. It is only then, I suggest, that cognitive linguistics may claim to have examined both normative language practices and those that, in some way or another, fall outside of the normative spectrum.

Alienation, Consciousness, And Discomfort

Developments within several major branches of linguistics have settled the discipline into a number of empirical and theoretical (and investigative) priorities, resulting in a number of gaps which remain largely unaddressed. The first of these, mentioned above, is a continuing lack of investigation into affect’s relation to the structures and productions of language. The second is a division of empirical language data into, briefly, code-conscious and code-unconscious data, such that only the latter — unconsciousness about
the code—counts as data “safe” for collection. Without too closely defining what I mean by these terms, I think it is adequate to say at this point that only “unconscious” language performances, such as those elicited by “near-death” tales, count as data that may contribute to the shaping of a description of language structure (which itself depends on an underlying structure of pragmatic appropriateness). More often than not, self-conscious language at large, whether or not it is consciousness about the code, which is more than likely to include those subjects who feel uncomfortable, is relegated to the occasional, to the category of artificial usage.

How do these sets of priorities bear, then, on a study of alienation and language? A concomitant question is, What does alienation have to do with consciousness? For Goffman, alienation functions as a class of exceptions to what he describes as “unconscious” engagement in language, characterizing engaged conversational activity as a trancelike, "hypnotic" and "fugual" experience:

When the individual in our American society engages in a conversational encounter with others he may become spontaneously involved in it. He can become unthinkingly and impulsively immersed in the talk and carried away by it, oblivious to other things, including himself. Whether his involvement is intense and not easily disrupted, or meager and easily distracted, the topic of talk can form the main focus of his cognitive attention... The binding and hypnotic effect of such involvement is illustrated by the fact that while thus involved the individual can simultaneously engage in other goal-directed activities... yet manage [them]... so as not to be distracted in his main focus of attention by them.... Joint spontaneous involvement is a unio mystico, a socialized trance. (1967)

Sociolinguist Deborah Cameron (1995), examining relations between theory and practice within linguistics, lays out how a preference for such "engaged" scenes in empirical linguistic research exposes a normative impulse within linguistic study. For the most part, as I wrote above, linguistic research has prioritized the study of speech produced
"naturally" and without consciousness about language, precisely so that insight may be
gained into the "unconscious" structures of language itself. This has led to a search for
normative dimensions of language in communities, communities whose condition for
study is that they be always-and-already-engaged ones. In some sense, the conventional
idea of "community" (as well as its cousin, "identity," ) presupposes a kind of unity. But
what marks the study of alienation within linguistics is that it requires the possibility for a
differential relationship between a participant and a context or community, rather than an
identifying one. Just as cognitive linguistic theory affords a deeply polysemous view of
language entities, so must such differences be understood to have many faces, many
kinds.

In general, while sociolinguistics has pursued the possibilities of, to use
Goffman's words, "alienation from interaction" as a serious theme, within cognitive
linguistics the priority of interest in "less" rather than "more" self-consciousness in
language use is significant. The priority has been, so far and certainly for its own good
reason, to expose the complex yet organized "background cognition" of language, to
show what marvelous cognitive workings necessarily lie behind the most prosaic,

38 The work of William Labov and others deal, however, with the relations between
social marginality and linguistic (dialectal) competency, which approach linguistic
discomfort from an interesting angle. See Labov 1972.
39 As linguists like William Labov and small-group sociologists (Simmel, Goffman)
have shown us in multiple ways, what makes a "community" is an often limited
alignment with a "group cause" or a single issue; there are, just as there may be between
nations or political parties, always dimensions of dis-affiliation and contestation that exist
within communities. The reality of multiple group membership for any individual,
further, makes dissension or contestation among members highly likely.
everyday language. There is much that is currently being examined about underlying cognitive structure, such as image schema theory, which bears greatly on our understanding of language and which clearly remains to be further investigated. Interestingly, Mark Turner’s project to uncover the “unconscious” processes in literary acts – but with “unconscious” defined as cognitive mechanisms rather than as psyche – sounds much like a defense of literary studies since its integration of psychoanalysis:

The unconscious, automatic, unoriginal aspects of thought are where the action really is. We simply do not attend to these aspects in consciousness because doing so would foul and slow our thought disastrously. Relative to the rest of the mind, consciousness is a small trick. The marvels of the human mind are not to be found contained within it. Acts of language and literature, like acts of thought, are acts of the human mind, the whole mind. For the most part, and in the most interesting ways, they are acts of the unconscious mind. (Turner 1991: 43)

It is only to be expected, then, that studies of structures of language that are intimately linked to phenomena such as alienation and discomfort have been ill provided for in contemporary cognitive-linguistic theory. Yet this is not for any inherent limitation in the theoretical framework. Indeed, this study suggests how cognitive-linguistic methods can be applied to the study of a phenomenon, alienation, which, in my view, bridges “conscious” and “unconscious” in that it represents a shift away from, a degree of departure away from, conventional attentions as they relate to language usage and self-presentation. Insofar as the new attentions overlap with the “sutures” of Stuart Hall’s identity, then this shift, to me, qualifies as a movement toward identity-consciousness, and in many cases self-consciousness. However, such a consciousness must not

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40 For a detailed understanding of background cognition, see Fauconnier 1997. For other references exploring the idea of the cognition of everyday language, see the work of G. Lakoff 1987, Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Fillmore 1982, 1985, Mark Johnson 1987,
necessarily be understood to amount to an equivalent loss of ongoing background cognitions. Rather, attentions, and possibly subjectivities, shift, or double, and I believe such shifts or doublings occur in a way that is, in some way, distinctly unquantifiable. In sum, then, alienation in a social scene amounts to a different mixture of attentions; self-awareness; presences; subjectivities. In every case, the details of this mixture are unique.

Overview Of Chapters

In the following Chapter 2, I locate a cognitive conception of alienation and define it in concrete terms, offering some examples of kinds of alienation and self-alienation. I also introduce at a deeper level than in the present chapter the details of the cognitive-linguistic framework that would provide my link between (the phenomenon of) alienation and (the phenomenon of) language. I form a definition of alienation that is appropriate for this study, and introduce the cognitive-linguistic frameworks that ground it. I then end with a few exemplary cases, briefly exploring their identitarian, affective, and linguistic aspects.

I begin Chapter 3 by defining linguistic objectification in relation to the cognitive-linguistic processes of personification and subjectification, and then go on to describe, with the help of critical theories, a diversity of types of language acts and outline the ways

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Many philosophers would seem to believe that there are exactly two modes: conscious and unconscious, or, to use Hubert Dreyfus' terms, "attentive skilled behavior" and "unconscious routine", such that the moment one begins to reflect at all on the act of throwing from the outfield one loses the ability to do it properly – this qualifies as "breakdown" (Dreyfus' words). If I have understood his position correctly, I believe,
in which these acts relate to moral or humanistic standards in a context such as the United States. But while such objectifying acts may be, in their own way, performatively powerful, in the sense that language enforces strong interpretive constraints by way of grammatical form, it is also important to recognize that objectification – the word conventionally connotes a “victim” state that is “bad” for its undergoer - is not necessarily injurious. Thus, I argue that the process of objectification (as much as that of alienation itself) operates in a markedly beneficial or harmful way only under certain conditions, and depending on what cultural, or cognitive, contexts serve as its material. In the effort of delimiting what counts as linguistic injury from a cognitive perspective, it is worthwhile exploring the varieties and intensities of “contextual,” “generative,” and intersubjective factors that make these injuries function - or indeed what makes observers or experiencers judge them - as harmful. I thus devote part of this chapter to the treatment of linguistic injury, (re-)uniting cognition and affect insofar as they have been characterized as separate phenomena.42

Chapter 4 addresses the possibility of resistive reading or linguistic acts – two kinds of resignification. I call such processes "reclaiming," and define them as reversals only to the extent that something is perceived to be recoverable or regainable that has once been “lost” (rather than suggesting, for instance, that reclaiming can happen only in the seconds following an insult, and within the same modality – that is, speech or gesture,

differently, that we cannot but think of behavior as occurring as an intertwining of what is conscious and unconscious.

42 For an in-depth review and treatment of the treatment of language and affect which emphasizes anthropological understandings of the necessary interrelatedness of two categories – whereas they have been understood as improperly dichotomous in
but not one and the other). I look closely at two cases: the reclaiming of *black* and the reclaiming of *queer* – in historical context, and by way of two theoretical perspectives: sociolinguistics and semiotic theory, broadly construed. I bring these perspectives actively into conversation by turning to a cognitive-linguistic analysis of the reclaiming of *queer* that integrates insights from both.

The conclusory Chapter 5, much more of a personal reflection than the preceding chapters, addresses contemporary questions of interdisciplinarity, reaching into debates about discipline-specific versus what might be called “broadband” epistemologies. In stating a dialogue between two reflective/reflexive retrospectives, *subject* and *object*, I manage the discussion as a review of precisely how I have employed diverse theories within my study, as well as where I feel I have failed to do so effectively. In so doing I attempt to reflect on constructive ways that these disciplines of thought may broaden their traditional fields of inquiry for the benefit of the study of shared objects. I will suggest that over and above the insights of a reflexive anthropology, disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity themselves cannot be in some way but personal.

linguistics ("cognition and emotion... must be assumed to be dichotomous...")—see Besnier 1990.
CHAPTER 2. Alienation Conceived, Cognitively and Affectively

Contextualizing and defining "alienation"

This work conceives of alienation as an ensemble of cognitive and affective orientations toward language and/or other social entities, and also as a subtle kind of subject positioning. The present chapter offers a characterization of some of alienation's rendering within contemporary cognitive-linguistic theory, referring in particular to its landscape of cultural frames, mental spaces, figure/ground structure, and event structure and image schemas; as well as (in part to forestay recourse to normative defaults) to social and cultural theories about identity, self, and other that supply necessary organizing frames for identitarian interaction. Such sociocultural organizing frames impinge on, or more aptly, infuse the cognitive landscape in specific and interesting ways.

Hence I consider alienation both in a linguistic sense (such that microcosms of interaction are studied empirically) as well as in a social-critical sense (such that social and political structures figure in many levels of linguistic experience and have some critical investment in the well-being of individuals or groups). Under such a view, alienation may equally manifest in an individual's feeling cast as an "outsider" in a group gathering, and in another individual's experience of the incipient structures of post-colonial nationhood; one experience may "speak" through the other, so that, for instance, a colonial subject's attitude toward surrounding political landscapes may manifest in interactions during a conversation in a coffee bar.

The diversity of alienation as a concept invites the securing of at least some strategic delineations. I begin by identifying which forms of alienation, while often
understood as foundational to understandings of alienation, also represent somewhat problematic points of departure for this work, since their frequently totalizing views may not provide adequate mechanisms to consider the dynamic features of alienative linguistic processes. This means that while these forms in principle remain adaptable to the rest of the framework, their reach is so extensive as to seem to fall more on the side of a universal condition of existence than on the side of a potential effect which can be realized, or manipulated, through specific practices, such as language performance.\(^1\) Once such articulations have been more carefully delimited and particularized, however - and this is especially true of historically significant theorizations of alienation such as those of Lacan, Hegel, and Marx – they have in some cases remained very important tools for the understanding of some cultural phenomena. Consider, for example, the strength and presence of Marxist linguistics, which manages to examine ways in which “global” structures repeat themselves in “local”, linguistic, scenes.

I begin with two such foundational forms of alienation. Both, while elaborated in highly different registers, share derivation or inspiration from Hegelian metaphysics.\(^2\) The first of these is the psychoanalytic alienation of Jacques Lacan. Lacan's alienation is not

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1 While this universality is sometimes explicitly promulgated, my belief is that these alienations would simply be relatively constrained and extreme, permitting less cognitive dynamism.

2 Hegel articulated alienation in several important ways. Within his critique of Christianity, the religion’s objectification, and externalization, of deities, came to represent a human process of self-alienation. By seeking their own values in external entities, and objectifying those entities as well as the institutions that couched them, humankind strove to submit to powers fundamentally outside of itself. In a broader sense, Hegel prefigured what Marx would later elaborate in a sociological mode, when he pointed out that it was through humanity’s own immersion in a world of objects which were assigned meaning and upon which humans came to depend, that they lived in a constantly alienated condition.
transient, but rather determines the very foundation and ensuing, lifelong existence of a subject. It is also the founding condition for all forms of desire.\(^3\) The founding alienation is, in Lacan's formation, incited in "the mirror stage" or phase \((le \ stade \ a \ miroir)\), in which in a world of undifferentiated images an infant is confronted with a (distal) image of itself in a mirror, in the form of a Gestalt. This "mirror" is to be taken not merely literally but metaphorically, in that it represents a process of encounters, each of which affords a site for identification outside of the ego. The infant misrecognizes in these images – such as the mother's gaze, or a mirror – an idealized whole, or gestalt, of its own self. Lacan writes that in this stage, the infant inaugurates the promise of his future ideality as a subject: the "nascent ego," in the sense of "There I am!".\(^4\)

\(^{3}\) Such a presumption, however, is debatable, particularly when we note that this account bears marks of a Western model of subject formation and heavily accentuates (possibly overly so, though its ideal nature is perhaps why the model is so appealing) the externality of a founding concept of self. See e.g. Foucault, 1995 [1977].

\(^{4}\) Malcolm Bowie interprets this moment thus: "The mirror-image is a mirage of the 'I' and promises that the individual's latent powers of co-ordination will eventually be realised...." (1991: 25)

\(^{5}\) In Hegel's self-alienation "[t]he slave's whole reality, defined and dominated as it is by the power and will of the master, is a coercive exteriority which he internalises as

\(The \ mirror \ stage \ is \ a \ drama\) whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation – and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic – and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development. (Lacan 1977 [1949]: 4, my emphasis)

In this period, then, an external or social definition is brought permanently into the infant's conception of itself – the conception of the "I," the condition of subjectivity.\(^5\) Furthermore, the "self" can only seek definition from the outside, in the form of an
“other.” In Lacan’s formulation, the subject is compelled to a lifelong search for its recompletion, to seek satisfaction, continually in vain, through the same medium of images – or language – by which the symbolic order is imposed.6

Such an understanding of desire and its relation to language, depicted here as complex and pervasive, could inform any study that concerned the anxiety and discomfort of apprehending one’s own self-fragmentation or dispossession, and could suggest why one might be motivated to do anything about one’s alienation, and why this might happen in language. If we consider desire to not merely constitute motive, but also factor integrally into acts themselves, it can enrich the understanding of the anxious substantiation of self that I try to develop here. But while my analysis of reclaiming, in particular, implies a certain effort toward reintegration that might resemble Lacan’s desire, I suspect they are far from similar; I further feel that full recourse to such an articulation would be overspecified for this project. For the most part, then I choose to render any "reintegration" not directly in terms of ego, or desire, but rather in terms of cognitive representations of the situated self or identity and their embedding within sets of social norms, demands, and idealisms. This is then to emphasize process and act over motive.

The second type of alienation are those forms associated with Marxist theory. These indicate an individual’s multilayered estrangements from others, from his objects of labor, and from himself, all promoted and mediated by the entry of exchange-value in the

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context of a capitalized economy: “The exchangeability of all products, activities and
relations with a third, objective entity which can be re-exchanged for everything without
distinction...” (1986: 54). These are tied to the multiple relations between a worker, his
labor, and his objects of production. Marx writes:

We have considered the act of estranging practical human activity, labour, in two
of its aspects. (1) The relation of the worker to the product of labour as an alien
object exercising power over him. This relation is at the same time the relation to
the sensuous external world, to the objects of nature, as an alien world inimically
opposed to him. (2) The relation of labour to the act of production within the
labour process. This relation is the relation of the worker to his own activity as an
alien activity not belonging to him; it is activity as suffering, strength as
weakness, begetting as emasculating, the workers own physical and mental
energy, his personal life – for what is life but activity? – as an activity which is
turned against him, independent of him and not belonging to him. Here we have
self-estrangement, as previously we had the estrangement of the thing.... We have
still a third aspect of estranged labour to deduce from the two already
considered... In estranging form man (1) nature, and (2) himself, his own active
functions, his life activity, estranged labour estranges the species from man. It
changes for him the life of the species into a means of individual life. First it
estranges the life of the species and individual life, and secondly it makes
individual life in its abstract form the purpose of the life of the species... (1986:
40-41)

This Marxian vision of alienation/estrangement thus suggests how certain subjects live
under conditions in which their identities are at once formed (as individuals) yet also
evacuated. We can imagine in this scenario, too, certain vulnerabilities of identity; but
apart from elaborated categories of class, once again a comparatively universal specter
looms large.7

6 In Lacan there is an association, though not an equation, between images and
language, both conceived by Lacan as beyond the individual subject and intersubjectively
constituted.
7 For more reading on these topics, see, respectively, Lacan 1977 [1949]; Marx
overview of the diverse forms of alienation is offered in Seeman 1959.
Beyond such far-reaching, durative, and class or society-wide alienations, what we might describe as "alienations of scale," there are also theoretical depictions of smaller-scale alienative schemes, which we might call "alienations of locality." We turn here to two works of Erving Goffman which I believe adequately lay out the fundaments of his sociological approach to the "alienations of locality": *Stigma* (1963b), a short text on social stigma and its effects on the self-imagination and behavior of an individual, and an essay, "Alienation from Interaction." (1967)

In the latter text, Goffman proposes to study "the ways in which the individual can become alienated from a conversational encounter, the uneasiness that arises with this, and the consequence of this alienation and uneasiness upon the interaction." He goes on to lay out four forms of behavior which he calls "alienative misinvolvement", which are divergences from "obligatory" joint involvement. After all, joint involvement is itself "a fragile thing, with standard points of weakness and decay, a precarious unsteady state that is likely at any time to lead the individual into some form of alienation." Goffman’s four forms of alienative misinvolvement are:

- **external preoccupation**, in which "the individual may neglect the prescribed focus of attention and give his main concern to something that is unconnected with what is being talked about at the time and even unconnected with the other persons present..."

- **self-consciousness**: "At the cost of his involvement in the prescribed focus of attention, the individual may focus his attention more than he ought upon himself - himself as someone who is faring well or badly, as someone calling forth a desirable or undesirable response from others."

- **interaction-consciousness**: "a participant in talk may become consciously concerned to an improper degree with the way in which the interaction, *qua* interaction, is proceeding..."

- **other-consciousness**: "the individual may become distracted by another participant as an object of attention..." (Goffman 1967: 117-120)

Goffman suggests any of these may occur together. These forms have relations to, and certainly can work in concert with, various kinds of sociocultural and structural alienation.
discussed in the philosophical, cultural studies and postcolonial literature; these relations will be discussed at length later in this chapter and in the following chapters. Without presuming these are simply translated in their entirety to cognitive linguistics, the fact that Goffman’s work seems already well-suited to cognitive characterizations suggests that finding some cognitive correlates of these forms of alienative misinvolvement could be useful.

First, a few words of contextualization — what is consciousness for our present purposes? In some sense, "consciousness of a thing," as in the lay expression "I wasn't aware of it," "I wasn't conscious of it," might be understood as an objectification of that thing. Otherwise put, to be conscious of a thing is to treat it as an object of consciousness. In cognitive terms, then, this is to lend an object of consciousness relative salience, or possibly even to pose it as figure to the surrounding cognitive ground. For instance, my awareness of a cup of coffee on a counter in a cafe, particularly if I have been craving it all morning, means that I have heightened attentional focus on that coffee; however, this is not to say that I do not perceive the background — the person who has prepared the coffee, the other coffee cups and coffee beans, the other persons in line. It is simply that in my cognitive imagination, the coffee stands out against whatever else I have been able to perceive with my various senses in the scene around me.

Goffman's "other consciousness," then, amounts to the existence of greater cognitive salience for a representation of an other (for example, the one who is speaking to the conceptualizer) than that for the rest of the cognitive context. He writes, for instance, of apparent faults in the speaker’s “communication apparatus”:

If the speaker's communication apparatus itself conveys additional information all during the time that transmission is occurring, then the listener is likely to be distracted by competing sources of
stimuli, becoming over-aware of the speaker at the expense of what is being said. The sources of this distraction are well known: the speaker may be very ugly or very beautiful; he may have a speech defect such as a lisp or a stutter; he may have inadequate familiarity with the language, dialect, or jargon that the listeners expect to hear; he may have a slight facial peculiarity, such as a hare lip, eye twitch, crossed or wall eyes; he may have temporary communication difficulties such as a stiff neck, a hoarse voice, etc. Apparently [sic] the closer the defect is to the communication equipment upon which the listener must focus his attention, the smaller the defect need be to throw the listener off balance. (1967: 123-4)

Finally, Goffman's "self consciousness" is describable as the existence of greater cognitive salience on the "cognitive landscape" for a representation of a self (note that this necessitates the existence of a self-representation on the cognitive landscape) as against the rest of that context which is apprehended cognitively; that is, greater salience than the self ought to have. Notably, this “ought” is defined in reference to a normative scheme of involvement in which one must show appropriate levels of both “dominant/subordinate” (according to involvement orders imposed from the outside) and “main/side” involvement (see 1963a: 41-50). Given that dominant involvement, writes Goffman, “seems to threaten the security of an individual and his self-control within the situation, he may initiate or effect a subordinate involvement in order to show that he is in command of his circumstances.” (Behavior, 49)

Cognitive Linguistics as a Means of Studying Identity, Possession, and Alienation: Bases and Extensions

I have by now mentioned three conventional apparatus in cognitive linguistics, namely the idea of figure-ground, salience, and subject-object. In this section I would like to illustrate more precisely what I mean by these concepts, as they have principal import in the technical discussions throughout. I also, along the way, offer some of the epistemological premises of cognitive linguistics, indicating what underlies its social
theory. Above, I wrote, with regard to attentional focus, "It is simply that in my cognitive imagination, the coffee stands out against whatever else I have been able to perceive with my various senses in the scene around me." With greater precision this should read: "In my cognitive apparatus, whatever cognitive entity pertains to the 'coffee' receives greater attentional focus and enjoys greater cognitive salience than the other cognated elements in the scene which I have been able to conceive."

Note that I have been specific about the fact that whatever exists in a cognitive imagination is nothing more than a cognitive trace of a perceived thing in the "external" world, where by "trace" I mean not an image neurally duplicated (as some accounts imply), but rather whatever cognitive representation is suited to engagement with (or against) the object. This emphasizes the primary material status I lend to the cognating mind, over and above what is commonly understood as "external reality." This stance represents a particular epistemology, understood as "experiential realism", by which the only form of "reality" we may address as related to human knowledge and meaning, is that which may be apprehended by animate experiencers (in this case, human conceptualizers), and whose very meaning is shaped by conceptual makeup, and other conditions shaped by human experience. George Lakoff writes:

The experientialist approach is... to attempt to characterize meaning in terms of the nature and experience of the organisms doing the thinking. Not just the nature and experience of individuals, but the nature and experience of the species and of communities. "Experience" is thus not taken in the narrow sense of the things that have happened to happen to a single individual. Experience is instead construed in the broad sense: the totality of human experience and everything that plays a role in it – the nature of our bodies, our genetically inherited capacities, our modes of physical functioning in the world, our social organization, etc." (G. Lakoff 1987)

8 By "social theory" here I simply mean the study of behavior and existence as it relates to social life.

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Clearly, such a view stands in contradistinction to objectivist philosophies, in which entities afforded epistemological force may exist outside of the possibility of human experience and knowledge. While this model first appears to be a very "internalist" (and thus, in perhaps its own way, alienated) approach, it will become clear in the course of the dissertation that to pose the mind as a locus of human reality is not to exclude the critical, indeed formative, influence of events that are conventionally construed as "external," "out in the world" as opposed to "inside the self". For the mind itself, continually engaged in processes that would appear to be external to the body and to "the local," is as much "external" as it is "internal", as much "global" as "local". Such reasoning is possible only if we put aside such misleading conceptions as the conventional humanist models of being that make possible the very notions of interiority and exteriority in a centered self.

Here I introduce the concepts "figure-ground" and "salience" as they relate to cognition. There is another relational pair that will help to contrastively define them: "foreground" and "background". Simply put, foreground and background represent a differential relationship of salience in the mind of a cognator, in that the foreground has greater cognitive salience than the background. In some sense, the foreground may be spoken of as defined "against" the background, but the terms "figure" and "ground" are more precise about this: the "figure" is defined with reference to, not simply in some kind of contrast to, the "ground". For example, in the scene corresponding to "Gumband is to the left of Gumby," the position of Gumband, the figure, is defined in relation to that of

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9 For more on Experiential Realism in relation to cognitive linguistics, see particularly Chapter 16, "A New Realism," in G. Lakoff (1987).
Gumby, the ground. However, while "figure" is in some sense notionally discernible from "ground", it may not necessarily have greater salience than ground. They may be equally significant constructors of meaning, and hence equally cognitively salient, as opposed to the less important part of the cognitive landscape, entities which are cognitively present without playing a primary role in the creation of meaning.

The other technical structure, subject-object, is the most critical conception to the arguments in this dissertation. My definition of these concepts, which were once limited to philosophical use but now diversely used, mainly follows a predominating view in contemporary psychological theory, which has been taken up by Ronald Langacker in his main set of works introducing his theory of cognitive grammar (Langacker 1987a,b, 1991). If we take "subject" and "object," as in philosophy, to be defined with reference mainly to consciousness, then "the subject" is the conceptualizer and "the object" is that entity, whether abstract or concrete, that is an object of consciousness.

![Fig. 1. Subject and object of consciousness.](image)

In Langacker's interpretation, the subject and object are in a privative relationship, meaning that inasmuch as they are quantifiable, they are in an asymmetric relation with regard to any fixed construed entity such that an increase in "subjectivity" is directly tied to a decrease in "objectivity" of the construal of that object. In the idealized case, the
subject and object are fully distinct entities, in an ideationally distant relationship. That is, the subject has no sense of identification with the object. The consciousness itself, then, can be characterized as fully "objective". In the case that the subject does identify with the object or in some way is reflective about either its self or the process of consciousness, then that full objectivity is "compromised". In this case, the subject of consciousness finds some representation of what is normally a part of its subjectivity, a part of its self, available for contemplation as part of the collectively construed object. The object then is "less" objective because it bears a relation to the subject, indeed it has been "subjectified". The subject, while being no less of a subject than it has been, is now represented in the object of consciousness, and in its own way, has thus been "objectified". This movement toward "self-objectification" is just one example of what I will expand on in the second chapter, where I discuss the relation between linguistic and cognitive objectification. The figure below represents an idealization of a state in which a conceptualizer has begun to reflect on some aspect of its subjectivity, such as what it believes to be a fallibility in its judgment, or the role of its own aesthetic taste in its judgment of another's choice of music.

![Fig. 2. Objectified subjectivity.](image)

Whether or not this objectified aspect of subjectivity is recognized by the conceptualizer as part of its "self" depends on whether that aspect of subjectivity is readily associated
with its awareness of its self; but from a formal perspective anything that is an aspect of subjectivity is by definition associated with that individual's subjective mechanisms, whether they be shared or unique: belief systems, societally held ideals, perceptual mechanisms, retinal cones and rods, sensory fingertips, and image-schematic cognitive processes such as those discussed here, all qualify as subjective mechanisms that can be contemplated by an individual.

Note that I have mentioned two possibilities of a movement away from an idealized subject-object polarity, of which the diagram above represents only one: an aspect of subjectivity comes to be objectified, that is it comes to be represented cognitively. The other possibility is that the subject comes to identify in some way with the object. Let us say, for instance, that a racially marked conceptualizer spies what she first judges to be a "foreigner." But the moment she begins to contemplate their place in the world, and realize that whether by national exogeneity or by racial marking, she and that person have something in common - a kind of vulnerability to certain structures of exclusion in society, that person, in some sense, acquires a subjective quality, acquires some of her subjectivity; that object (person) is subjectified (through acquiring a relationship with herself). In this case the arrow reverses direction:

![Diagram](image-url)
Already, the notion of “identification,” particularly as it relates to racialized societal schemas, and their presence in local scenes of interaction, invites a wider discussion on identity itself. I revisit identity in a more extended fashion later in the chapter.

For the moment, I footnote Oxford English Dictionary definitions for *subject*, *object*, *subjectivity*, and *objectivity*, with a reminder that these initial definitions above will be exercised quite heavily in the course of the dissertation, and so any subtleties may be clarified in time.$^{10}$

It is now appropriate to enter a more extended example of alienation, invoking it explicitly in cognitive terms. As seen above, *self*-alienation is a specific and poignant form of alienation, in which one apprehends (a representation of) one's self in “its” object

$^{10}$ Below are the Oxford English Dictionary definitions for, respectively, the words "object" and "objective". They comprise both lay and expert definitions, with the philosophical definitions marked by "Phil."

**OBJECT:** 11. a statement introduced in opposition; an objection. 2. something 'thrown' or put in the way as an obstacle; a hindrance. 3. something presented to the sight or other sense; a material thing; b. something which on being seen excites admiration, horror, amusement, commiseration, etc.; in colloq. use a person or thing of pitiable or ridiculous aspect. 4. that to which action, thought, or feeling is directed; the thing (or person) to which something is done or about which something acts or operates. 5. the thing aimed at; purpose, end 6. metaph: a thing of which one thinks or has cognition, as correlative to the thinking or knowing subject; something regarded as external to the mind; the non-ego; also extended to include states of the ego, or of consciousness, as thought of 7. Gram. A substantive word, phrase, or clause 'governed by' a verb. Also, the word 'governed by' a proposition."

**OBJECTIVE:** a. 1. philos. pertaining or considered in relation to its object; constituting, or belonging to, an object of action, thought, or feeling; 'material', as opposed to subjective or 'formal'. b. Of or pertaining to the object or end as the cause of action; 2. philos. used of the existence or nature of a thing as an object of consciousness (as dist. from subjective) a. opp. to subjective in the older sense = 'in itself'; existing as an object of consciousness; considered only as presented to the mind. b. opp. to subjective in the modern sense: that is the object of perception or thought, as dist. from the perceiving or thinking subject; hence, that is, or is regarded as, a 'thing' external to the mind; real.

(The Shorter OED)
of cognition. But, once again, what makes self-alienation discernible against the more general process of self-objectification, which presumably happens at any time a subject is aware of “itself”, looks at “itself”, contemplates “itself” at all? As in Chapter 1, we can appeal to "desirability" and "cultural frames" to suggest that alienation, used critically and as a negative phenomenon, is an undesirable self-imagination, undesired either in that the self-representation does not correlate well to dominant social models (idiosyncratic or broadly shared) of how one's self "should" ideally or normatively be; or in that in a certain context one should not be contemplating (an aspect of) one's self at all – consider that in certain contexts, say the body salons of Santa Monica in Los Angeles, it is quite appropriate to be, and appear, highly attentive to the details of one's own bodily appearance, whereas in other contexts it is inappropriate to attend to one's body, such as, say, the U.S. President's scratching himself while giving a press conference.

We might also describe self-alienation this way: In a dominantly humanist society in which the unity and centeredness of the self is placed at a high premium, to apprehend self-objectification as, in literal terms, a "splitting of the self" is frequently to apprehend one's self-objectification as undesirable. This large excerpt describes a form of self-alienation which is manifested in a man's alienation (let us say at the conceptual level) "from" his own body:

1. The black man among his own in the twentieth century does not know at what moment his
2. inferiority comes into being through the other. Of course I have talked about the black problem
3. with friends, or, more rarely, with American Negroes. Together we protested, we asserted the
4. equality of all men in the world. In the Antilles there was also that little gulf that exists among the
5. almost-white, the mulatto, and the nigger. But I was satisfied with an intellectual understanding of
6. these differences. It was not really dramatic. And then...
7. And then the occasion arose when I had to meet the white man's eyes. An unfamiliar
8. weight burdened me. The real world challenged my claims. In the white world the man of color
9. encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema. Consciousness of the body is
10. solely a negating activity. It is a third-person conciousness. The body is surrounded by an
11. atmosphere of certain uncertainty. I know that if I want to smoke, I shall have to reach out my right
12. arm and take the pack of cigarettes lying at the other end of the table. The matches, however, are in
13. the drawer on the left, and I shall have to lean back slightly. And all these movements are made not
14. out of habit but out of implicit knowledge. A slow composition of my self as a body in the middle
15. of a spatial and temporal world – such seems to be the schema. It does not impose itself on me; it
16. is, rather, a definitive structuring of the self and of the world – definitive because it creates a real
dialectic between my body and the world...
17. ‘Look, a Negro!’ It was an external stimulus that flicked over me as I passed by. I made a
tight smile.
18. ‘Look, a Negro!’ It was true. It amused me.
19. ‘Look, a Negro!’ The circle was drawing a bit tighter. I made no secret of my amusement.
20. ‘Mama, see the Negro! I’m frightened!’ Frightened! Frightened! Now they were
21. beginning to be afraid of me. I made up my mind to laugh myself to tears, but laughter had become
impossible...
22. My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning in
23. that white winter day. The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad....
24. All round me the white man, above the sky tears at its navel, the earth rasps under my
25. feet, and there is a white song, a white song. All this whiteness that burns me...
26. There are times when the black man is locked into his body. Now, ‘for a being who has
27. acquired consciousness of himself and of his body, who has attained to the dialectic of subject and
28. object, the body is no longer a cause of the structure of consciousness, it has become an object of
consciousness’ [this quote from Merleau-Ponty].

(Fanon 1967)

Taking Goffman’s typology a step further, we might well treat this as a particular racial
narrative of self-alienation. Fanon’s narrator points here to the corporeal nature of his
identification by the others, as well as his inescapable identifiability as “black”, as being
primary modes of interfacing with “the white man”. This understanding is corroborated
by a description of his self, as it is determined in the realm of whites, as a body: “A slow
composition of my self as a body in the middle of a spatial and temporal world – such
seems to be the schema. It does not impose itself on me; it is, rather, a definitive
structuring of the self and of the world – definitive because it creates a real dialectic
between my body and the world...”

By posing the body as the mode of interaction between his self and the world, the
narrator postulates not merely a racial or social subjectivity, but a more encompassing
subjectivity through which "the world" is apprehended. This subjectivity is set into such
inescapably racial terms by someone else: the omnipresent white man. As an “interface,”
this subjectivity is relocated, or "vectored", toward the body, rather than seated in intellection alone. And yet, of course, his "third-person consciousness" is active despite this displacement of subjectivity into the body. By identifying with that body, Fanon's narrator at once self-alienates (both by objectifying himself more than usual, in Goffman's sense, and by identifying himself with, or centering himself in, something other than the desired seat of self) and subjectifies an object. It is this recruitment of attention toward his corporeality and the accompanying negotiated intentfulness of his corporeal actions, including both his movement and speech, that I believe forms a critical kind of self-alienation, one which has multiple consequences in verbal and gestural behavior. Such a scene might be rendered by a diagram of the sort given below:

As a way of foreshadowing future discussions, we can mention some themes that are implicated in the treatment of this text as an account of corporeal alienation. They are, respectively, possession, and alienation's relationship to agency— or, more specifically, to acts of speech and/or body. First, the narrator relates to his body via a "third-person consciousness", that is, he objectifies it. Besides describing its visual qualities, his third-person consciousness more explicitly regards his body as an "alienable possession": "My body was given back to me..." and yet the body is also his: "There are times when the black man is locked into his body".

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Note that the range of these dispossessions and possessions are much broader than to behave privatively; that is, they are too multi-tiered to correlate cognitively to Langacker’s linear perceptualist scheme, which implies that the self-regarding subject, if it is "doubled" in representation, must somehow “lose” subjectivity. Yet, certainly, though, as in the above example, one’s subjectivity might appear constrained by its objectification - by a newfound vigilance perhaps - this subject is at base simply not correspondingly any less of a subject. The subjective faculty remains intact. The dispossessions occur more or less onstage, which is by no means a reason to deny their material consequence. I say this simply to clarify the co-existence of, and the presence of less visible mediations between, on the one hand, entrenched physiologically-engendered cognitive bindings, and on the other hand, the sheer flexibility of imagination, the two of which Langacker appears to conflate as one. But while the cumulative line between physiology and imagination seems to become vague if not chaotic, traversals across this boundary remain important, and I believe, traceable.

For alienation to be understood in a relationship to language performance, as well as identity, it is necessary to connect it to a theory of action, of agency. Indeed, it is through the critical self-alienation described above, as I see it, that bodily and speaking agency that would have been natural is de-naturalized, is no longer habitual, but requires conscious decisions and intentional physical movements in every chosen act. Note the narrator’s “excessive” attention to detail when he considers having a smoke, and his claim that “these movements are made not out of habit but out of implicit knowledge” – as in a script consciously invoked when non-conscious acts, such as habit, are unavailable; as for the speaking, he “made up my mind to laugh myself to tears” but laughter “had become
impossible". We will see later that agency is directly related to the operations of objectification and reclaiming, insofar as we are concerned with questions of social existence and action for the individual.

Above, I suggested that subjectivity has been "displaced" toward the body. In what sense is this true? It is true to the extent that, insofar as the objectified element of the self must continue to be subjective (recall that I wrote above that even if self-objectified to some extent, the subject is no less a subject than it was before the self-objectification), this doubled subjectivity takes on an intensity – perhaps depending on the subject's apprehension of the affective fields attached to the possible fields of action. I made such a gesture in the above discussion on the subjectification of an objectified element. In other words, an actor cannot think about his possibilities for action without reference to whatever is already locally salient in that field of action – here, the corporeal field of action. This is a kind of vigilance, mentioned earlier, which may have material effects, and may effectively bind agency (and, perhaps to some degree, influence subjectivity by way of constraining attention to an imagistically narrow field of options).

Alienation and cognitive linguistics: Cognitive grammar as a "symbolic" theory of language
So far, we have described alienation and self-alienation in psychological and cognitive terms, and studied a couple of forms of alienation by way of example. Still, one crucial question is left open: What is the place of language with regard to what still appears to be a fundamentally psychological conception? Some further introduction to cognitive linguistics is appropriate here, before we can enter an extended discussion of alienation in the framework.
In cognitive linguistics theory, it is taken as given that the mind works with symbols, images, and image schemata— even if the definitions for these terms may vary. As seen in Chapter 1, in Ronald Langacker’s Cognitive Grammar theory (Langacker 1987a, 1987b, 1991), every meaningful “node” has both a semantic and a phonological pole—not terribly, in its raw version, unlike Saussure’s ideas, wherein a meaning is tied to a sound image. All linguistic knowledge is organized in this way. For every concrete linguistic expression, called a “predication” by Langacker, a particular cognitive organization is implied: the imposition of a ‘profile’ on a ‘base’. (L:5)

The base of a predication is its domain... Its profile is a substructure elevated to a special level of prominence within the base, namely that substructure which the expression ‘designates’... The base (or domain) for the characterization of hypotenuse is the conception of a right triangle; for tip, the base is the conception of an elongated object; and for uncle, a set of individuals linked by kinship relations.... The meaning of hypotenuse, tip, and uncle is in each case given only by the selection of a particular substructure within the base for the distinctive prominence characteristic of a profile. An expression's semantic value does not reside in either the base or the profile individually, but rather in the relationship between the two." (L p. 5)

Note that while this strongly resembles the relationship between "figure" and "ground" above, Langacker uses those terms specifically for a different reason. In a scene in which we already understand that certain information is profiled within a certain base (a domain), within that profiled information, two further elements persist in figure-ground relationship: "trajector" and "landmark".

"Relational predcations normally manifest an asymmetry in the portrayal of the relational participants... The asymmetry is more apparent in cases like go, hit, enter, and approach, where one participant moves in relation to another (which is stationary so far as the verb itself is concerned)... I attribute this inherent asymmetry to figure/ground organization. A relational predication elevates one of its participants to the status of figure. I refer to this participant as its 'trajector'; other salient participants are referred to as 'landmarks'... The trajector/landmark
asymmetry underlies the subject/object distinction, but the former notions have considerably broader application." (L. p. 9)

A further premise of cognitive linguistics is that language provokes interpretive processes on the part of the hearer – some more conscious than others. Langacker's vision of cognitive linguistics is not the only one. *Mental spaces*, for example, is another theory of cognitive representation during language processing and thought in general that particularly emphasizes the dynamics, subjectivity, and creativity of meaning.\(^\text{11}\)

Not only are we not aware of the constructions we perform (any more, say, than we are aware of chemical reactions in our brain or other biological operations), but we do not suspect the extent to which vast amounts of prestructured knowledge, selected implicitly by context, are necessary to form any interpretation of anything. We notice only the tip of the iceberg -- the words -- and we attribute all the rest to common sense. (Fauconnier 1994)

Uttered or articulated language, then, consists of proposals of meaning. It is largely up to the hearer how to construct that meaning, though the theory of mental spaces suggests that there are cognitive limitations that lead to strong biases for a certain limited number of possible readings – a kind of loose conceptual determinacy. Under this view, an utterance has a "meaning potential," but no more. For example, the compound "lesbian marriage" (at least until recently, if not continuing to be the case for a significant number of people) involves two apparently incompatible concepts which, by our conscious judgment, would seem to be unnaturally "forced together" into a resistant word compound. And yet it is nevertheless already understood in a certain sense, even while it invokes a raised eyebrow. The mental-spaces explanation for this – the readiness of meaning even at times when a phrase feels impossible – is that language understanding is
always creative, and almost effortlessly finds one or more working interpretations even for the most difficult of language processing tasks or contradictory utterances. In other words, we cognitively hybridize structures, blending together, overwriting, or simply ignoring other conceptual incompatibilities so that they will work together. And it seems we do this in the usual case, rather than only when it seems necessary to resolve conflict.

On the other hand, it seems that meaning cannot always be recruited to “make sense” of things, much less of language-borne proposals of meaning. Sometimes meaning is lost – to interpretive ambivalence; to confusion, say, between what one kind of subject says, and what a given cultural frame says it is possible to say or do; and even to the wholesale expulsion of its speaker and its productions from the domain of acceptability, foreclosing the greatest of linguistic artfulness in that speaker’s attempt to be understood. In making meaning, it seems, we engage a heady mix of computation and feeling. The sometimes competing, sometimes orthogonal, claims of cognitive linguistics, one in which a kind of conceptual determinism is advanced, and another in which meaning is rendered nearly effortlessly despite interpretive obstacles, become highly relevant to later discussions in the dissertation – beginning with Chapter 3 – about just how we might conceive of linguistic objectification and reclaiming in a socially critical sense. For instance, what are the implicit discursive conditions that produce, for some subjects, "effortless meaning", that is, what are the "cultural" resources that allow some readings to be reached, and not others? Where precisely are readings likely to be highly deterministic, and under what conditions?

See Gilles Fauconnier (1994, 1997) for an in-depth introduction to mental spaces theory, and Fauconnier and Sweetser (1997) for a particularly good set of focused
I return now to the discussion of alienation, given now not only in general
cognitive or psychological terms, but in an expressly cognitive-linguistic theory. Let us
begin by reviewing the subject-object/subjective-objective psychological schema
outlined above. Langacker directly takes up these psychological ideas and extends them
to cognitive linguistics, with a mixture of cognitive linguistics' and his own theoretical
vocabulary of "profile", "trajector", "landmark", "onstage" and "offstage", "image" and
"symbol". Inviting us to consider conception analogously to perception, Langacker claims
that with regard to a given construal of any conceptualized entity, subjectivity and
objectivity are in an asymmetric relationship. If the construal is maximally objective (and
thus minimally subjective), the conceptualizing subject has no representation on-stage,
including any possible conceptualized relationship with the onstage entities. If the
construal is maximally subjective (and thus minimally objective), the conceptualizing
subject "is" relatively more on-stage, that is, its cognitive representation, either via direct
perception or via "imagination", constitutes part of the construed object. To put my
earlier reference to "doubling" more precisely: in a subjective conceptualization, we
might say that the subject is imaginatively "doubled" from its original simply-subjective
self, via a cognitive self-representation within the image that serves as its cognated
composite object. It is further "doubled" in the sense that though its image is extended
into the objective domain, it remains as a part of subjectivity.

Returning to the example from Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks*, we might
describe the narrator's bodily alienation in the diagram which follows. In it, a cognitive
"self" is partly onstage, partly offstage. Contrary to Goffman's view that such situations

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are marked, I allow that some degree of self-objectification may well exist in any social situation and particularly for some kinds of subjects in selected kinds of domains; but at the same time I concur with Goffman that this will be more true in social situations which are novel or involve some discomfort. In the case of bodily alienation, the body itself is foregrounded, and left onstage (in the mind of the conceptualizer, in this case the narrator). His self-rendering as a corporeal being in social situations is not purely imagined, as he is given the suggestion that his primary external identification is based on his visible, black self: “Look, it’s a Negro!” (it seems clear that in this case, the label “Negro” is associated with his corporeal self). What are the consequences in language of this configuration of attentions? The narrator perceives that whatever his actions, it is his body, and his bodily movements, that are profiled in the scene - even when his actions are not explicitly interactive: “I shall have to reach out my right arm and take the pack of cigarettes lying at the other end of the table. The matches, however, are in the drawer on the left, and I shall have to lean back slightly. And all these movements are made not out of habit but out of implicit knowledge.”

That the movements are made out of implicit knowledge (which I read as conceptualization, as a device that aids in generating “novel” action), and habit becomes inaccessible, is due to a binding, I suggest, between the narrator’s heightened consciousness of his body, and his corporeal agency; and as such this binding would affect both movement and speech. I would add that in the narrator’s postcolonial context, the commitment to speech, the risk of speech, is made more dramatic here. I am trying to claim here that the heightening of a particular tension, a binding, combined with the sense of a risk of expression, is precisely what makes this situation an incontestably affective
situation, one where affect has significant consequences in expression. It is not, simply, hypercorrection, because one is perceived to fit "less" to an identity, or attempting to be appropriate to a certain level of prestige speech. Thus some of the narrator's desired actions are "lost", in the sense that they are not performed: "I made up my mind to laugh myself to tears, but laughter had become impossible."

Fig. 5. Corporeal alienation (self-alienation from body)

There are, of course, some "alienations" which to some degree have been presupposed in the preceding discussions. They are the biological fact of living with physically (and, in many cases, notionally) separate bodies, which Lacan has addressed in his own way; and the case, in some (Western) cultural contexts more than others, that the "self" is the preeminent social body, rather than, say, the "community"; this is one of the alienations that Marxian theory, cultural studies, and anthropology have dealt with in one way or another. As I see it, there are two consequences of an investment in "self" (which
includes impositions of "self" from without, as in colonial situations): one is an increased investment in identities; and the other is an increased degree of anxiety attached to the substantiation of one's self. In some sense, the presence of all of these elements sets the stage for certain further or augmented kinds of alienation – including dis-identifications, insults, and self-alienations such as those seen above. We can represent the basic outlines of this kind of setting-of-the-stage in mental-spaces diagram form; but first, to explain my terms, I shall take some time to discuss each of the constituents in the diagram.

While the unbounded complexities of the construct "identity" cannot be ignored, it is not difficult to deal with one highly relevant aspect of identity, that is as an image, meaning self-representations, other-representations, social stereotypes, and the like. These, as identity itself, are highly mutable, highly subject to both local and far-reaching social forces. I suggest that it is these images, along with affect, that play significant roles in the intersubjectively negotiated reality between interlocutors. Not only between strangers who are willing to enter discourse, but also between intimates, are identity images negotiated. (See e.g. Goffman 1959.) The use of this diagram comes with certain cautions. The graphic would appear to assume a fact of separateness of selves before anything else; I must repeat that this is an assumption which can be made only of certain cultural contexts and not others. Indeed, in Mental Spaces representations, several spaces may include the "same" conceptual entity; thus in this case two "selves" may at least to some degree refer to the "same" notional identity. This can occur among friends; members of the same identity group; and family members in a cultural context – say
traditional East Asian cultures – in which individuals identify strongly with their immediate family members.¹²

Rosaldo (1984), arguing against delineable ontological boundaries between body, self, and feeling, relates ‘lives of feeling to conceptions of the self, as both of these are aspects of particular forms of polities and social relations.’ Indeed by identity we cannot simply mean the body, nor can we consider affect as a solely corporeal phenomenon. It may be overlooked that embodiment is always deeply embedded in social contexts that themselves inform it with meaning. Our physical and social selves, while not one, are also inseparable: this is not to say that the physical boundaries of the body stand for social boundaries, but that the physical cannot be read without reference to the body’s situatedness and meaning in a social context. Therefore we must consider boundaries that are abstract. The image, no less, cannot merely be material.

Taking Rosaldo’s conceptions of the self to a schematic level, below is an image to think ‘from,’ a Mental Spaces diagram of the intersubjective negotiation of identities by two interlocutors. This is only one possible setting, though it contains elements that would also appear in other scenes: an individual reading an e-mail, letter or newspaper (in which case there may be two or more entities afforded “interlocutor”-status); a public figure giving a speech to an assembled crowd (in which case that speaking figure may entertain multiple individual, and multiple collective, spaces); and so on.

¹² This is true, for instance, of many East Asian-derived cultures, including their diasporic communities. In traditional Chinese culture, ancestry and extended family membership still hold significantly greater importance and count as effectively ‘part’ of an individual’s identity. Though these systems are in constant shift, Hsu (1985) offers a still-useful comparative study of Chinese-U.S.-Japanese cultural influences on the
Fig. 6. Self-other minimal four-space configuration; intersubjective negotiation of identity.

All four spaces are managed, I would suggest rather effortlessly, by a single interlocutor-conceptualizer, Interlocutor 1 (let us say the speaker/insulter). Imagine that an equivalent configuration of at least four spaces exists for Interlocutor 2. As for Interlocutor 1’s configuration, the lower left space is the base space (called the “R” space), Interlocutor 1’s sense of present reality which includes everything in the context, including both interlocutors and discursively and socially relevant aspects of their physical and social setting. At upper left is the (expanded, elaborated) identity maintained by Interlocutor 1, which for routine communicative functions remains schematic in R. More than just one of these identity images are certainly possible, as in the case where a multiplicity of roles are simultaneously entertained in a conversation, or if we bring to an interaction an uncertainty as to which role we are given by our interlocutor to occupy.

At lower right is the R space that Interlocutor 1 attributes to Interlocutor 2, which includes Interlocutor 2’s R space as well as its expanded self-identity. The connectors boundaries of the self (jen), and describes the greater inclusion of kinship ties in the Chinese self as compared to the U.S. self.

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Benveniste (1971) has eloquently maintained that the foundation of subjectivity in discourse is the possibility of mutually defining selves offered by the discursive positions of “I” and “you.” Hence, what is being “worked” in an insult exchange are precisely the meanings of my “you” and your “self” in relation to each other. The greater the intent of insult, the greater the projected distance between, say, Int.1-R’s “you” and Int.2-R’s “self.” Crucially, if Int.2’s self-representation has any vulnerability, its susceptibility to momentary or lasting overwriting/overriding by the definitive conceptualization in the discourse (which, in the case of Int.1.’s relative invulnerability and relatively powerful “speaker-writer” position at that moment in the discourse, would be Int.1’s perspective) is non-zero.

As an example of identification, envision a scenario in which, after a talk, a person who I had not met before came up to me and said, apparently with perfectly sincere (as opposed to ironic) outward affect, ‘Blah, blah, blah,’ then turned and walked away. My knowledge that we would normally hesitate to tell each other our opinions on a bad talk would factor in a Gricean computation: I might conclude I have been judged as a loose talker, with little worthy content to communicate. Arguably, it becomes prominent in my conceptual representation of my momentary identity, at least in the perspective I attribute to my interlocutor. But it may not be what I identify with — my adopted viewpoint — and hence what I ‘own’ emotively. What decides this?
The extent to which Int.1-R’s proferred “you” image may “bleed” into Int.2’s R, depends on several factors, among them what I call “writing authority” and Int.2.’s own vulnerability of self-image (discussed below), affective orientation to Int.1, and cognitive processing strategies. When Interlocutor 1 speaks, he/she possesses some momentary authority, as the conventional stick-holder, turn-taker, and, most importantly, writer of/contributor to the shared intersubjective reality space. This authority is even more durative if Int. 1 is (relevantly) a member of a group which occupies collective power in relation to those (relevant) groups occupied by Int. 2. Interlocutor 2, if thus vulnerable, may be forced to transparently read Int.1’s R/depicted R as his/her own R as well. That is, the reality between them, while intersubjectively shared and thus intersubjectively negotiated, is always negotiated with differing contributions.

In the present instance, I may already be uncertain about the quality of my talk, and this is bound to have an influence on how I receive that communication. One way to conceive of what is meant by ‘vulnerability’ is that I foster multiple perspectives of myself – including one which is less than desired; and further will feel that my self is not so readily defensible, my borders more permeable. (This is, of course, metaphorical language used to describe an experience of indefensibility.) The degree to which I assume this viewpoint, duratively, renders me increasingly vulnerable to being negatively “written”, for instance by insult: Because there may be no ready dissension in internal (what I bring) and external (what another offers in discourse) representations of my self, my identification is more commensurable with theirs, and I am less in a position to refuse that blend. I am, hence, increasingly open to injury.
Up to this point we have focused on detailing, to some degree of precision, how alienation might be rendered in a cognitive, as well as a cognitive-linguistic, framework; and we have taken alienation to be related to a kind of mode, whose attainment or exit so far have not shown in our descriptions (for instance, nowhere in the Fanon excerpt is any previous "unity" with the narrator's body premised, nor any previous time in which he lacked self-consciousness). And yet, as I suggested above, it is the (language-borne) movements to and from this mode - and the acts that incite them - that seem of particular interest to analysis. Indeed, a premise in cognitive linguistics is that every language act constitutes some change to the cognitive apparatus, whether it be an entrenchment of neural structures, a change in belief states, a modification of knowledge. It is these changes - these linguistic-cognitive dynamics – which we pursue in the following chapters.
CHAPTER 3. Perspective and Blending in a Cognitive-Linguistic Approach to “Objectification”

OBJECTIFY: to make into, or present as, an object, esp. an object of sense; to render objective. Hence Objectification, the action of objectifying or condition of being objectified; an instance of this. (Oxford Shorter OED)

Li Peng is the son of a turtle egg with zero I.Q. (1994 editorial, Next weekly, Hong Kong)

Introduction

The previous chapter developed the idea of linguistic alienation, using a set of formal and conceptual models from sociology, cognitive linguistics and cognitive science: Goffman’s conception of alienation in interaction; figure-ground relations; and notions of subjectivity and objectivity in construal. With these concepts in hand, the present chapter explores linguistic objectification, understood as having a close relationship with conceptual alienation. Two forms that participate in objectification will be examined here: what I call object-ification, and objective-ization, which have not so far been elaborated theoretically in cognitive linguistics but which can be at least initially derived of existing cognitive-linguistic scholarship.

Consider a case in which a racial-ethnic “term of reference” – “black” – is used to refer to an individual (in the United States). The suggestion of simple linguistic referentiality contained in the phrase “term of reference” is broken by the fact that such a term cannot easily refer or be taken “literally”. The question that immediately follows is, how is it being used, and in what context? Who is saying it, and who is a designated audience? Hence whose kind of “black person” is being represented? Ultimately, what cultural framings and construals are being brought to bear by way of that citation? The answers to “how” determine in a critical way “what” a term is understood to reference, both denotatively and connotatively; that term cannot “exist” in a consequential way
without the “quieter” presence of the cultural frames that give it flesh, lend it potency. Thus, “referential” meaning together with its cultural framings must be understood to constitute lexical meaning. This opposes model-theoretic, objectivist and formal semantics; their position that pure reference can be isolated exposes them to critique by both critical theory and cognitive linguistics. The play between “what is referred” and “how it is referred” here has everything to do with the degree to which it serves as objectifying.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, as suggested above, a discussion of theories of reference is very much in order; that is, which linguistic operands are accorded effectivity and consequence “matter” highly in a study of language’s doing. I proceed then to a discussion of objectifying language. As the term “objectification,” and its kin, have a heavily invested history in scholarship, I first briefly review cultural/critical theory’s treatment of objectification and offer a summary sketch of the kinds of objectifications represented therein. I then suggest that not only are there discursive regularities that explain the sharedness of these forms across critical discourses, but that the cognitive-linguistic construct of animacy as a “theory of the object” may, in addition, implicitly shape conceptions of objectification by theorists such as Marx.

Moving to a derivation from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, I then explain that while conceptual objectification has little direct engagement within cognitive linguistics, there are two lines of study that cover conceptually converse processes, personification and subjectification, that could be used as resources for the derivation of objectification as a cognitive-linguistic concept. Yet both are plagued by a series of
philosophical and sociocritical neglects. In addition, subjectification scholarship makes claims on diachronic linguistic tendencies that could not possibly apply to objectifying language processes. More generally, cognitive-linguistic discussions of either of these processes neglect to identify the social conditions in which such change must take place, having the effect of foreclosing possibilities where anti-subjectification, or anti-personification, may be imagined. This neglect has the result of occluding an enormous area of social-critical discourse in which dehumanization, both small- and large-scale, with the undeniable support of language, persists. To this end, I attempt to remedy the limitations of both cognitive-linguistic processes while developing a unique theory of objectifying language.

Along the way I will show that the two converse processes to conceptual subjectification and personification (again, object-ification and objective-ization, a duo brought about by my initial confusion about what existing concept from cognitive linguistics to start with), often work not independently but in concert, owing on the one hand to the experiential ties between human perception and action, and on the other to active structures which naturalize the relations between the two processes in specific sociopolitical contexts, sometimes insidiously. The naturalized union between these two types, objectness and objectivity, is reflected in the Oxford English Dictionary entry opening this chapter. Yet object-ification and objective-ization are not one and the same, as I shall demonstrate.

As may be clear by now, this chapter provides an opportunity to submit these meta-traditions of thought, critical-cultural theory and cognitive linguistics, to a conversation. I summon critical theory to attend to the questions left open by cognitive
linguistics' treatment of societally induced language change, and to help inform and contextualize my own active integration of personification's inverse with subjectification's inverse. At the same time I attempt to show what might be gained in cultural criticism's approaches to objectification from the cognitive linguistic treatment developed here, beginning with the theory of animacy. If, as I suggest, the use of cognitive linguistics helps to investigate ways that language can "hurt" that are not reducible or attributable to the structures of language itself, but that rather rely in part on the conceptual conferral of highly consequential identity attributes to language's participants, situational framings in which language acts are rendered, and the conceptual directives of grammar, it is only then that we may arrive at an account that fairly mediates between the perfect impossibility of reference and the perfect possibility of reference, and recuperates "presence" without reinhabiting it.

Derridean deconstructionism, which has held a significant influence in recent critical thought, questions, in part, the possibility of seamless reference within language, thereby profoundly de- and re-structuring language as we know it; among other relations, it aims to displace the hierarchical opposition primary-speech: secondary-writing, as well as other constructed oppositions. In contributing to an exploration of the unrecognized vastness of language's experienced ambiguity,¹ such insights are vastly useful. Yet by focusing on reference to the general absence of contextual considerations, such a view has an answering risk to invest form with meaning, thereby collapsing the complexity of reference that involve context into reference that simply does not. The consequence is

¹ One such experienced ambiguity is rendered as a Lacanian anxiety about the elusiveness of the "real": while language is our adopted means of self-representation, our necessary "face" of subjectivity, it is a failed promise, having been built on an illusory integration whose brokenness we feel but cannot change.
that lexical forms themselves can be rendered effectively as possessors of meaning and
the very agents of injury and/or control. While the works that bear this deconstructionist
influence represent significantly different genres of scholarship, and while many of them
admittedly have an aim that is distinct from direct cultural critique, they seem from a
certain perspective to bear similar imprints of a relative discounting of the integration of
language with human life, and hence with certain kinds (but certainly not all kinds) of
context.

Pierre Bourdieu writes of a “theory-effect” whereby reality is in part maintained
or constructed by virtue of “the imposition of the principles of di-vision which occurs
whenever an attempt is made to make something explicit” (1991: 132-3). Surely, there is
a certain reifying danger implicit in the scientific practice, fairly conventionalized within
linguistics, of categorizing one phenomenon as a type of another, or of partitioning an
utterance into tokens of one or another grammatical construction. It seems clear that this
risk partly underlies critical theory’s discomfort with linguistics. As explained in Chapter
1, it is true that in linguistics, the elaboration of cataloguing and description of “present”,
“visible”, “detectible”, “audible” language acts has had the effect of shaping what is
understood as “real” language, which reinforces the pairing of language with speech as
contrasted to its other, silence, such that the division speech-silence already seems self-
evident. And yet it would seem that a different, perhaps quieter risk exists when in theory
“context” is absented, when the only safe namable is a language whose condition of
endless deferral legitimates its “mere” citation and nothing is effectively left to analyze
but form itself.
When so many contexts are lost to the privileging of the play of interior meanings in a (decontextualized) semantic space that exists of its own accord (i.e. without its own existential reliance on human experience, and living language’s man-madeness is de-emphasized in relation to man’s language-madeness), then so is the capacity for hewing, in a critical mode, to the concreteness, the either-or, the practical limitations on ambiguities, and, ultimately, the precise ways that some “kinds” of people can, in citing a word, render specific injuries in ways that others cannot.

From the point of view of cognitive linguistics “context” is a requisite participant in the construction of meaning, since only with great difficulty could contextual details and framings be excluded from a lived conceptualization; and language, as uttered form, is but a prompt for the active construction of meaning. To be sure, specific forms enact strong cues that bias a conceptualizer towards certain kinds of conceptualizations. Yet meanings that involve contentious forms can nevertheless emerge in vastly different ways, even for the same conceptualizer, in two different citations of a given form.

But here, too, is where cognitive linguistics’ inquiry toward “meaning” must have the assistance of social and critical theory. For cognitive linguistics is ill-equipped to handle such positive constructs of social identity (beyond the kinds of formal identity relations that enable disciplinary conventions such as the categorization of utterances into linguistic classes); as well as such negative constructs as social bodies’ internal difference – ways that some humans are systematically rendered as less than human; ways that full intent, self-determination, and self-composure are neither templatic habits of a conceptualizer, nor necessarily normative states that are broken only in marked
situations, an insight for whose detailed study Erving Goffman is credited. Both of these constructs have important consequences for research and what may be learned from it.

**Cultural/Critical Theory Objectification(s)**

It would be impractical here to paint any more than the broadest outlines of the disciplinary array which has produced the particular historically and politically specific articulations of objectification; yet an overview, though likely dissatisfying as a representation, can nevertheless help set the stage for a focused conversation. First, let us take “cultural theory and criticism” to include cultural studies, philosophy, Marxist, feminist and postcolonial theory. Within these discourses is quite a rich and diverse literature on objectification, particularly as it affects human beings, directly or indirectly; indeed, often such an objectifying process ultimately leads to the objectification of individuals. Generally, those implicated in such processes are members of groups who are subjected to diversely articulated structures of power: these may include women vis-à-vis patriarchal structures; persons of color subjected to racist psychologies; persons exposed to the effects, or aftereffects, of economies put into effect during colonization. Above and beyond the possibility of dehumanization, such objectification is often also understood to deprive people of their proper humanist freedoms and rights.

The critically elaborated concept of socio-cultural objectification – that is, that which did not become an arm of the formalized discipline of modern psychology – bears strong historical ties to Marxist discourse. Two objectifications are of note here: with the introduction of capital, private property, and the economic and social relations that result, there emerges an establishment of labor value in terms of the objects produced by that labor; and concomitantly a valuation of workers who perform that labor in the same
terms. Of objectification, particularly the relations between the objectification of labor, labor’s products, and of laborers themselves, Marx writes the following. Note that his articulation invokes the concepts of estrangement, barbarity and animal life, possessibility and control relationships:

We shall begin from a present-day economic fact. The worker becomes poorer the more wealth he produces, the more his production increases in power and extent. The worker becomes an ever cheaper commodity the more goods he produces. The devaluation of the human world grows in direct proportion to the increase in value of the world of things. Labour does not only produces commodities; it also produces itself and the workers as a commodity, and indeed in the same proportion as it produces commodities in general... Finally, the external character of labour for the worker is demonstrated by the fact that it belongs not to him but to another, and that in it he belongs not to himself but to another.... The result is that man (the worker) feels that he is acting freely only in his animal functions — eating, drinking, and procreating, or at most in his dwelling and adornment — while in his human functions, he is nothing more than animal. It is true that eating, drinking, and procreating, etc., are also genuine human functions. However, when abstracted from other aspects of human activity, and turned into final and exclusive ends, they are animal.

(1978 [1844])

To Marx, the creation of an alienated laborer is complex, and depends on a concerted interplay of factors, including: the unequal distribution of capital; the enhanced nature of “things” as opposed to the “human world”; identification of a laborer with the labor it produces; and the dependency of a laborer on that labor. One consequence of this transformation of social and economic relations is the loss of a laborer’s connection to its once-elaborate human nature (presumably, civilization and the spontaneous enjoyment of other “higher” forms of social relation), leaving it in the world of the “animal functions.” Furthermore, self-possession is no longer the laborer’s right, since it “belongs” to the labor on which it depends for its livelihood.
Where Marx emphasizes, as above, the insidious concealment of labor in the creation of products, feminist theory has further pointed out a vital erasure of "women's work" by its naturalization into the domestic space, which excludes it from the proper domain of "work". More à propos objectification, feminist theory has detailed ways in which women can be or have been objectified by diverse practices. The critical feminist perspectives include ones that depict women's bodies are representationally fragmented into fetishized parts; in which women's subjectivity is represented as dependent on, determined by or structured by the desire of men; or in which a woman is posed as static receptacle or visual "object" to a moving or perceiving male "subject." The last example represents an active, socially cultivated union between the perceiving (male) subject and the acting (male) subject, a union which has borne much examination in feminist film theory as well as in critical studies of pornography.

Catharine MacKinnon defines pornography as "graphic sexually explicit materials that subordinate women through pictures or words" (1996: 22) In partial response, Martha Nussbaum, in "Objectification," (1995), working with Kant’s understanding of sexuality and in dialogue with MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin’s (1981) accounts of sexual objectification, identifies seven ways of "seeing and/or treating of someone as an object", including instrumentality, denial of autonomy, inertness, fungibility, violability/breakability, ownership, and denial of subjectivity. Through her analyses of a few classic literary examples of sexual objectification that she takes as "morally assessable", she attempts to rehabilitate sexual objectification from the totalizing

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2 "Political economy conceals the estrangement in the nature of labour by ignoring the direct relationship between the worker (labour) and production." (1992 [1844])
accounts of MacKinnon and Dworkin, suggesting that “some features of objectification... may be either necessary or wonderful features of sexual life.”

Postcolonial theory, which heavily engages in the study of literature in and of former (often European) colonies, works to identify the complex structures specific to the interactions between a dominating (usually imperial or colonizing) country or power and a colonized people, normally after the establishment of formal independence. The range of study is vast, not only because the very category “postcolonial” is so contested. Postcolonial theorists have examined the ways that colonization duratively affects a colonized people’s self-determination, including their “new” sense of national identity; and the ways in which colonization presses both “colonizer” and “colonized” into mutual psychological entanglement, leaving effects long after any formal establishment of independence. Emphasizing the anxious psychology of the colonial interaction, Frantz Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, writes:

> When we consider the efforts made to carry out the cultural estrangement so characteristic of the colonial epoch, we realize that nothing has been left to chance and that the total result looked for by colonial domination was indeed to convince the natives that colonialism came to lighten their darkness. The effect consciously sought by colonialism was to drive into the natives’ heads the idea that if the settlers were to leave, they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation and bestiality. (1963: 211)

Because a process of economic and territorial domination in the history of European colonialism has inevitably summoned forms of psychological support in one domain or another, colonial subjects are often understood to be represented and/or treated as in some way “less” than fully human subjects, less than fully self-possessed, readily “subject to
subjugation”, and also to be in a position to come to see themselves differently. Thus, postcolonial literature often actively engages in the reclaiming of “lost” histories and ways of being, as well as the recovery of a “lost” communal identity, on the part of those who have come to bear the multifaceted legacy of colonization.

It is worth noting that many of the objectification discussions invoke animals as standards of (inappropriate) comparison. Many mainstream discourses exhibit an extreme disavowal of the possibility of significant horizontal relations between humans and other animals. Within such discourses the category “animal” comes with a frame that categorically opposes “human” to “animal”; any symmetricities between humans and other animals tend to emerge as marked, as shown in the meaningfulness of the phrase “the human animal”. Also, the conditioned presence of non-human animals in humans’ lives, particularly in urban environments, seems limited to pet ownership, street animals categorized as ferals or vermin, and zoos; and even the partial mutuality of pet relationships all too often falls into practices of anthropomorphism, abuse, control, or neglect. At bottom, animals seem to be conferred very little subjectivity, and still today it

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3 The history of what is called “colonialism” is overwhelmingly European, and the classical understanding of colonialism has been built from this example; as well, the great part of the world has at some time or another been colonized by a European country. Given that the periods of colonial expansion in Western Europe were marked by an abiding humanist ethos, one which further inherited the powerful framings of Enlightenment thought, the subjects of the colonies posed an apt exercise for the emphatic reiteration of the humanism of their European colonizers. See Said (1979) and Memmi (1991).

4 The responses to such histories of colonial domination vary, and their controversies are actively engaged in postcolonial theory and literature. For instance, the term “negritude” designates a mode of resistance in the African Diaspora, which was understood by some, such as Léopold Senghor, as signalling the positive definition of a collective and unified black identity, whereas Aimé Césaire, a Martinican poet who coined the term, actively advocated its use as a negative strategy to move out of a history of subjugation.
is under scientific debate as to whether “animals” really do have “emotions”. As Laura Tangley summarizes in a popular newsweekly:

Skeptics remain unconvinced. ‘A whale may behave as if it's in love, but you can't prove what it's feeling, if anything,’ says neuroscientist LeDoux, author of The Emotional Brain. He maintains that the question of feelings boils down to whether or not animals are conscious. And though animals ‘may have snapshots of self-awareness,’ he says, ‘the movie we call consciousness is not there.’ Richard Davidson, a neuroscientist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, agrees that higher primates, including apes and chimps, are the only animals that have demonstrated self-consciousness so far. Still, he believes that there are other creatures that ‘may at least have antecedents of feelings.” (2000)

Note that by such accounts, consciousness is equated with self-consciousness, which is necessary to legitimate the affordance of emotionality to animals. If we augment this scientific elaboration of consciousness as underlying the ethics of human-animal treatment with John Cherry’s crosslinguistic account of animacy (discussion below), then under such conditions, “like an animal” can certainly be a ready resource for comparison and from which to draw inferences.

One attempt to form a meta-perspective over the many “objectifications” explored above can be found in the following diagram. The processes of objectification outlined below are ones in which, we might say, “object properties” are emphasized (and capitalized upon) at the expense of other “subject properties”.

[figure on following page]
Returning to Marx, the features highlighted in his articulation of objectification can be detected in more than a few of these senses, namely labels A, B, C, F, G, H in the diagram above:

A: quantifiability – exchange-value.
B: controllability – “So much does the appropriation of the object appear as estrangement that the more objects the worker produces the fewer can he possess and the more he falls under the domination of his product, of capital.”
C: possessibility – “he belongs not to himself but to another.”
F: materiality – “The culmination of this slavery is that it is only as a worker that he can maintain himself as a physical subject and only as a physical subject that he is a worker.”
G: inhuman — “It is true that eating, drinking, and procreating, etc., are also genuine human functions. However, when abstracted from other aspects of human activity, and turned into final and exclusive ends, they are animal... Conscious life activity directly distinguishes man from animal life activity.”

H: instrumentality — “In these two respects, then, the worker becomes a slave of his object; firstly, in that he receives an object of labour, i.e., he receives work, and, secondly, in that he receives means of subsistence.” (Marx 1992 [1844])

Such a breadth of coverage may well reflect Marx’s formative influence, given that his work appears early in the history of theories of objectification. Nevertheless, this attribution only begs the question: how did such qualities become collectively available to Marx in the context and era in which he did his work? More precisely, what informed Marx’s vision of the process which objectifies and/or alienates the worker, and further, what led him to populate this vision with the elements that form the consequential relationships?

While nothing less than a “history of the object” may be ultimately demanded, a cognitive-phenomological explanation may augment this historiographical account. Marx’s and others’ “features” and/or oppositions of object-ness/subject-ness are highly conversant with the complex structure of conceptual animacy detailed by John Cherry (1992). On the basis of a crosslinguistic study including Swahili, English, Navajo, Shona, Chinook, Algonquian, Hopi, Russian, Polish, Breton, and others, Cherry claims that there exists evidence for a crosslinguistic “animacy hierarchy”, though “it should be borne in mind that no language exemplifies all of these distinctions, and that the major distinctions are far more common than the minor ones.” (315) Where Cherry’s overall hierarchy is:

humans > animals > plants and inanmites > incorporeals,

he further characterizes each subcategory as follows:

Humans: adult > nonadult; male/MASC gender > female/FEM gender; free > enslaved; able-bodied > disabled; linguistically intact >
prelinguistic/linguistically impaired; familiar (kin/named) > unfamiliar (nonkin/unnamed); proximate (1p & 2p pronouns) > remote (3p pronouns).

*Animals:* higher/larger animals > lower/smaller animals > insects; whole animal > body part;

*Inanimates:* motile/active > nonmotile/nonactive; natural > manmade; count > mass;

*Incorporeals:* abstract concepts, natural forces, states of affairs, states of being, emotions, qualities, activities, events, time periods, institutions, regions, diverse intellectual objects (Cherry 2002: 314)

The basis for Cherry’s claim is phenomenological, and on that claim he suggests there may be something universal about animacy. He sees animacy as an intuitive recognition of like kind on the basis of one’s own *embodiment, purposiveness, and activity* (EPA):

We have averred that the reason why EP&A emerge as the dimensions of an animistic conception of life is that the animistic conception is constituted as a projection of the animist’s own life. By ‘projection’ it is intended... that the structural terms of our own existence condition in a general way how entities show up for us, as well as the prominence of their showing up. We are necessarily oriented to other entities in the very terms implicit in our orientation to our own selves. Phenomenologically, the first figure against the background of the world is always oneself. Via projective processes, EPA subjectivity then issues into EPA ‘objectivity,’ and the EPA structure of other figures emerge. (217)

If Cherry’s claims are accurate at least insofar as they may apply within a community of scholars who have maintained a broadly consistent ethics over the centuries, the theories of objectification corresponding to each of the features of object-ness may well have implicitly relied on such extended conceptions of animacy; scholars tacitly, and by shared humanistic standards of reference, assumed their relevance to a theory of human disempowerment or deprivation. Cherry’s study of cognitive development revises the Piagetian concept of animism away from its status as a “naïve theory of biology” held only by children, and instead toward animism as an “intuitive, relatively nonanalytic, phenomenologically situated style of engagement with the natural world” (199) that persists into adulthood, even when contradicting biological theories stand beside that
knowledge. Cherry writes:

...EPA sensitivities not only disclose one's own being, and the being of others, but also draw inanimate entities to the forefront of one's attention when they are also in some sense embodied and involved in purposive activities and hence, in some sense, of like kind.” (my emphasis) (1992)

Crucially, then, Cherry identifies correlative relations between a phenomenon much like identification, and the conferral of animacy. Insofar as this dissertation chapter concerns the objectification of human beings by other human beings, our relevant gradient seems less to involve objective distinctions between animate and inanimate, or life and death, of which Cherry writes, but rather the gradient between identifying and non-identifying.

Hence, what underlying cognitive tendency – embodiment, purposiveness, and activity – may implicitly serve theorists of objectification with a set of interpretive resources and consequent “objective” definitions of objectivity or object-status, may be the very same resource which implicitly fosters efforts to reinforce unjust human hierarchies in societies that ostensibly operate by the equalizing tenets of liberalism, democracy, or socialism.

There is one more important quality to note about the objectification scholarship as represented in the diagram. While it is true that a conceptualized entity’s construal develops towards what might be called “object-ness” by being blended in one way or another with features from the “less-animate” end of an animacy cline, it is also important to note that whose property of “object-ness” and/or objectivity is being discussed varies. In Marxism this conceptualization is that of experts; people are as objects from the point of view of economic structure framework, but not necessarily in the minds of others – though they may well undergo alienation from one another. In feminist theory, this conceptualization of women-as-objects is that of experts; but it is
also imputed to the minds of men. It may alternatively be imputed to the minds of men as well as of women, insofar as persons at large must to some degree participate in the circulation and uptake of all social constructions in a field of normative ways of thinking and acting.

Two Kinds of Cognitive-Linguistic Objectification: Object-ification, Objective-ization

Let us now turn to an attempt to identify “objectification” from a cognitive-linguistic point of view. In psychology, as we have already seen, objectification has primarily to do with objectivity, its diachronic realization being a durative conferral of repeated objective construals. For instance, in the last chapter we reviewed Langacker’s account of the increase in subjectivity of a form’s associated construal, which concomitantly displaces the objectivity of its construal.

Even as a largely psychological phenomenon, objectification appears to have been little examined within cognitive linguistics. There are, nevertheless, two closely related processes that have had some attention within the discipline: personification and subjectification. Each functions as a distinct inverse correlate of objectification. In the coming sections, I derive a theory of cognitive-linguistic objectification from these. I show there are effectively two forms of conceptual objectification – one being a form of blending between the cognitive object and less-personified entities or roles, which I aptly call object-ification; and the other, a kind of psychological effect, dealing with the relationship between the conceptualizing subject and the object; I call this type objective-ization.
Objectification As Metaphor And Space Blending (Object-ification)

Personification, little discussed within cognitive linguistics, nevertheless received some attention in the context of the cognitive linguistics of poetics (Lakoff and Turner 1989). In their account, personification involves the humanizing of a conceptualized entity, one that is apparently non-human to start out with. They describe personification as the use of "metaphors through which we understand other things as people":

The power of poetic composition to create complex new ideas from simpler conventional ideas reveals itself in especially clear form in personification—metaphors through which we understand other things as people. As human beings, we can best understand other things in our own terms. Personification permits us to use our knowledge about ourselves to maximal effect, to use insights about ourselves to help us comprehend such things as forces of nature, common events, abstract concepts, and inanimate objects. (1989: 72)

Though Lakoff and Turner write here about personification's exploitation within poetics, their reasoning strongly resembles a common explanatory resource: *anthropomorphism*, often described as a generalized "tendency" apt to show up on all dimensions of human thought. But how often, and precisely where, is anthropomorphism a tendency? Is humanizing, seeing (some) things in "our" terms, not just as often also a *strategy*—and a culturally specific one, at least as it is represented here? And is not its use as strategy the effect of extending the notion of "we" as against some "other", or "them", as in, for instance, a colonial psychology?

As to the technology of personification, Lakoff and Turner's personification is realized by the felicitious composition of metaphors in a linguistic text; their main vehicle is the metaphor EVENTS ARE ACTIONS. This metaphor provides what they consider the foundational personifying frame: by this event-structure related metaphor
which carries causal structure, a non-person is mapped to an agentive, hence human, role, where agency is seen as a key (perhaps the key) component of the human being.

(1) Marshall Fields is happy to offer you Mixed Nuts in a family size tin!
(2) The rabbit has decided to join us for dinner

In Examples (1) and (2) above, Marshall Fields Department Store and a rabbit both arguably undergo personification. Marshall Fields possesses the affect of “happiness” and the intention of “offering,” but Lakoff and Turner’s account should detect only the offering as a conferral of agency. The rabbit possesses not only the animate capacity of choice, but an added rational capacity of decision, and one that involves the human-specific social ritual of taking a communal meal. And the rabbit certainly possesses a kind of agency, as well. Hence, it is appropriate to ask: precisely what kind of agency do Lakoff and Turner assume is adequately personifying? Does it involve rational decisions, or non-instinctual intentionality? Does it involve the capacity to deliver a linguistic performative?

I would suggest that Marshall Fields and the rabbit are quite differently personified, owing not only to the demands of the discourse (advertising discourse emphasizing a consumer’s direct relation to another human being, giving the impression of “personalized/individualized attention,” the discourse of children’s fiction animating a world that remains, for children, “alive”), but no less to their different “entering capacities” at the moment of the rendering. Let us consider the full range of capacities deployed in personification, such as rational thought, complex emotionality, physical strength, sophisticated cultural ritual, “advanced civilization”, elaborate and multifacted memory. Marshall Fields, as a corporate body, has little animacy in and of itself, but does have the possibility of collective intent and a high degree of human social competency,
whereas the rabbit is fully animate but has less absolute physical strength than a person and less human social competency (much less, it would seem, the desire to perform or mimic humanness).

We might ask some questions about these accounts. First, should there not be partial or graded ways to understand processes of personification? Second, given that the reason offered for such a frequent and widespread personification is anthropomorphism, a tendency to “see things in our own terms” (72), could there be motivations for personification that are not about anthropomorphic "tendencies"? In regard to the first question above, might it be relevant, for instance, to examine animacy hierarchies (of the kind described by John Cherry) whose application has the effect of lending some entities agency without lending them full "humanity"? As one might imagine, this question is highly relevant to the discussion of object-ification, because it leads to the further question: Which entities does a particular group or individual wish to see in human terms; and which not? As suggested above, a survey of Lakoff and Turner’s examples and their accounts suggests that they leave little room for a graded understanding of personification, while examples like the two examined suggest one is necessary. Besides being a concern of proper theoretical refinement, a graded approach to personification becomes even more exigent if we consider that the conditions for agency among humans are in a very real sense unevenly distributed across social strata and social divisions – including among ethnicity and gender. One way to work with variations of gradedness is not to rely on metaphor theory’s asymmetric “transfer” of structure from a metaphorical source domain to a target domain (as exemplified in Lakoff and Turner’s EVENTS ARE ACTIONS metaphor) – a mechanism which can handle partiality only by limiting the

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amount of structure which is transferred – but rather to turn to *mental-spaces blends*. In the case of blends, full agentivity need not be transferred wholesale from source to target, but rather agentivity or animacy may be partially imported from source and from target alike to achieve a *composite* agentivity/animacy.

**Mental-Spaces Blending And Object-ification**

Despite the problematic generalizations Lakoff and Turner use to motivate personification, their description of its technology remains useful to derive a (first) form of object-ification here. As an inverse of Lakoff and Turner’s personification, objectification would involve seeing *persons as objects*, by way of metaphor, such that an inverted relationship of weights holds between source and target domains, or in some sense, source begins to be *confused* with target. Moving past the asymmetricity constraints of metaphor theory, we could alternatively say, in terms of mental-spaces theory, that *blends* between two different domains effect the object-ification.

Working on an analogy to Lakoff and Turner’s account, which relied exclusively on metaphorical projection of structure from source to target and assigned primary (essential) status to the event structure metaphor because it has *basic* conceptual metaphor status, the object-ifying example below works by imposing semantic roles via the grammatical exploitation of a verbal event. The precise mechanism involves blending between the “real-life” scene presented by the verbal event and the normative grammatical scenario given by the verb “to give”. Imagine a marriage ceremony’s most salient moment of the symbolic transfer of property, linguistically punctuated by the utterance “Who gives this woman away?” (Fig. 2). Heteronormative cultural knowledge,
instantiated here in a "marriage" frame, includes the matching of the woman, man, and father with three of the central marriage-act roles.

Fig. 2. Object-ification by exploitation of event structure metaphor: "Who gives this woman away?"

The grammatical order is mapped as follows: The grammatical pattern is SUBJECT [Who]-VERB [gives]-OBJECT [this woman]-VERB PARTICLE [away]. Because verbal language understanding inherently involves blending grammatical directives with the conceptual "content" of referents, one is invited in this case to conceptually blend the properties of a patient role for "give" - possessibility and
exchangeability (see “GIVE” subcategorization at left) - with the person grammatically mapped to that role (this woman). Placed in analogy to the examples of Marshall Fields and the rabbit, which personified those entities by filling the verbal subject slot with their referring expressions, the marriage example might seem to be engaged in a relative de-personifying by filling the verbal object slot with the referring expression for a woman. The word “relative” above is essential here, for many verbs conventionally and non-problematically have humans serving as both grammatical subject and grammatical object.

Finally, what kind of change is achieved in this act – and so what kind of potency may we lend it in regard to its effect on women? There are two aspects to consider: first, the context in which this utterance occurs; and the status of the utterance as ritual. Clearly, many aspects of the tradition of Western Christianity which are brought to bear on the ritual of marriage involve the objectification of women; so certainly the function of this verbal act is as one of a concert of such acts, and the change in “objectness” should only be understood as either incremental or iterative, rather than deterministic or radically transformative. This iterativity/incrementality may also be understood to be cognitive, in the sense that learning occurs over multiple iterations. Yet at the same time, the performative qualities of ritual make the symbolic act of transfer of property, which is signalled by this question, preeminent among acts that structurally contribute to the realization of marriage. Here, too, ritual’s potency is reflected in cognition: the relative salience of an event contributes to its neurological strength, and hence its learnability.

But what of the fact that in the blend we might observe that the groom is no more “humanized” than the woman? Indeed, in the utterance the groom is not explicitly named,
yet he likely implicitly serves as the recipient/goal for the woman. As the “recipient” he will be an animate possessor, but as a “goal” he may as well be inanimate. Hence the groom’s correlate in the blend, all else equal, has no good “reason” in that local blend to be any more human or animate than the woman who is being given to him. The difference between bride and groom here precisely relates to the conditions of iterability and context. The relative non-salience of the groom makes the learnability of his de-humanization a less likely consequence. As well, elsewhere in the marriage ritual he is conferred (at least in more conservative traditions) a wealth of agency and, in some versions, animate-possessor status.

Though the above example can be fairly dealt with by an inversion of Lakoff and Turner’s account of personification, there are very similar phenomena that their strict account would miss. The apt grammatical imposition of a verbal template is but one means to conceptually confer agency; and furthermore, that agency is not limited to activity. Verbs involving symmetric agentivity themselves are not immune from participating in objectifying processes: a later example in this chapter uses the verb “talking to”, whose conceptualization involves a highly symmetric activity between its agents. In that case, it is what happens around the verb that has objectifying effects. Personification then engages any number of qualities of “human-ness”, whether subjective judgment or a strictly imagistic invocation of a human form. Lakoff and Turner do not miss that ultimately, personification is the effect of an appropriate composition of effects, but they still seem to consider the application of EVENTS AS ACTIONS to be essential and/or central to that composition.
As for other forms of personification, let us, for contrast, consider a quality not organized by activity: images. Imagistic conceptual conferral is more directly enacted by way of nouns, rather than verbs: “substantive” qualities, including visual information, are most directly supplied by way of noun forms. To give a simplistic but illustrative example, the figure below is a mental-spaces representation for one possible conceptual blend prompted by “I knew a guy who resembled an apple,” where, prompted by the word “resembled”, the image of an apple conceptually modifies the schematic “guy” that one has begun to conceptualize.

Fig. 3. Direct image blend.

“I knew a guy who resembled an apple...”

Any humorous reactions to this expression might well be understood to stem on the casual de-humanization of a person (even if merely on a visual level). This “de-
humanization" may be performed conceptually, not necessarily by replacing outright the image of the man with an apple, but merely modifying his image. The result is a "hybrid image" whose specific terms will vary from one conceptualizer to another.5

It should also be noted that the conditions licensing a humored response are particular. There must exist some investment (even if not on the part of the conceptualizer; one might simply know that the person represented as "appley" would not wish for that representation) in seeing that person as fully human; and a recognition that the representation is less than desired. Such conditions may fail in the case that the one represented is one with whom the conceptualizer does not readily identify, and/or to whom the conceptualizer does not readily confer subjectivity: the ironic juxtaposition may fail. On the other hand, as will be seen in a later example, the juxtaposition may not involve a blend, but rather two images side by side: between a conventional image of a person which is already de-humanized (consider the image of the “black body” in the United States which still bears the imprint of the early history of slavery and its consequences over time), and a contrasting image of fully human status.

Psychological Forms Of Cognitive Objectification (Objective-ization)

Let us turn to a second area of study in linguistics that involves a conceptual movement toward subjectivity: subjectification scholarship. In grammaticalization theory, Traugott (1989, 1995), Traugott and Koenig (1991), Sweetser (1990), and others variously define subjectification as the diachronic shift or development of a form-meaning association away from propositional meaning and toward a greater connection to the conceptualizing

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5 The juxtaposition of two "noumy" concepts is dealt with more extensively in a discussion of word compounding, including nominal compounding and modified nominals, in Fauconnier and Turner (1996).
subject. For example, the English modal "may" has followed one path of development away from its earlier deontic sense, that is indicating some kind of externally-granted permission, toward an epistemic sense, which indicates something about the belief state of the speaker. "He may be at work" is an example of this epistemic sense. The older, deontic sense is represented in "You may skip school if you are really sick." Such a movement from, in Traugott’s terms, proposition (deontic) to expressive (epistemic) meaning, functions as a kind of grounding—a shift of meaning in relevance toward the present utterance context.

(3) You may skip school if you are really sick.

(4) He may be at work.

At this point it should be made clear that subjectification is not simply a diachronic version of personification. In subjectification any given meaning does not simply become more human-like, endowed with the properties of a human being; it may rather serve as an implicit reference to the state of mind of the person speaking. Also, whereas subjectification may describe the developmental trajectory of any grammatical element’s meaning, personification refers mainly to nominal entities. There is no sense in which the meaning of any of the elements in "He may skip school" is more human-like than those in "You may skip school." The first "may" simply carries more subjective meaning—in the sense that it indicates more about the subjectivity of the speaker—than the second.

We might therefore consider subjectification to mean something like increased grounding via "pointing to subjectivity," reminding us of the subjective soul "behind" an expression and hence emphasizing the referent part of a representational relationship.
(between "words" and "self" – this is the force of expressive language), while personification amounts to "overlaying a less human conceptual entity with the representation of a human," with manipulation occurring within the space of representation – in some ways pointing only to the representational purchase of the figurative innovation itself. Neither necessarily depends on an ironic comparison for its operation.

As a point of departure for subjectification theory I return to Langacker's (1990, 1991) account, which was introduced in Chapter 1. Recall that his account proposes the cognitive toolery involved in the subjectification process; as such, it lends itself most easily to both diachronic and synchronic phenomena, both of which I address in the present chapter. For Langacker, subjectification turns crucially on the asymmetric relation between objective and subjective construal, terms which he takes from perception theory and maps directly to conceptual phenomena. Subjectification then is a process by which constructions shift over time from an "objective" to a "subjective" axis, schematized as if on a two-dimensional grid; for a given meaning these axes are asymmetric to each other, that is the given meaning is singly distributed across them.

Langacker claims that "[t]he contrast between subjective and objective construal... reflects the inherent asymmetry between a perceiving individual and the entity perceived. The asymmetry is maximized when the perceiver is so absorbed in the perceptual experience that he loses all awareness of self, and when the object perceived is well-delimited, wholly distinct from the perceiver, and located in a region of high perceptual acuity" (Langacker 1991: 316, my emphasis). Recall that Chapter 1 examined examples of self-alienation in these terms. For Langacker, then, objectivity varies only by
the degree that the perceiver or the instruments of perception are off stage. In the style of Langacker (see esp. 1991:317), an example of a construal that represents a departure from idealized, full objectivity is shown in Figure 4.

Fig. 4. Construal representing a loss of full objectivity. Partial source: Langacker 1991: 317.

Imagine the viewing subject, S, approaching, from a place clearly offstage and distinct from its perceptual field (maximal objectivity), an alternative situation where it is highly self-concerned (less objectivity). In this case it not only enters an onstage region, but may indeed become the very object of perception. The example, while illustrative, is rather confusing, for Langacker’s explanation for this condition is that “people are sometimes concerned with themselves and the relationships they bear to other entities.” (317) Thus, on the basis of a clearly perceptual example, the motivations for shifts in what would be called “perception” seem purely conceptual. Emphasizing the asymmetry of subjectivity and objectivity, Langacker writes “[e]ach step along this path toward focused

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self-examination increases the objectivity of V’s construal and diminishes that of P.” He notes that “at the extreme, V can itself become the focus of viewing attention (V=P).” (1991: 316-7).

My critique of this account is twofold. First, I find the perceptual/conceptual analogy problematic, and particularly where it concerns social thought. Traugott (1995) suggests that Langacker’s analysis in fact focuses on a narrowed aspect of subjectivity. While Traugott augments the subjectivity of his account in another direction, it seems to me that the question of perceptual/conceptual subjectivity cannot, for example, be divorced from considerations of perspective (and vantage point theory). Langacker concedes that “the notion of subjectivity/objectivity is applicable well beyond the perceptual sphere, narrowly interpreted. For one thing, even in the absence of actual perception I can easily imagine how an object appears when perceived with varying degrees of subjectivity” (1991: 317). But while Langacker allows for possibilities beyond the “perceptual sphere,” he considers subjectivity as a singularly quantifiable measure that can vary “by degrees.” The subjectivity thus excised from the equation is precisely the subjectivity that attains in much social-critical discourse. Over and above metaphorical thought, cognitive subjectivity actively, and consistently, blends the “dry” workings of physically grounded conceptual metaphor, with all forms of social thought, including cognitive models of culture. This means – and this is no minor point – that “raced” thinking, for one, is by no means marked, or exceptional; the seemingly primary status we give to a “former” physicality as it appears to arise in social thought is easily
countered by the fact that we grow and live as social beings in the first place.\(^6\) Furthermore, thoughts about physical phenomena about which we have plenty of experience – consider the famous example that lay expectations are that a twirled ball, once released, follows a curved rather than straight trajectory – are not exempted from the possibility of being fundamentally shaped by socially distributed thought, rather than exact models of physics derived by experience.

Secondly, when Langacker contends that there is an "inherent asymmetry between a perceiving individual and the entity perceived," he neglects to make certain important ontological and epistemological distinctions about the concept of subjectivity. With regard to a "more objective" expression, his contention that there is "less of the conceptualizing subject" can be confusing. What this in fact means is that if the construal of an object is maximally subjective, the conceptualizing subject's *representation* is the thing that "is" relatively more on-stage, not the conceptualizing subject itself; if the construal of an object is maximally objective, the *object's* representation is then the thing that is relatively more on-stage. The conceptualizer's own subjectivity is no less, even if a representation of that subjectivity now exists on-stage in the conceptualization. It might rather be that there exists an added dimension of identitarian *binding* between that representation and that aspect of subjectivity represented by it, under reflection. That is, with increased consciousness of the onstage representation and its relation to the conceptualizer's subjectivity, the "responsibility" of an aspect of subjectivity may be extended. Recall that I made some gesture toward this figuration in my articulation of self-consciousness in Chapter 1. This dimension of consciousness, I think, is an important

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\(^6\) Judith Butler (1993a) questions the given (gendered) "nature" of bodies that may "be" in and of themselves, prior to a social-cultural reading.
element to consider if we wish to attend to the relation between action and conceptualization (which subsumes the relation between speech and conceptualization).

The second objectification, objective-ization, that would be derived from Langacker's subjectification should then involve *divesting* a form of its alignment along a subjective axis, and mapping or remapping it increasingly to an objective axis. Such patterns of development are certainly present, perhaps even to the same degree that these anthropomorphisms or tendencies do their work (a comparison that cannot be reasonably assessed without research). These *objectifying* patterns are ones in which *pragmatic classes of forms* – indicating persons or groups – evoke less human entities than the humanist ideals that are still normatively maintained. That is, there is prevalent social or structural motivation for certain forms to further objectify, whether in their encoded perspective or in their very form – that is, de-subjectify – over time. Certain classes of things (whether inanimate objects or animate beings) are, given the investments of a certain discourse which is established by a certain locus of human experience, palatable, ready to be anthropomorphized, welcomed (with perhaps some controls) into the human or human-like fold. But the very same discourse invests in the exclusion of other classes of things from that fold. "Humanity" thus remains a highly contested status only granted in fullness to selected members of this species, and certain of these members have highly (if not perfect) determinative powers over its local conditions, and hence over its membership.

Following is a brief survey of a number of discourses, closely linked with what I call "pragmatic classes", which are actively and quite diversely invested in the objectification of a particular category of humans. First, consider a rather widespread
convention: in scientific discourse, the pragmatic/rhetorical demand for passive rather than active forms. Whereas the passive constructions: [finite-auxiliary-verb...perfective-verb-complement] seem to have subjectified to some degree (in that they conventionally imply that the author or authors of the text in fact were responsible for the action; I would contend that this attribution occurs more directly semantically than through any process of implicature), the active constructions: [finite-present-perfect] rather seem to have objectified.

Examples of sexist de-humanization abound. Consider the obvious example of “blonde.” The English blond(e) was once more common in adjectival use, pre-disposing it to be a less exhaustive depicter of the person whom it described; four centuries intervened between its earliest documented use as English adjective (blond, blonde, 1481) and its earliest documented use as a noun (blonde in 1822), which is especially used in reference to women. Today, the predominant nominal representation invokes a conventionalized and denigrating stereotype: a woman of exaggerated sexual inclinations, and/or of particularly low intelligence; closely associated terms are “ditz” and “airhead”. A subclass of language forms pertaining to women have come to reflect the objectification of their surrounding discourse, as such pragmatic meaning “bleeds” by repeated inference into enduring form associations. Thus, what might otherwise be seen as “mere expression” about an entity in such cases can easily inherit a surrounding context’s typical investments in judgment of that entity, whether a specific value judgment or a cultural frame that lends object characterizations to that entity. All that is required for such a semantic shift to take place is a condition of polysemy which

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7 Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed.
redistributes according to the pragmatic contexts (social frames) in which it appears, normally owing to changes in the rhetorical conditions of the contexts themselves. This pragmatic-inferencing process has been explored extensively in the subjectification literature, reviewed earlier.

One strategic use of objective-ization, the inverse of grounding to a subject, is the vying for, or laying claim to, a universal or maximally authoritative perspective, a “God's eye” view – a view which indeed, as we might expect, grammatically most resembles the relative objectivity of propositional meaning. A related area concerning de-subjectification, one which may well cooccur with the above, is the blurring of responsibility, in the case either of evading accountability or a claim to authority. Specifically, the desire to conceal one’s role as a responsible agent motivates the occlusion of subjectivity in a reported event. A relation that might have been rendered in "I dropped the bookstand and it broke," is rather rendered in passive form as "The bookstand got dropped and broke," or simply “The bookstand broke.” In the second and third utterances, the speaking subject is no longer offered as a potentially profiled entity, having "robbed" itself out of the linguistic expression. In cases that saliently lack an inferrable agent, we might have to search for one to fill in, or in less salient cases, we simply do not think to supply an agent.

Some literary conventions support the idea of an all-knowing, omniscient author. With the onset of modernist literature from the early twentieth-century in the Western literary history, realist conventions gave way to a number of “writerly” interruptions, among them new strategies that impede straightforward attributions of perspective or voice. If, then, a reader fails to attribute an utterance to any existing individual narrator,
or if one experiences a rapid shifting among distinct individual perspectives, one may be led to default to an omniscient narrator. This effect occurs, for example, in the fiction of Virginia Woolf. To draw a provocative analogy to a linguistic study of semantic forms, Arie Verhagen’s (1995) *diachronic* analysis claims that subjectification works by a process of *de*-objectifying “semantic bleaching”, followed by *recourse* to subjectivizing – a negative account – rather than any directed re-subjectification. Conversely, then, we could suggest that if subjectivities themselves are “bleached,” the inferral of objectivity may be a compensatory reaction.

Another case of de-subjectification involves discourse-wide applications of a “robbery” of subjectivity from collective utterances, this time with no default to an omniscient narrator, an attribution more difficult to effect in speech. Examining a number of elicited Holocaust testimonies, A. Huber discovered a consistent elision of subject forms such as “I”, resulting in utterances such as: “saw her... watched her go in... couldn’t do anything... never saw her again”. Huber suggested that this was, in fact, the best linguistic solution for the depiction of scenes in which the person felt they had little or no agency. Again, to identify the pragmatic class to which these forms belong is not to identify them so simply as motion verbs, as in the case of subjectification, but rather to indicate a certain discourse to which subjectless sentences belong – in this case, a discourse of “agentless witnessing”.

In general it seems that lexical and constructional members of the discourse registers belonging to and in some emergent relationship to Western philosophy, especially in written forms but not necessarily limited to them, will be affected by the

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8 A. Huber, personal communication, Spring 2000.
discourse's investment in objectivity wherever it applies its characterizing, delimiting, and determining finger. Hence such forms will "objectify" in comparison to any pertaining forms in the vernacular.

**Object-ification With Objective-Ization**

The question is then, what to make of the possible cooccurrence of *object-ification* and *objective-ization*? They are certainly "friends": the cultural criticism reveals some of the ways these are bound together in a number of dominant epistemologies, essentially to the degree that subjecthood is maximally conferred to human beings. Indeed, both the *psychological* theory of objectification, ostensibly based in a scholarship of (physical) perception, and the more critical *social* theory of objectification, owe their formation to a set of traditions of Western Enlightenment philosophy – one which has taken vividly "humanist" directions.

But, for lack of a better way to put it, *object-ification* and *objective-ization* are not always gentle friends. The critical literature has not merely identified and delineated processes of objectification. What it has further explored is the *relationship* between claims to authoritative knowledge and the denial of individuals' subjectivity, which facilitates abuses of power over them; that the less symmetric, or the more alienated, relations one may have with those who are to be exploited, the more effective powered moves may be. A similar logic also underlies critical theories about science itself; that is, science is often taken to play a critical role in the objectification of our bodies, and hence our subjection to "discourses" of corporeal control. As another example, Nazi German pseudo-scientism about what *defined* "the Jew" worked in concert with gradual dehumanization processes from "above" (in the sense that Jews were quantified in
masses) and "below" (in the sense that Jews were deprived of the signs of their equality and agency in society). It was here where the forces of modernity and of science joined together to make a particularly effective machinery of power.\(^9\) Why might certain powered acts be facilitated by a change in knowledge, or a change in representation? Returning to examine some more basic mechanisms of cognition may provide a clue. In order to provide the link between cognition and these cultural-criticism claims, however, requires a close critique of one of the accounts presented in Langacker's Cognitive Grammar.

Langacker's account of subjectification, as we have seen, rests on a privative relationship between objectivity and subjectivity. His only example exhibiting that asymmetricity, recounted in Chapter 1, literally constrains conception to the limitations of perception. In fixing an increase of subjectivity exclusively to a degree of conceptual self-reflection, he turns – for lack of a better source, and in tune with cognitive-linguistic tradition – to perception to model that self-reflection. In the example, a relatively "objective" arrangement is created when one takes glasses off – glasses which have formerly assisted in the subject's visual perception - and holds them out in front. By moving them out and opening them to visual perception, one has in effect created a new object. Clearly, in this case, the agent now cannot see as well as before, since the agent literally depends on the glasses in order to see clearly: an increase in objectivity seems to have corresponded to a decrease in subjectivity. But note that the movement of the glasses is a physical-perceptual act which is much more likely than any imaginative act to

\(^9\) Mario Biagioli (1992) argued that western science was responsible for the production of racial hygiene, and set the stage for the Final Solution.
have consequences that deprive the agent of (perceptual) subjectivity. The analogy is not secure.

An inhibition of conceptual imagination might see its analog in something like the increase of psychological stress or of perceptual stimuli, or a cognitive injury, rather than the common act of self-reflection (even though this self-reflection certainly does have its consequences in conceptualization and action, it is more complex represented by Langacker). Therefore I would argue that this kind of subject/object asymmetry is not necessarily the case in a conceptual act of self-reflection. It is in Langacker’s prima facie invocation of the more limited domain of perception to explain conception, as well as his conflation of the onstage existence of a representation of an objectified aspect of subjectivity with the reduction of subjective capacity itself, that I believe he quite dramatically limits what can count as conception.

**From Self-Reflection To Perspective**

In an effort then to move beyond Langacker’s account of subjectivity, how can we consider further ways that the objectivity of a construal may be increased, such that the degree of self-reflection alone must not be the controlling factor? Returning to the points made by the cultural criticism, in cognitive terms it is clear that a globalized, or bird’s eye, internal point of view can certainly conceptually reduce a conceptual object; and distance from the conceptualizing ego may follow as well. Note however, that this seems less related to the speaker’s degree of self-reflection, or to perception, for that matter, than to perspective. Perspective, because it subsumes perceptual phenomena, may well be what Langacker intended, but it is significantly richer in possibility, as point of view is
neither limited to visuality, nor constrained to the domain of perception. Perspective does, then, offer a theoretically more permissive explanation for why object-ification and objective-ization can be related: Imaginary perspectives have consequences for conceptualization.

In a discussion about memory among U.C. Berkeley undergraduate students attending a course on identity, ethnicity, and gender, connected with an exercise in which they were to write down their very first memory in the 1st person and then to write it down in the 3rd person, one student remarked that when she changed to 3rd person, she could recall much less detail -- as if the specifics of her first-person memory were somehow inaccessible when she moved to an ‘outer’ perspective.\(^{10}\) Supporting such an account, Michael Bamberg (1997) discusses the presence of a distinct moral order in first-person accounts which is ‘washed out’ in those given from an outside perspective of a ‘generalized other.’ In a sense both of these accounts go almost directly against the received wisdom about the greater, if not omniscient, knowledge that an outer, or birds-eye, perspective can bring. Indeed, critical thought often associates mastery of knowledge with a subjectivity “outside” the individual subject. But there is another sense in which the received wisdom is maintained, and matches cognitivist understanding: To move “up and away,” as in a birds’ eye view, details eventually move farther from plausible perceptual grasp, and hence are less able to be “seen” in detail.

Conversely, “removing” subjectivity from the linguistic or rhetorical evidence, given our conventions, often has the effect of an absolute or global perspective -- which is a transformation rather than a removal of subjective capacity -- such that objects

\(^{10}\) The course was “Identities across Difference”, taught by Trinh T. Minh-ha. Her GSI, Shawn Doubiago, guest-taught and introduced this exercise on 10-8-1999.
“become”, in a sense, how we see them, not what we see. The slippage between epistemology and ontology, in other words, rather than being the source of a theoretically limiting mistake on the part of Langacker, can be exploited productively. Another way of putting this is: The other face of full objectivity is conceptualization of objects. This leads to the question: What might we “do” (or be asked to do) in our conceptual imagination in order to render things more objectifiable, or more objective? How reasonable is the prospect that we could imagine humans as objects, under conditions where such might not be likely, considering the “humanizing” affordances of a given context? What forces of conceptualization, of linguistic rendering, are enough to overpower a discursive “subjectivity-requirement” (at the level of conceptualization)? As a first response I suggest the following: When a distancing perspective has the effect of greater bounding, clarity, disaffiliation from the conceptualizer, or inferrable control by the conceptualizer, then here, too, a kind of objectification may be attributed.

Put technically, this definition would not seem to allow for much flexibility. Yet, once our focus is conception rather than perception, it is not only our psychological perceptual framework and extensions thereof, but rather all the combined social determinants of our categorial worlds, which have a say in how things are rendered and “what” they count as – including our affective psychology. Thus, just as ontology crosses epistemology in the adage “seeing is believing”, it may also be true that distance can certainly “become” lack of intimacy or the disavowal of a relationship with an object; and greater relative height of perspective may “become” a relationship of asymmetricity, possession, or control. Ultimately, these suggestions go far beyond both Langacker’s perceptualist view of subjectification and Lakoff and Turner’s claims on personification,
where the only implication regarding the conceptualizer’s relationship with the personified object is simply that something is being brought by the conferral of agency into the conceptualizer’s own “world of humanity” rather than kept external to it.

Following are discussions of a succession of examples that are characterized by a particular relationship between the two kinds of objectification. The first examples are particularly self-announcing, the most caricatural, and hence perhaps the most open to social critique. Here, object-ification occurs with objective-ization. The epithets applied to some stigmatized boys as terms of address, “mouse”, “string bean”, “little j”, “leprechaun”, “shortie”, “half pint”, and “spaghetti,” are used in acts of authoritative naming, which, we could argue, attempt to impose a conceptual representation that is a blend between an animal, piece of vegetable, or pasta, with the human object. Rather than a transfer of inferential structure without access to metaphorical sources, as conceptual metaphor theory would assert, it is blending that seems a more accurate representation of objectifying epithets. Elements from both domains need to be present for the epithet to do its “work”: very simply, the addressee of “Hey, mouse” would not have the capacity – much less interest – to respond to the address if it were indeed constrained to having the subjectivity of a mouse. Recalling the previous discussion of the consequences of perspective, note the frequent scale decreases in this example. The conceptual “mouse” in particular possesses “less humanness”, as well as an inconsequential potency and size.

[figure on following page]
Fig. 5. Object-ification with objective-ization:

*Of all body-image issues, size is the most important, because it leads to a kind of involuntary self-definition. The kids were called Mouse. String Bean. Little J. Leprechaun. Shortie. Half Pint. Spaghetti.* (Hall 1999)

**Objective-ization:** Dehumanizing metaphorical mapping (blend)

**Object-ification:** “Hey, mouse!”

The cultural criticism does register certain contradictions to the “normal” correspondences between object-ification and objective-ization, however. For instance, there are a few instances in recent theoretical work in which it is noted that perfect objectifications are resisted in one way or another; indeed, as in the next example, they may create their own subjectifications just as they strain to reach an objectifying ideal. In Homi Bhabha's (1994) work of postcolonial theory, *The Location of Culture*, he aims to show that the borders between "colonizer" (subject) and "colonized" (object) must be less rigid than one might imagine or wish (from the point of view of the colonizer). He argues that in the very move of asserting one's own absolute subjectivity over the colonized's

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absolute objectness, that idealized subject must in some sense fail; for the subject cannot help but invest the object with subjectivity in order to justify its means of domination.¹¹

To assert a polarity is also potentially to assert a kind of symmetry – and also to risk invoking a common grounds for comparison. In linguistic terms, objective-ization, if idealized in a self-evident way (in the sense that I announce, perhaps unwittingly, that I am so absolutely the subject of this person the object), might well invoke an oppositional typology, as long as a pragmatic frame of denial, or even phobia, may be inferred. “Intensifiers” – or, more generally, high-degree or idealized forms, when used in a certain context, can indeed signal speakers’ subjectivity rather than objectivity. For at least some conceptualizers, particularly those sensitive to the pragmatic dimensions of the talk exchange, this oppositional typology may be aroused strongly enough to invoke the subject to approach the profile.

To deny an object’s membership in a category is thus already to categorize oneself with the object, for it is already to claim enough typological similarity that a contrast can be made. Either of these cases effectively entails the addition of a relationship between the subject and the object. Thus, the subject approaches the onstage area at the same time that it may also be rendered in the ultimate power or control position. Object-ification and subjectification then are coupled in an asymmetric relationship. Interestingly, I earlier noted that in the criticism about human objectification there is a frequent invocation of the “animal” as a constrastive basis for comparison. In protestations about one’s objectification, declarations that one has been treated “like an

¹¹ In this move he seems to be applying a Hegelian master-slave analysis to the postcolonial situation. See also Albert Memmi’s (1991) argument about the reflexive psychology of the colonizer.
"animal" is often meant rhetorically to arouse indignation; it is an extreme comparison. But it is telling that the animal is nearest the human in Cherry’s animacy hierarchy. It is so very far away, because it is after all the “proper placeholder” of the subservient, instrumental, degraded being; yet it is also close enough to possess some recognizable subjectivity. It is close enough that we may attribute pain to it as we do ourselves.

Denial and phobia, as explored above, are certainly not the only possibilities means of breaking the object-ification/objective-ization bind. There may be general situations in which an object is anti-personified, but the collective scene is subjectified, for example “Those beasts will never make it in society”, in which there exists no explicit denial and yet a scale of social distance is implied, and the speaker’s viewpoint is projected to one end of it. “I’m going to wrap you up, sweetie, and take you out on the town” and “I’ll pick you up with my right hand, you little bugger, and swing you around my head” are more explicit examples.

Fig. 6. Object-ification and de-objective-ization:
Those beasts will never make it in society.
I’m going to wrap you up, sweetie, and take you out on the town.
I’ll pick you up with my right hand, you little bugger, and swing you around my head.
I mentioned above another set of terms which merit further attention here: the place of typology and categorization in conceptualization (they are also present in perception, but I do not emphasize that here). As scholars since Sapir and Whorf have intimated, culture and grammar/language are interdeterminative, meaning that to some degree, cultural models are reflected in the grammar. Sapir’s contention was that thought correlated to grammatical structure at least inasmuch as more attention would be required to be directed towards the contrasts that were necessary for the correct expression of a concept. Part of what is required to do this properly is the proper categorization of entities -- whether an event occurred in the past, present, or future, as in English; whether it has realis or irrealis status; who is responsible for the direct experience of the event (evidentials), and so on.

In a more recent and more cognitively sensitive articulation of the same basic idea, Dan Slobin has presented “thinking for speaking” (1996), which consists of a hypothesis about what kinds of conceptual acts need to be learned efficiently to support the proper habit of communicatively appropriate speech. With these theories in the background, we can see how third-person singular paradigms like “he, she, and it”, and gender and sexuality typologies (woman-man, homosexual-heterosexual), as well as other categorial typologies separating “man from beast”, “mind from body” and “form from matter” and “black and white”, “inside-outside”, which are not directly reflected in grammar but rather deeply in Western philosophies, in lexical schemes and social-contextual frames, are implicated in the interpretation of linguistically objectifying expressions.

Examples from the present time proliferate, and they often work to divide classes...
of human beings into asymmetric power or status relationships; this is particularly true in the U.S. of gender, class and race relations. Consider "It put on some really ugly clothes today," which exploits a animacy-nonhuman contrast implicit in the choice of the 3rd person pronoun in the person paradigm (rather than 1st or 2nd person). More subtly (as well as less directly linguistically), consider "You know, if you don't improve that acne, people aren't going to like you." The slightly objectifying aspect of this example matches that cited in a classic feminist complaint: a focus on appearance, or more generally, on surface rather than "inner" or "abstract" qualities, which is, in a dualistic soul/material or body/mind typology, quite the opposite to subjectivity. Note that it implicitly relies on an image-schematic conception of the human being as a container with inner ("I can't read your mind") and outer qualities, as well as surfaces or surface behaviors: "Hal may seem great on the surface, but he's really an asshole."

The foregoing examples seem to be largely self-evident, rather dramatic examples; but since the cultural criticism makes it clear that part of the "danger" of objectification is that it happens at levels below the awareness of the ordinary subject, it is important to consider linguistic examples where context or differential subjectivities, rather than our relying on predictability based on forms alone, may play a significant part in interpretation. In linguistic terms, this means that we have extended our lens of observation beyond cognition and cultural models to include pragmatics. Considering now both possibilities of linguistic-conceptual objectification, object-ification and objective-ization, we can examine further potentially objectifying examples. "You want to speak to her, too? OK, let me give her to you" would certainly appear to manifest some kind of objectifying language, in which, in this case, an entire woman seems to be
“given” by one person to another person, showing at least some of the features of an object, in this case possessibility. The woman linguistically appears to fill the patient role of “give”; and so, strictly analytically, this example strongly resembles the marriage example of Figure 2. And yet this time a telephone conversation serves as the conversational frame and context. Indeed, it is not the woman but the telephone – functioning here as a metonymic reference to her – which is being transferred. An analogous pragmatic metonymy can be seen in “Pick up (that) Shakespeare from the shelf, will ya?” (examples discussed in Fauconnier 1994).

Thus, if we accept that in language understanding, a range of interpretive possibilities are present but that, as discourse proceeds, some are eventually resolved by the disambiguating pragmatics of the context, we can claim here that a rendering of “her” as an object is backgrounded to the other interpretive possibility of metonymic reference.12 Hence, there are longstanding (at least since near the beginning of the telephone era) frame-based or pragmatic reasons for the metonymy to prevail; interpreters are simply not, for instance, in a marriage context; and in the phone frame, the phone is the most direct and immediate connection to the woman in the task at hand. This is, in the end, what makes this in-context utterance for normative interpreters not likely to be objectifying. For comparison, in the wrapping-up and picking-up examples from above, no alternative metonymic construals seem to be available, leading to a likely judgment of relative objectification. Once again, this is not for reasons of strict form:

12 Rachel Giora and Ofer Fein (1999) claim that it is cognitively prominent salient meanings whose activations precede less salient ones in language processing. Literal meanings are always activated; however, it is only in ironic contexts that ironic meanings are also activated. This result may suggest implications for the present analysis, though it will only be explored in future work.
“gives this bride away” and “give her to you” share largely the same syntactic structures and form relationships. The reference relationships, themselves determined by contextual considerations, make the difference.

Such “odd” interpretations, even flamboyantly perverse ones, can never guarantee that they will leave extant meaning untouched: they always have some power to change belief, sometimes subversively or covertly. Indeed, it must be reiterated that, quite unlike what might be imagined from a file-system retrieval metaphor for word meaning, no meaning is stable; though some are relatively entrenched, such as metaphorical structures that are repeatedly reinforced by physical experience, others need constant reinforcement or will simply “atrophy.” One example is particularly illuminating with regard to such distinctions: a recorded utterance by a teenage boy who is being interviewed by a journalist about his experience as a teenage male:

“I treated girls pretty bad. I was like, Oh, there’s a pair of boobs, I’ll go stand next to it. I think I’ll talk to it.” (LeBlanc 1999)

Though several space-building sequences are possible, one such sequence goes as follows, and is depicted in Figure 7 below. In the conceptualizer’s ground, the already-existing “R” space, the conceptualizer places the participants “the boy” and “girls.” Yaguello and Fleischman’s work on “like” have shown that it functions, in the expression “I was like,” as a subjectivizer (or a perspectivizer; see Sanders and Spooren 1997) and a space-builder of an instantial or approximating second space. Let us call the second the imaginary, or “I” space, which may be compared to Sangeeta’s “thinks” space (where it is raining in Bombay) in the first chapter. In this space, the conceptualizer places a “pair of boobs”, and the boy. As the discourse continues to build this imaginary space, the boy considers standing next to the “boobs”, and then talking to them. We thus have two
cognitive tasks before us: the realization that the “boobs” may have some relationship to girls, and the partial personification of the “boobs”.

The problematic – because it does not uniformly “work” as an object of intersubjective interaction - yet nevertheless persistent – use of the pronoun “it,” seems to make more vivid the referatum rather than any referent. This is because there is no antecedent which is transparently available to “fill” the pronoun “it.” The last mentioned noun form is a pair of boobs, which are typically referred by “them,” rather than “it”; the penultimate noun form is “girls,” a plural form which also would be referred by “them.” This unavailability of a ready referent lends compensatory salience to the referatum and encourages the exploitation of the mechanism of reference in order to resolve the confusion. One possible resolving reading is, of course, that the “it” refers to a part girl-part boob hybrid, if not directly imagistically, then perhaps ontologically.

Fig. 7. Mental-space configurations corresponding to “I treated my girlfriends really bad. I admit it. I was like, Oh, there’s a pair of boobs, I’ll go stand next to it. I think I’ll talk to it.” BEFORE resolution of contradiction.

In this preliminary phase of space-building, a seemingly significant “bump” in the interpretation centers around the use of the pronoun “it.” Several specific contradictions may be read into this utterance, among them that the boy considers standing next to “it”,

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treated the "boobs" therefore as a landmark; but a particularly significant contradiction is that the boy considers talking to it, conversing with it. The imputed frame of conversation certainly involves, indeed supplies, some degree of interchange; yet breasts clearly cannot converse. To resolve this contradiction, a conceptualizer may well build a blend similar to that represented in Figure 5. Note that the same two spaces from Figure 4 are represented in the middle of this new figure.

Thus, on the basis of a generic space which includes a basic event structure as well as agent and other roles, a conceptualizer constructs a blended space with the same boy, and a blended entity that is, effectively, partly "girl", partly "boob". This blended entity has...
some properties of the agency of a girl, since the breasts’ “inability” to respond stands in
salient contradiction to other aspects of agency; but crucially, too, this blended entity also
inherits a relatively lack of agency from the “boobs’” contribution. It could indeed be
argued that one inference emerging from the generic, event-structure space – which is
confirmed within the imaginative space – is that the landmark or patient is less animate,
potentially inherently so, than the trajector or agent.

Objectification And Structures Of Belief

As to the question of objectification, what, then, is the role of a “part-girl-part-boob”
blended entity in this presumed linguistic objectification of girls? Among social
criticism’s investments is an effort to prevent structures of belief from migrating in
(conceptually) “dangerous” directions. In terms of Mental Spaces, the structures of belief
most exigently inviting protection are whatever cultural frames primarily, fundamentally,
or most frequently constitute a “R” space in contexts of social being. That is, the R space,
a space of “highest belief’ which is most associated with a positive epistemic value for
the conceptualizer, is precisely that which may carry the most future effects.¹³

In the example, then, objectification may happen under the following conditions:
If the conceptualizer assimilates the blend, that is, if it fails to attend to the “bad” value
cue which would enable it to perspectivize the blend to the boy, then a backward
migration of the part-girl blend to the category “girls” in the conceptualizer’s R space –
hence the “girls” category’s loss of animacy or agency – is then possible. This moment
might well qualify as what we might call an infinitesimal learning act about “girls”: in

¹³ Seana Coulson (in press) has written that “[c]onceptual integration processes
allow us to construct bizarre, disposable concepts which in turn promote particular
construals of their input domains”.

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terms of a neural theory of learning, it constitutes a tiny entrenchment in the neural structures associated with the conceptual schema for "girls". This constitutes a change in knowledge structures representing cultural belief. Failing intervention, these structures can house conceptualizations that have damaging consequences.

Note that even if we assume that the "it" refers to the pair of breasts by a pragmatic and part/whole metonymy, the pragmatic metonymy which linguistically substitutes the telephone for the woman would seem at first glance to be "harmless", while the metonymy of the boobs for girl would seem, again, "dangerous". Indeed, it seems not an accident that "boobs" have been chosen here. The boy seems to be highlighting their high degree of association with the sexual function of women in order to show the instrumental value of the breasts, their primary function for an intersubjective activity that mostly has to do with sex. In other words, while the telephone serves, quite unproblematically, as an (inanimate) instrument to reach the woman, the girl's breasts may be an instrument to get sex; that the boy never said "talk to her," as demanded by convention, doubly serves to invite us to infer that the girl is not worth talking to, and that her speech (or, in bodily terms, her head) is not as worthy a site for interactive engagement as her breasts. His reference most easily resembles a pragmatic metonymy – and the pragmatic value expressed by the boy regarding "boobs" is not hard to imagine in this context. Indeed, the word exploitation, in its critical sense, refers to the inappropriate use of the functionality of an animate being for one's own relative advantage.

It is crucial to note that while the specificity of a distinguishing marker for women is important to this reading, not everyone will "get it" in this way. Otherwise put, the boy's utterance may well not be read, or received, as socially critical. There are many
possible levels of understanding of the implications of "it-ifying" a class of women by referring to their breasts. Some have a highly elaborated critical understanding; others might simply feel that the local act of "it-ifying" someone, anyone, was simply funny — it certainly thumbs its nose at a humanist demand that is part of the Western understanding of face — and that the representation of a girl by her breasts is a matter-of-fact application of the "funny dehumanization" of women. Indeed, if we supposed the audience were a number of other adolescent boys, it may well be that one of the lessons learned through such a conflation — a view that takes language understanding as just as much constructive of knowledge as it is dependent on pre-existing world knowledge and belief systems — is that the "proper" interaction with girls is when the locus of intersubjective interaction is that "pair of boobs", rather than the face. As much as the example seemed self-evident, then, so many possible exceptions exist; and by no means are these exceptions tied only to exceptional thinkers.

In "I was treated like a dog," the speaker decries treatment like an animal, intimating objectification. But in common understanding, while he may be indirectly suggesting that he was subordinated, objectified, and robbed of self-determination, at the same time he may be emphasizing his prevailing humanity. Again, pragmatics comes into play. The simile cue "like" may prompt a conceptualizer to transfer the inferences and discourage a direct animalization; combined with Gricean pragmatics, profiling one's own treatment "like" an animal, especially with an air of protest, seems to emphasize not the viability of the substitution, but its remarkability. It serves, therefore, as a counterfactual. Thus, in "half" of the counterfactual he counts as an animal — but this equation has meaning only in the context of a counterfactual which suspends the full
reality of that representation, the full learnability of that representation. If one understood
the boy’s example, too, as a counterfactual, in the sense that the present is to be
contrasted with the past, then one might well have a similar suspension of belief about his
objectification of girls.

A word on irony and Gricean pragmatics. Counterfactuals are also an essential
element of ironic expression. When a rendering self-evidently offers a highly disfavored
image, it functions more like a blatant violation of a Gricean maxim than a unostentatious
violation, inviting an opposing interpretation along any of the available pragmatic lines
(including the propositional one, but others; see Grice’s maxims). Such a reading,
especially if the two poles of interpretation remain similarly salient, may lead to
judgments of irony. For instance, referring to the “boy-boobs” example, it is not a
convention to refer to a woman as “it” unless the speaker wishes to make a point about
her not being able for some reason to be referred to by the more human pronoun
available. If only one interpretive pole is available, such uses may merely lead to insult.

Objectification that is more subtle, less salient and hence less able to be
apprehended as such, has the potential to shape belief without inviting us to be aware of
the ways that it does so. Consider, as examples, the relatively blatant “Women are
objects” versus “I think the women should be moved to this area here.” While the former
utterance invokes a direct form of objectification at a brusque, readily apprehensible level
(cognitive-linguistically, it involves both event-structure anti-personification through
syntactic object placement, as well as conceptual blending between “women” and the
category “objects”, which is analogous to the apple-man imagistic blending), the latter
utterance presupposes the manipulability of the category of women – potentially by
agents who are outside of the category. Though irony can itself be subtle, this expression is not ironic, for it does not invite the conceptualizer to maintain two salient possibilities. A primary mode of cultural criticism deals with presupposition: representations that implicitly bring in harmful frames of reference are inherently more threatening and dangerous to an unsuspecting subject than something that foregrounds the harmful frame of reference.\(^{14}\)

Irony and insult seem to exploit similar devices; one can imagine similar reasons, for instance, for a speaker’s decision about how subtle to be in the expression. But while irony would seem to occur where the objectified person’s rendering is not considered important or we do not think we are joking at its expense, insult usually has addressees who are intended to appreciate a representation – of themselves or others – as defective subjects.

Part of the indeterminacy of the boy’s utterance, then, is that we are not quite in a position to know which it is - irony or insult - or more precisely, who the implicit addressee is; and further, if we are setting up a present-past counterfactual set of mental spaces, we also do not know quite what is to appear in the present space. One factor that seems to distinguish irony and insult, therefore, is the epistemic value of the propositions (or of elements in the counterfactual if such is involved): that is, a speaker may be less or more sincere about the objectifying utterance.

There are other kinds of impediments to a purely objectifying reading; this is a conflict between subjectivity and objectivity, between objectification and personification.

\(^{14}\) Indeed, the foregrounding of a dangerous element may well serve as a means to political resistance; consider the work of Cindy Sherman, which renders in vivid relief the intimations we may already have about the work of prostitution. I will examine this kind of act in the following chapter on reclaiming.
The examples below contain somewhat impeded objectifications for these reasons:

(5) You’re going to die if you don’t clean out those vessels!
(6) [B.] Smith is peddling style as an aspirational tool. ‘I am more of a conduit,’ she says. ‘I bring in experts, and the audience and I are in it together.’” (Hamilton 2004)
(7) I’m going to scrunch you up into a little ball and... stick you in a bottle, like you deserve.
(8) You’re going to really like how... I’m going to stick you in a bottle, like you deserve.

In (5), the direct address to the person who presumably has unhealthy living habits, and the appeal to the capacities of that person to change them (an active form, “you don’t clean out those vessels”, rather than a more passive form such as “you don’t have those vessels cleaned” or “those vessels don’t get cleaned”), conflicts with the objectifying emphasis on the correlation between death and the neglect of some purely material substance, vessels. In (6), B. Smith’s objectifying self-representation as a somewhat mechanical “conduit” conflicts with her controlling self-representation in which she, as active agent, “brings in experts”. In (8), much more than in (7), the objectivity of the addressee which is encouraged by the second portion of the utterance clashes with the subjectivity which his presented as a fact in the first portion. Another way to understand this might be to say that the perspective changes from “you’re going to like”, which profiles the subjectivity of the addressee (albeit under an ambiguously objective-predictive and an epistemic “going to” clause, which functions as an umbrella prediction on the part of the speaker), to “like you deserve”, which clearly implicates the subjectivity of the speaker.

All of the above examples, most notably perhaps the telephone-marriage comparisons, would seem to suggest that pragmatic contexts seem to be a necessary factor to consider in a theory of objectification – that is, we must consider how the
various mechanisms of representation – metonymy, metaphor, and context and frame semantics – interact together. This has implications for how we might want to think about cognitive semantics and the relations between language, thought, and reality. The examples also make it clear that objectification is best imagined at the level of discourse, most notably because, as we have seen with the critical theory examples, we cannot make any judgments purely on form without context. That is, objectification can occur lexically, either by the use of deixis, as in the use of “there” rather than “here”, or by the explicit use of pronouns like “it” and lexemes like “thing”; but it need not be so restricted, as it represents only the most apparent means.

As an example, consider the following utterance by a young man whose affections were being contested by his girlfriend and her sister, all of whom were guests on the talk show “Latifah” (2000). The girlfriend’s sister had apparently seduced him with the additional perk of offering to buy him an expensive sweater, perhaps to force her sister to move away from him because she apparently disapproved of him. After the two women gave their accounts, he explained his actions, and reported that before he slept with her sister, he had discovered that his girlfriend had actually slept with someone else near the beginning of their relationship. This apparently legitimated his own unfaithful act, which for him counted as “like for like” treatment. Asked about his feelings, he screwed up his face in disgust and indicated the sister with an open-handed gesture, proclaiming in exaggerated prosody, “I don’t need to sleep with this,” The crowd roared in reaction to the last word, and responding affirmatively, he repeated “this, that’s all this is.” As an afterthought, he threw in, “And that too,” indicating his (former) girlfriend. Clearly the choice here is not between one form or another of a distal or proximal deictic,
because this appears not to be posed as socially proximal at all; it may in fact serve an indicative adjective function and may in addition be physically proximal. But his disavowal is in regard to the referent of “this,” which is the sister, which would license a distal deictic for maximal consistency.

It appears the speaker flouts, in Gricean terms, another grammatical convention: one that separates the demonstrative pronouns from the personal pronouns, such that in cases of demonstration, if the referent is personal, the speaker will use personal pronouns. If demonstrative pronouns alone are used in the case of a human referent, then the cooperative principle applies, and the speaker is understood to have an overarching reason to pick a term that would normally categorize non-personal entities (because it is still assumed that he is cooperating conversationally). The implicature is that in his opinion, the referent of “this” qualifies more as an object than as human, inanimate than as animate.

Fig. 9. Proximal-distal, object-human pronominal scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Human</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proximal</strong></td>
<td>This</td>
<td>He/she</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distal</strong></td>
<td>That</td>
<td>He/she</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This objective reading is supported by the speaker’s characterization of “this” by “that’s all this is,” with “that” presumably referring to some object rather than human reading of the sister. The “all” buffers the objective reading by adding a sense of quantifiability, which generally applies to objects and is licensed for humans only under certain conditions (in medical discourse, for instance: “We are eighty percent water.”)
The example of “the boy and the boobs” demonstrates that beyond the complexities of discourse, whose internal intricacies may themselves make it hard to “predict” what is objectifying and what isn’t, we must remember the cognitive-linguistic insistence that language understanding is always subjective. That is, objectification depends in some sense crucially on what standards are brought to bear on the scene by an individual conceptualizer – what categorizations are intact, what typologies organize which pragmatic domains, and so on. Nor is interpretation a simple matter of bringing to bear static models. Recent experience can shape sensitivity, which we might explain by our understanding of cognitive salience; but affective history may also have a crucial role in the determination of what interpretations are reached. For instance, “Let me give her to you” may well represent an objectifying use to someone who, even if they understand the metonymy, carry a much more salient objectifying direct-referential interpretation, than the metonymic one, for some reason or another. They may, for instance, be someone who either locally or for the long term has been oriented toward thinking of this particular woman, or more general conceptual categories in the relevant experiential typologies to which the woman belongs (such as the category “women”), as an object.

Subterranean and Explicit Objectification: Injury, Insult, and how “Offense” depends upon Reference to Belief Systems

A word on value and its relation to the processes examined in this chapter. The label “objectification,” when it is applied in lay discourse, is almost always taken as a bad thing. People will explain that it is humiliating to be spoken of as an animal, or as a “thing”; the statement that one has been treated “like a dog” is accompanied with indignation. If we think more generally about what in the physical realm may be bad for a
person, limitation of basic movement, i.e. containment -- is typically “bad”, but also partial or reduced subjectivity (not only, say, operations on the brain such as lobotomies, but many cases of what is considered “mental illness”, indecision; some kind of, what we think from our supreme metaphysical, spiritual viewpoint, compromise of subjectivity).

Lay and expert discourses about objectification alike decry the marked phenomena whereby humans are rendered into object-like entities. Yet, humans are self-evidently material participants in a material world, and such discourse happens all the time (recall the rather everyday example, “you’re going to die if you don’t clean out those vessels”). One example of border-straddling psychic-corporeal experiences is the close relationship between bodily and mental pain; there are corporeal aspects of mental trauma just as there are in physical trauma. Furthermore, corresponding mirror neurons in a visual witness’ body are neurologically activated upon their watching another person perform an action. Indeed our corporeality is a constant engagement for our minds, yet it continues to be a managed separation that is our Enlightenment inheritance. It is true that many in the United States anxiously try to maintain a body-soul distinction; in fact we have both religious and philosophical inheritance in our thought and behavior, when in fact this division seems to be threatened repeatedly. It is precisely why the study of objectification must also be a study of values.

Consider examples (5) and (6), admittedly somewhat ludicrous but minimally constrastive for our purposes:

(9) James is a real leg.
(10) James is a real brain.

Suppose this individual, James, were given a choice between the body part objectifications of (9) and (10). The choice, at least in culturally dominant contexts,
might be rather straightforward: (10) preserves what is conventionally understood in Western thought as the locus of subjectivity, as well as of what many might call James’ “soul”. In August 1999, National Public Radio hosted a science program concerning the possibility of brain transplants, which included ethical debates about their propriety. The scientist who had engineered the developing technology and who claimed he had already performed the operation on a monkey, said confidently that there seemed to be little left to debate, because he was “not giving a body a new brain” (which was presumably the problematic version), but he was rather “giving a life a new body to live in.” Clearly, his reasoning favored a view that the self is “located” in the brain, rather than in the body. At one level, then, (9) and (10) are both kinds of objectification; and outside of human meaning, neither is “greater” or “worse” than the other; but in an experientialist theory of meaning, and one potentially connected to value, many persons who live under the deeply-ingrained cultural influence of Western philosophical traditions might have more reason to see (9) as more objectifying than (10).

How much “is” James a brain, or a leg, for that matter? What if, as implausible as it seems, he counted as one? Conceptual metaphor theory and mental-spaces theory often launch the rejoinder that people are simply not fooled into thinking other people are objects; we “understand” what is being manipulated in objectifying jokes; we know, for example, that “the thoughtful cloud” of poetry is of course not a person. I believe such statements are based on rather idealized oppositions between fully subjectified humans and fully objectified abstractions. Hence, once the very complex definition of “what is an object” comes into play. Considering, for instance, that trajector/landmark relationships often determine which conceptualized entity is to be understood as “active” or “acting”
and which is "passive", and given the role ambiguities of expressions that are not fully grammatically specified, then if an "object" qualifies as something with relatively less agency, or relatively less mobility, there is no reason why in an event structure rendering, that entity will be rendered interactionally as a landmark rather than as a trajector. In a cognitive grammar, event structures are certainly asymmetric with regard to trajector and landmark; so at the level of interpretation, mapping decisions must be made. Ultimately, in the case of ambiguously defined entities, durative, "characteristic" qualities – such as enduring landmark rather than trajector status – may well be imputed to a novel conceptualization.

Regarding an evaluation from a conceptual metaphor point of view, my contention would be that what we first of all use physical-domain metaphors for, is to describe what or how we do, so that we are frequently already in (a) subject position. For instance, in LOVE IS A JOURNEY, we are still travelers, fully animate, with plenty of choices. We seem only to have a few truly self-objectifying metaphors.15 The ones that do exist, however, are potentially powerful. For instance, the BODY IS A CONTAINER metaphor is one which is productive and has its effects. One metaphorical extension which seems to have taken on its own life in medical domains is THE BODY IS A MACHINE metaphor, whose effects on medical practice and patient treatment alike Suzanne Fleischman (see e.g. 2001) has extensively pursued from a linguistic point of view. Clearly, in this case the metaphorical mapping itself takes on active status; thus conceived it qualifies more as a blend, a lived and running blend (in this case between conceptual human and conceptual machine). As soon as either the metaphors or the

15 See G. Lakoff (1997) on the "internal structure of the self".
blends themselves are productive back onto the target domain, there exists a lived blend, and it is no longer just that inferences are made at a safe distance from the originary blend. The ludicrous expression “James is a real leg” is easy to disavow; but it is shamed by its structural affinity to “The black man is best suited for physical work.” Hence, “When are we not fooled, and when are we fooled?” is a question that must be challenged and examined very closely in particular domains.

I believe that these discussions underline the importance in cognitive linguistics of referring to the cultural criticism, which connects values to the mechanisms of objectification, and hence helps to motivate its processes. Inside linguistics, such criticism accentuates the sometimes essential importance of a consideration of value in a linguistic investigation. Indeed, it seems that by claiming anthropomorphic tendencies without exploring the interrelatedness of two "inferred" theories of objectification introduced in this chapter, we might have missed a crucial observation: that there exist specific regulations for just which things, objects or people, “we” are willing to see as truly symmetric to ourselves, and it is therefore highly important not to simply assume that the fullness of humanity – with all its idealized attributes – must always be conferred to a human being in its conceptualization.

Otto Santa Ana’s (1999) study of conceptual metaphor in California print media around the time of California’s Proposition 187, which blocked the provision of social services to “illegal aliens,” explored how immigrants were framed in the media discourse and found a preponderance of animal metaphors. With his proposal that “IMMIGRANTS ARE ANIMALS” most accurately described the representation of immigrants in the print...
media at the time, Santa Ana challenged the ready applicability of G. Lakoff's more benign conceptual metaphor, "IMMIGRANTS ARE CHILDREN [of the nation]."

Fauconnier and Turner write, of a 1993 clipper ship fictively "racing" against its 1853 counterpart which had made the original trek: "Here, too, nobody is fooled into confusing the blend with reality." (2002: 64) In another work, of a "debate with Kant" staged by a lecturing professor, they write:

A "realist" interpretation of the passage would be quite fantastic. The philosophy professor and Kant would have to be brought together in time, would have to speak the same language, and so on. No one is fooled into thinking that this is the intended interpretation. In fact, using a debate blend of this type is so conventional that it will go unnoticed.

(Fauconnier and Turner (undated), my emphasis).

The writers, here and elsewhere, systematically invoke a "reality" against which such fictive blends are self-evidently, and safely, opposed. Such a "reality" is defined as a site of maximal epistemic identification for a conceptualizer, and would stand in stark contradiction to such imaginative blends as the 140-year-stemming boat "race". As best I can tell, this "reality" is favorable to objectivist semantics' "possible worlds" in that it clearly refers to conceptual imagination rather than objectivist reality, but its self-evidentness seems to be sporadically applied; in one portion the authors concede that "when we see a picture of the newborn baby, we cannot suppress our feeling that we are seeing a baby" (5), but elsewhere, confusions about what is "reality" – in one case the author turned the volume dial on his radio to better hear his car passenger – stand out as exceptional and rare. What they never discuss, however, is the variable real circulating around objects that bear differential social investment, in particular, raced or gendered identities. In these cases, there is no idealized "reality" to which one can point, no "reality" that it is communally desired to maintain – there are only contested
conceptualizations informed by ideological investments. When such contestations are quiet, then it would seem quite possible to be “fooled.” Postcolonial theorists have made it clear that persons under a situation of dominance need to keep track of multiple “realities” for their own survival; it is often those in a dominant position who have the luxury of continuing to be “fooled.” As Trinh T. Minh-ha (1996) puts it:

A further example is, say, the fundamentally different meanings that may be given to the same word, the same sentence, when it is read by a member of the dominant group and by a member of a dominated group of a culture. Since marginalised people are always socialised to understand things from more than their own point of view, to see both sides of the matter, and to say at least two things at the same time, they can never really afford to speak in the singular. (8)

To depart from a blanket "change is intrinsic to language" perspective, and to move toward a consideration of the roles played by pragmatic and social factors along specific paths of language change – which has been a steady interest in the subjectification scholarship – we are also invited to consider situations like these more seriously. Second, by claiming that subjectification is about tendencies for grammatically incipient forms to "point to the subject", true as it may be, we may miss the fact that there are specific domains in which not pointing to the subject, the profession of universal perspective, are claimed, and may well see their own diachronic developments. Furthermore, the claim to a universal perspective could be tacitly tied to an objectification of certain groups of people; as examples are rife, this relationship is by no means rare.

Linguistic Injury and Naming

Injury, whether delivered or felt, as an object of study has generally been relegated to psychological or psychoanalytic disciplines of study, as “trauma theory” or “trauma
studies”. I will suggest here that in order to consider the “technology” of injurious language, it is not enough to say that all we study is the language objects which can be used instrumentally to express, convey, or control, so that psychology may be applied (in, say, a modular fashion) on top of these objective data.

Such an appeal to bring (affective) psychology more deeply into the understanding of cognition itself, as opposed to applying it to the output of cognition from which it is substantively divorced, parallels, in a way, the Berkeley school’s critique of Chomsky’s insistence that syntax (traditionally reducible to “structure”) is independent of semantics (“meaning”) – i.e. that semantics enters the language process through the application of meaning “assignment rules” to the syntactic output. As has been widely demonstrated, meaning is determined in context; in fact, we could say that meanings seen as “objectively universal” and thus “held” within a linguistic construct such as a word or a grammatical construction are in fact simply those exceptional meanings which happen to hold for a great number of contexts. This fact extends to the most ostensibly stable of meanings. For example, as (K.R. Coventry, M. Prat-Sala, and L. Richards 2001) have shown, meanings of the spatial prepositions “above” and “over” are significantly conditioned by functional and geometric considerations.

While it would seem evident, then, that the actions in and by linguistic performances are always determined in psychological context, only some aspects of psychology have been taken up into linguistics, such as rational cognition, functionalism, and cultural frames, rather than others, such as emotion. That linguistic analysis must lose something important with the continuing exclusion of emotion, is clear when we ask: How might we otherwise explain an “act” easily “captured” within the proper linguistic
domain of analysis (though itself significantly neglected; see R. Lakoff 1995) – literal silence – which a subject “produces” upon being addressed by a derogatory name? Is it enough to say the subject chooses not to use the resources available? Indeed, by superficially exiling kinds of injury out from one’s “own” domain of inquiry, do we not stand to lose a great deal? It is these losses which I hope to examine here.

Empirical theories of “psychological injury” tend to be relegated to the consideration of physical damage to the body or brain, even in psycholinguistics (Garman 1990); hence they exclude psychic pain in favor of a neurological description. On the other side, psychoanalytic theories of injury, often nominated “trauma theory,” are expressly not neurologically specified. Yet I believe that both psychoanalytic theory and contemporary cognitive-linguistic theory need to be, and can be, brought into dialogue with each other in the common effort to detail a (affectively) psychologized linguistic subject – one that, unlike psychoanalytic semiotics, remain amenable to contemporary linguistic frameworks. I further believe it is possible to bring linguistic approaches into further conversation with theories that concern fragmentation, as fragmentation is often equated with traumatic injury to the psyche, is controversially evoked to explain disempowered subjects’ structures of knowledge and/or identity, and finally, is used to represent the crumbling structures of late-capitalist societies.16

Freud is credited with a highly influential theory of trauma and its later reflexes in the subject. In Freud’s work, the unconscious is understood as an inalienable part of the subject’s psyche; the agency of the unconscious is divided (via the id) from the intending and cognizant subject. Against this setting, Freud introduced the notion of traumatic

16 See esp. Naomi Quinn (1997), who submits the idea of “postmodern”, “fragmented subjects” to cognitive-anthropological consideration.
neurosis, or traumatic repetition, described as the need to repeat the experience of an original injury (which may not have been recognized or consciously experienced) over which a subject appears to have little control. The incomplete knowability of the original injury is realized in the unconscious’s repeated revisitation of the injury in an effort to “speak” it, a repeating that is described as “compulsion repetition.” (Freud 1986 [1914]; Freud 1986 [1920]) As noted earlier, Lacan worked Freud’s concepts into his own theories of trauma and desire, lack, and fragmentation. In Lacan’s view, once a subject has been swept up irretrievably into language (its own formative trauma), he suffers ongoing self-alienation by fatalistically representing himself in the intersubjective terms of language, the only means of self-representation.

That this (mis)recognition of “I”, and the ensuing subjectivizations that follow, are associated with trauma, invites an investigation into language forms that refer, either directly or obliquely, to the “self” or to “others.” Thus, it is appropriate to locate where injury might stand both within the domain of naming, and outside of it. Naming has been studied mainly in speech act theory, though speech act theory itself may be said to have split into two strains, one being the philosophy of language (analytic and ordinary language philosophy — Austin, Kripke, Searle) and linguistic pragmatics; the other being cultural studies and social theory in which performativity became an intriguing site for exploration (Derrida, Sedgwick, Butler). Kripke, in Naming and Necessity (1980) introduced a theory of the personal name, The Causal Theory of Names, in which an individual’s being repeatedly referenced or addressed in his lifetime by the same form, is constituted by a “causal” chain in two senses: first, that any occurrence can be traced back to an original moment in which the person was first associated with a name; second,
that each later instance can be said to have been “caused” in that the “new” person calling him by that name must have been told the correct form by the last person in the chain, when both understood that the same individual was being referred to.

There is a generally meager and idealized schematics in this proposal, not least of which is the appeal to an “objective” reality (the enduring self which stands unchanging behind the chain of reference). Such a presumption of a field of objectivity, has been challenged from one direction by social theory, which has sought to explain the structural mechanisms - including authority, the reach of the state, and processes of consent - by which “objectivity” is historically and materially produced; and from another direction by philosophers of science, in which “objective reality” is rejected in favor of “experiential objectivism” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). And as Evans shows, this objectivity is idealized, and is clearly strained of its existence as a possible effect of political structures. Evans thus brings other social factors into consideration, including powered relationships which he claims have determining influence over such “causal” processes. The Causal Theory of Names is teleological, for it makes self-evident that which it depends on.

Judith Butler suggests that because proper names are only rarely unique, a subject who is named is at that moment subjected to a structural gap, between the belief that the name is unique and the fact that it is not. I imagine, however, to the knowledge of the subject, in the social and documentary world in which she travels, this uniqueness is supported and validated (if we are, as usual, to validate felt subjectivity) – if such a uniqueness is desired in a society. In her move to the kind of naming that hate speech involves, Butler suggests that personal naming is not entirely unrelated to other forms of naming, especially in the sense that it happens “before” it is even chosen. By choosing a
naming that is not only imposed or manipulative, but hateful and intending injury, Butler offers a highly politicized view of naming.

Who then suffers from being named, say, at a moment of derogation? How do we assess emotional effects in what would seem to be experientially very similar cases to naming — say, when a name, technically speaking, is not the linguistic offering, such as the adjectival complement in “But you are so serious!” to a person who has been laboring for years to improve their sense of humor? How do we account for societal differences in the importance of personal names and the sense of individuality? Butler questions a certain interpretation of linguistic “injury” understood as hate speech, illocutionarily delivered: “[T]here are reasons to question whether a static notion of ‘social structure’ is reduplicated in hate speech, or whether such structures suffer destructuration through being reiterated, repeated, and rearticulated.” (1997: 19)

Maintaining my insistence on a differential experience of injury, its relation to social subordination, and the necessity to read injury in context, I propose the following definition of linguistic injury. As I see it, six conditions hold:

- an utterance X is conducted from one subject A to another B;
- Subject B must consider Subject A intelligible — that is, worth listening to. (The relative vulnerability of Subject B adds to the risk — even more if it coheres with the perceived attribution of the utterance). This is not an unlikely prospect, since Subject A types normally assume authority in the uttering of linguistic injuries.
- utterance X contains an attribution to subject B (to be more precise, the subject B understands X to contain an attribution to her)
- subject B can be understood as being “at risk” in the sense of being (symbolically, identificationally, socially) vulnerable, in one or more ways;
- one of these risks may be associated with the attribution;
- subject B experienced injury, by her account.

While in general these admittedly tentative categorical schemes cannot be perfect, I hope that they have a pragmatic, if not determinative, purchase.
The example below illustrates the role of a lack of intimacy – in a sense, a kind of negative affect – in an insult reading without injury. S calls H a ‘feces-flinging monkey’ in an online exchange where, besides brief participation in larger discussions of the online community, the two interlocutors have remained strangers. Once again, the kind of insult here is the common blending of people with disfavored non-human entities and abstractions.

Fig. 10. S to H: Feces-flinging monkey!

Note that S and O (the blend) in the above diagram may be superimposed on, respectively, the upper left (Int.1-self) and upper right spaces of the four-space intersubjective images of the previous diagram, which is repeated here in dotted lines. The two sources for the monkey-human blend are expanded with some (contrastive) characteristics of monkeys and humans that ground the relevance of the insult.
Presumably, the blend contains, say, a human figure with the appearance of the addressee H, perhaps with the same memories and world-knowledge of H’s self, except that the blended entity is adorned with a different set of capacities: the “animalistic,” “monkeylike” properties that would degrade a human-animal hierarchy-adherent’s sense of dignity, intellectual capacity, protected segregation from its own abjected substances, and sense of advanced civilization. Note that, along these lines, the bracketed elements of Source 2 are blocked from being imported to the blend. Instead, these capacities and characteristics are “filled” with the monkeylike properties of Source 1.

As the addressee, which is a particularly powerful viewpoint-centering device, H is almost coerced, in registering S’s utterance, to at least momentarily adopt the viewpoint of the blend – O – as informed by S’s perspective. If we assume that S and H are both members of a collective social group that places animals lower on a hierarchy than humans, H has a good chance of perceiving this as an insult. What about injury? At first it might seem that H is interpretively encouraged to ‘feel the sting’ of the insult, since he would seem to have few options for escaping its imposed viewpoint. The interpretive options are at least partly fixed by grammatical constraints. The accusation has the simple form of unadorned direct address. What might otherwise be interpretable as a grammatical subject (feces-flinging monkey) is unaccompanied by an article, nor is it followed by any predication (e.g. “The feces-flinging monkey had been provoked by the zookeeper”), leaving the addressee to see the phrase as a predication applied to him.

And yet what such a language-limited view might miss is that H is not one to readily identify with whatever depiction is offered him. As a member of an antagonistic exchange, and no real foundation for intimacy or shared perspective, he has had very
little inclination to identify with the object of S’s preferred perspective. So while he may or may not “take offense,” it is questionable as to whether this must be hurtful to H. I would suggest that this reception constitutes an example of a disparity between interpretation and emotion, and that what distinguishes them in this case is H’s likely ability to distanciate the image from his own reality space.

To the extent that Judith Butler gestures in *Excitable Speech* to, following Derrida, the uttering of a word as citation, and further, takes the citation in hate speech to be a citation or “calling up” of authoritarian, oppressive, or powered structures, her explanations offer a great deal; and yet I feel they do not take sufficiently into account the relation of those cited structures to the relative stability or instability of the “receiving” subject. Her works largely depend on an overarching theory of resignification, which posits both producer and receiver of a message as equal authors of (re)signification. If we are to render the concept of linguistic injury as one with political purchase, if it is to have any diagnostic function, I believe it must work into its structure the possibility of differentiation among injuries.

The definition of linguistic injury offered above allows a kind of access to the differential senses of injury – in terms of its crucially subjective and potentially corporeal nature – between one’s being called an ostensibly benign term “Asian American,” and the experience of a recent immigrant who does not understand the language well enough to know he has been called a “chink”; but the attribution he may understand may not have to do with the semantics of “chink,” but something else: a Barthesian connotation of his distance, and thus disempowerment from, language itself. Further, the corporeality or materiality that Butler attributes to being named (“to not know where you are”) may be
valid as it applies to raced subjects, but in a particular way. Thus if the risk (Condition #3) of the receiving subject is along the lines of a raced existence, it would follow that Fanon’s and others’ accounts of the intense, pervasively corporeal nature of the experience of racial markedness and the vulnerability of raced subjects may predispose such subjects to a corporeally felt injury, even if the devices for alerting the injury are themselves “merely linguistic”.
CHAPTER 4. Reclaiming: Cognitive Repossessions of the (Subjective) Self

SUBJECTIFY: To identify with or absorb in the subject; to make subjective. (Oxford Shorter OED, 1933)

When the Plain-Belly Sneetches popped out, they had stars!...
“We’re exactly like you! You can’t tell us apart.
We’re all just the same, now, you snooty old smarties!
And now we can go to your frankfurter parties.”
(Dr. Seuss, “The Sneetches”, 1961)

Review Of Objectification

The previous chapter outlined two cognitive processes related to what are understood to
be social-theory and cultural-theory understandings of linguistic objectification, or, more
cautiously put, objectifications that involve “language” in some way. The processes as
such were revealed to be idealized effects that may not be able to be segregated in
practice. It further traced the relationship of objectification to injury, considering affect
along the way. In particular, it explored how the experience of injury is constituted by a
combination of disposition, interpretation and affective response.

One of the processes, objective-ization, involves a broadening or distancing
perspective, induced by the use of such distal lexical forms as “that,” and the concomitant
“shrinking” and apparent delineation of a given cognitive object, a process that invites
categorial separation across lines of identity or affiliation. In a viewpoint-theory
perspective, the dynamics of viewpoint in this case may be modeled on a physical
foundation (though it would seem there is no way to segregate the entrenchment of
“physical” versus “cultural” experience), so that a greater imagined physical distance has
its own objectifying effects on the onstage entities. Here, “imagination” is depicted as a
correlative working of cognitive landscapes that has the entrenched facility of frequent
real-world experience. Of course, in this case, the limits of metaphorical modeling on the
percepts, as opposed to other cognitive structures, are to be dealt with very carefully, and what is taken as “common” real-world experience must not be naively equivocated with what is “natural” or “universal,” nor are the percepts themselves to be taken as a foundation upon which, for instance, all subjectivity is formed.¹

The second process, object-ification, involves a distance-neutral object-making by way of blending a given cognitive object with entities that are deemed relatively deficient of subjective properties, where subjectivity is implicitly defined in Western humanist attributes, sometimes contrastively emphasizing the dualities: colonizer-versus-colonized, subject-versus-object/abject, mind-versus-body. There are viewpoints that inform the blends; these are imagined “placements” or “situatings” within cognitive models – idealizations of social hierarchies, scripts, and so forth, which include participants and relations between them. One situates oneself, and/or one’s interlocutor, in a particular “place” in the scene, which lends either animate or inanimate, human or inhuman, relatively powerful or unpowerful qualities to the (otherwise indistinct, perhaps inchoate) onstage object.

¹ My own sense of relative comfort with seeing such dimensions as physical proximity as universally tied (say, proportionately) to intimacy, falls away sharply when I consider the possibility that similarly naturalizing conclusions could be drawn from such scenarios as repeated racial and ethnic segregations in public life and urban geographies worldwide, without at the same time recognizing that what is normally granted as belonging to “worldwide” tends to be precisely those places marked by racialized colonialist histories. It might, indeed, be more advantageous, and more safe, to view these distantiating-shrinking correlations to be simply imbricated in or determined by cultural frames of distance and intimacy, which are vitally buttressed by the entrenchment in cognition of the faculties of physicalist perception.
Ways of Reclaiming

The present chapter turns to the examination of a “way” (as opposed to being isolated to “acts” or subsumed into “being”) which is often understood to be resistive: reclaiming. The term “reclaiming,” far from being clearly defined, refers to a broad array of theoretical and conventional interpretations of both linguistic and non-linguistic, individual and collective, acts. Social analysis, cultural studies, and language studies have joined discussions of the (re)appropriation of signs by invested groups. To give some sense of its multiple valences, reclaiming has been equated, alternately, with reappropriation, amelioration, repossession, reterritorialization. There are differences among these concepts, of course; for instance, “reappropriation” elicits connotations of “rights” less than reclaiming does.

Such a diversity of synonyms suggests that reclaiming is articulated, and thus rhetorically meant, diversely. In many language-centered accounts of reclaiming, a derogatory sign or signifier is consciously employed by its ‘original’ target, often in a forcibly positive sense; and very often in an opposing stance, in “public” contexts where the imagined originators of the injury are in a position to perceive the text. Other accounts hold that reclaiming is a matter of regaining control over the very linguistic instruments of one’s injury, forestalling further attacks. Still others claim it shakes up, makes unstable, the self-evident connection between the label and the group that label is normally associated with. For others, reclaiming can be characterized as an appropriation of the right, or power, to name oneself – to have control over, quite literally, the terms of one’s life, as Eve Sedgwick suggested is true of the self-naming of sexuality. This chapter
shows finally that there is little consensus on the operations or desired ends of reclaiming, nor on when we may say “a” reclaiming is complete - if we wished to do so.

Reclaimed objects themselves may be found in a number of modes, manifesting in labels, gestures, or physical artefacts. Perhaps they are most often noted in verbal form, as in slogans, which are pre-eminent linguistic vehicles for political collectivities: “Taking Back the Night,” “Grrrrrl Power,” “Queer Nation”; these are relatively crystallized symbolic meanings and speech acts. They also appear as non-conventionalized linguistic innovations, such as in a statement I recently overheard: “I am unapologetically a feminist.” Within such verbal reclaimings, there is disagreement as to what constitutes “success”: Some say a term has been reclaimed when it has been successfully adopted for use inside, and throughout, a given (speech) community, an example being dyke among lesbians, which continues to be resistant to positive or neutral use by outgroup members. For others, a term has been reclaimed only when it has attained a positive or neutral sense not only within the community, but without, as has been argued to be the case with black (Hock 1991: 300, R. Lakoff 1975: 41, Smitherman 1977: 35), as a term of reference for African Americans.

There are also reclaimings that are not verbally explicit but graphically rendered: for instance, revolutionary Russian and Chinese communist iconography that depicts workers as icons of strength and stature. And there are reclaiming acts whose form is difficult to discern. I recall a moment from my childhood, spent mainly in Central Illinois, when my brother, after a communication between my parents and an uncle in Taiwan, was to receive for Christmas a most excellent Chinese dragon kite, with some twenty panels, rotating eyes, and legs on all the sections. I, on the other hand, was to receive a
gift I cannot remember – all I do know is that I read the event as gendered, and in my
disfavor, and that I could not stand it. Fortunately, my uncle in Taiwan had misaddressed
the tags, and I opened the kite while my brother opened “my” present. I knew exactly
what had happened, but I went by the tags, pretending ignorance of the recent discussions
about who was to receive what; and despite entreaties from both of my parents (my
brother, perhaps with some understanding, remained silent, bless his heart), I refused to
hand over the kite, and I insisted on having it mounted in the ceiling in my room (later,
too frightened by its rotating eyes to sleep, I had it removed, but I would never hand it
over). In this sense, my dispossession of certain privileges to my brother on the basis of
our gender had been both implicit and ongoing, and was instantiated in practices across
the extended family, despite my parents’ efforts to afford relatively progressive gender
attitudes within our immediate family. The kite, then, became the symbol of my gendered
dispossession, and that which, desperately, I had to reclaim at all costs.

At least from a more generic viewpoint, reclaiming can be described with some
consistency. First, there is some sense in which reclaiming represents an intervention,
rather than an avoidance. Writing in a linguistic mode, Deborah Cameron distinguishes
reclaiming from euphemism, which she defines as a practice that “consists in the
avoidance of a word or idea whose direct expression is taboo.” (1995: 145) While both
reclaiming and euphemism deal with a movement away from a societally-imposed
negativity, one significant difference is that reclaiming serves not to “avoid” but to
foreground the taboo. I believe this to be true of reclaiming acts, though I am not in full
agreement that it is the taboo itself which is foregrounded. It further seems that
reclaiming always also works at a symbolic level; and to the degree that it is self-
conscious, it is a project of groups that have reached some threshold of social-political recognition (as identity groups or, in addition, groups with explicit investments in "politics" as conventionally defined) and yet are understood – by themselves or by others – to be socially or politically disenfranchised.

I have suggested that reclaiming may be seen as a kind of resistance to certain kinds of objectifying practices; however, this characterization cannot be sufficient. In early 2003, at least ten women’s shelters in California were sued on grounds of gender discrimination by individuals associated with the National Coalition for Free Men, for not providing equivalent access for men seeking shelter from domestic abuse. They sought, in particular, to force women’s shelters to admit men. Given overwhelming evidence about the gendered identities of most agents and of most victims of domestic abuse, and the continuing need for greatly increased services for victims of domestic abuse in general, the relative paucity of shelter resources for men – which admittedly relates to a real need to acknowledge that men can be victims of abuse - far from substantiates a direct attack on women’s shelters. Such a claim posits men as disenfranchised victims who are attempting to recover access to resources to which they have an inherent right. The attempt to recover access, perhaps in this limited context, might be an accurate description; but the disenfranchisement is simply not. A perusal of the website for the National Coalition for Free Men is telling. The first of two “quick links” to specific issues on the home page reads “LEARN how civilian men in AFGHANISTAN have been brutalized, while governments fight for women’s rights.”

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2 This link leads to a page which presents two main points: first, the crimes against men in Afghanistan are diverse and emerge from multiple sources; and second:
is distinctly antifeminist: the second quick link announces the campaign “STOP CEDAW (Convention to Eliminate Discrimination against Women), the United Nations’ Attempt to Impose Radical Feminism on the United States.” On a multilevel perusal of this site I found no acknowledgement that sex discrimination is in most, or even many, cases to women’s disadvantage; rather, the organization posits men as victims repeatedly, and often as victims of women in particular.

Hence reclaiming and objectification cannot be perfect complements of each other, because, as I would suggest is true of the above case, some self-announced reclaimings actually work to further domination rather than to achieve equality, and some objectifications work in the interest of those objectified, making it difficult to apply notions of resistance. Ultimately, then, one cannot formally wed reclaiming to objectification. Rather, one might see them as closely related yet independent, and to depict reclaiming such that it not be always and only a response. What distinguishes reclaiming, then, is precisely that acts that would otherwise simply be read as initiative claims, are fashioned as “re”-claims for no reason other than that a given group is understood (by itself or by others) to have lost something, whether enfranchisement, visibility or self-determination on a media, institutional, or cultural level; or the inherent

“Feminists are exploiting the situation in Afghanistan in order to impose a quota system on the new Afghan government. According to a recent article by Wendy McElroy, ("Boss Tweed' Feminism," December 11, 2001), feminists are using euphemistic phrases such as "including the voices of women in government" in order to push a feminist utopia on post-Taliban Afghanistan. This top-down strategy worked in Kosovo, where the parliament now functions under a UN-mandated quota system that required that one-third of all candidates in the 2001 election were female. A similar tactic was also used in Argentina, which dramatically increased the number of women who have been "elected" into government. If Afghanistan goes the way of Kosovo and Argentina, then what
value of a group's characteristic features (the loss occurs via its negation by society at large).

If objectification can be said to be a kind of object-making, then, as I will attempt to show in this chapter, reclaiming can certainly be seen as an animated kind of subject-making, and as such seems important to a discussion of resistive or (re)enabling political action at both individual and collective levels. How might we begin to characterize reclaiming in a cognitively amenable view, yet remain sensitive to, for instance, the politics of loss and gain? Is there a way to characterize a reclaiming of subjectivity that rises not merely out from objectness, but from abjection, so deeply inarticulable in a sense; and is reclaiming in this sense not a repossession of subjectivity, but an effort towards subjectivization within the domain of a dominant political realm? What are the precise terms which are understood to be contested and then asserted? And what do they – cognitively – share in common? I address these questions in the present chapter.

Black/Queer/Linguistics/Semiotics

The chapter is structured along two axes: it comparatively examines two major political movements in the United States in the second half of the 20th century, both of which include reclaiming events around specific terms of identity; and at the same time it visits two major theoretical areas, each of which affords certain perspectives on reclaiming. I begin with a "textbook" example of a reclaimed word, black, set against a context of racial politics in the U.S., one heavily inflected by a lasting legacy of slavery. Then I

country will be next?" http://www.ncfm.org/menshealthamerica/afghanistan.htm; the main page is at http://www.ncfm.org/.
assess several linguistic accounts of the contextual and political factors, the agents, and the temporal processes of black's reclaiming. While the linguistic accounts provide essential insights, especially for language-specific domains, they also to some extent demonstrate the risks of a perspective restricted to linguistic form. I then turn to address a number of "poststructuralist" (in some cases semiotic)\footnote{I had some trouble categorizing in a simple way the diverse perspectives to which I juxtaposed the sociolinguistic ones. By "poststructuralist" I do not mean to imply that there do not exist poststructuralist linguistic accounts; yet not all approaches I refer to would self-refer as "semiotics". As an umbrella term I have chosen to use "semiotics," perhaps most simply because I wish to refer to a broader category of signs than those normally entertained in linguistics.} accounts of reclaiming, this time focusing on the word queer and its special place in the public discourse (as, for instance, a signifier of tabooed sexuality) in relation to its intended effects in terms of queer theory. Semiotic accounts, just as once envisioned by Saussure, include "language" (as it is normally understood in linguistics) within a larger landscape of signs, but do not specify quite where uttered language fits within this landscape. I show how linguistic accounts can be enriched by a semiotic approach; but I also show that certain poststructuralist accounts also risk universalizing certain factors and deter inquiry into issues of, for example, language change or individual agency. I finally show that the two approaches, insofar as they can be seen as separate, need not remain estranged: in a two-part cognitive-linguistic analysis on the reclaiming of the word queer, I respond to both theoretical discourses, attempt to integrate the crucial insights they offer, and offer novel and revealing explanations (and sometimes correctives) in cognitive terms, for the claims of semiotics that would have seemed empirically unattainable.

\footnote{I mention some major writings on abjection later in the chapter.}
Throughout we must consider affect as essential to the process of reclaiming. “Meaning” (in symbolic language) cannot be equated with “self”. Rather, affect intervenes between what are understood as “intellected meaning” (which I would argue cannot exist without affect, alone) and “self”. Such affective presence can be seen in identification (or perspective) and vulnerability, as well as such parameterized theories as those which take measure of value judgments, mood states, proximities, and attitudes that may be expressed in language. In sum, we must consider both the unrealized, in some sense inchoate, meaning of a conceptualized object, and affectivity, for it is affectivity which determines the sense of a self in relation to that object.

First Case Study: The Reclaiming Of Black

Perhaps what is held up as the most “successful” and representative verbal instance of reclaiming in the United States, is the word black (seen, for example, in the slogan Black Is Beautiful). We begin with a literal “textbook example.” According to Hans Hock, who in his introductory historical linguistics text treats black as an exemplary positive semantic change from negativity to neutrality, black was successfully reclaimed: the derogation was simply lost, and the term, perhaps once purged of its taboo, broadened to common in-group and out-group use as a term of reference rather than insult. I depict his characterization in visual form following the excerpt.

[N]egative attitudes of Americans of European descent toward fellow-citizens of African origin for a long time brought about a situation in which any term used for Afro-Americans quickly acquired negative, derogatory, or insulting connotations. Just as with tabooed words, the response until recently consisted in a constant turnover in the words designating Afro-Americans, ranging from ‘Ethiopian’, ‘African’, ‘Colored’, ‘Negro’, ‘Afro-American’ to the six-letter obscenity still commonly used as a term of insult. This linguistic turnover was in the nineteen-seventies brought to a halt by a conscious and deliberate redefinition of the word ‘black’: Where previously this word had negative and derogatory connotations, even among Afro-Americans, it was now redefined by the
‘Black-Power Movement’ as a word with neutral or even positive connotations, completely on a par with the word ‘white’ which had traditionally been employed in reference to Americans of European origin. And since then it has replaced all its predecessors, including Afro-American, as the most commonly used, neutral term for Americans of African descent. (300, emphasis mine)

Fig. 1. The reclaiming of black in U.S. – my depiction according to Hock 1991.

By all accounts, the apparent history of the use of black in the United States does involve, at least, a reference to African Americans which dates back at least to 19th-century usage. More recently was a marked period in which black was used in a novel and visible way: the 1965 phrase, “Black is Beautiful”, is attributed to the Black Power Movement. This movement occurred in the wake of events relating and in response to the civil rights actions of the late 1950’s, which consisted of vehement resistance to white racist violence and discrimination and efforts to procure safe and tenable access to the polls. By the 1960’s, however, the Black Power movement had developed as a radical response to widespread white hostility and violence in reaction to civil rights gains of the 1950’s. Black Power also distinguished itself from what it saw as the relatively assimilationist tactics of the civil rights movement, and was deeply engaged in grassroots struggle for the well-being of blacks at a time when the country’s preoccupations with the
Vietnam War made further civil rights legislation impossible. The radicalism of black political movements at the time were apparent in the tactics of the Black Panthers, a group based in Oakland which planned armed revolution during the 1960’s.

Despite the appearance of temporal simplicity alleged by Hock, there are nevertheless a diversity of conflicting perspectives around black, and its use continues to be debated. Already in 1977, Geneva Smitherman wrote that “the term ‘black’ has achieved widespread usage and acceptance by both blacks and whites” (1977: 35), though she acknowledged that “there are some blacks, especially older ones, who do a double flinch at being called ‘black.’ You see, they remember when black was not so beautiful…” (41) Her account of the usages of black and African-American interestingly suggests that it can often be a shift in concern with one or another aspect of identity – rather than only a negative value of the term itself - that mobilizes the eventual abandonment of one term for another. This suggests the same shift in concern may also motivate the adoption of that term in the first place. Unlike Hock, Smitherman hints that positivity and negativity, which are the key terms of “amelioration,” may be derivable from, rather than central to, identity-based or politically-informed connotations. Smitherman’s account also suggests the possibility of intergenerational change, suggesting that a given term may gradually be “bleached” of its derogation.6

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5 Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed.
6 I use this word self-consciously and ironically to suggest racialized interiors of semantic change. I take it out of context: “Bleaching” is a term that has been used in linguistics scholarship on grammaticalization, particularly subjectification (see references mentioned in Chapter 3). In the process of grammaticalization, lexical items became more grammatical over time and concomitantly less “contentful,” in the sense that they refer less and less to concrete domains and more to abstract domains; they furthermore shift away from propositional meaning to textual or expressive meaning. The bleaching theory
There are also expressions of concern about the fact that there is not only one meaning for *black*, that being an adjective or noun that designates people of African descent – a fact which Hock ignores. Indeed, both historically and in the present the phonological “black” ([blaek]) has so easily slid from homophony (2 words which sound alike but which differ in meaning, and share no etymology) to polysemy (2 words which sound alike and which also have split into different meanings from a shared history) and back again. Some say that the word *black* represents a clear case of polysemy, rather than homophony: one *black* indicates the social group of persons of a certain ethnicity and/or racial status; another *black* indicates an affective quality, a dismal or hopeless aspect; and yet a third *black* indicates a shade in the color spectrum. Since “the” social group – itself a particular racialized construction with vague borders, produced and reproduced by a racist society - is consistently associated with multiple forms of negativity, and since it is difficult to reject out of hand the possibility that the three senses may interact, if indirectly. There is a very literal sense, then, that the use of *black* has effects beyond one’s individual control.

Furthermore, the practice of the use of “black” to refer to African peoples in particular, reaches back to European colonialism and expansionism, a time at which a long-enduring association (starting with Christian medievalism) between negative and positive values and “black” and “white,” respectively, was conveniently available to serve the marking and devaluing purposes of colonial domination. Cornel West delineates several modes of “Afro-American oppression” as follows:

referred uniquely to the apparent “loss” of content and has since been abandoned, since more recent accounts favor understanding semantic change as shift rather than loss.
The aim of the first moment is to examine modes of European domination of African peoples; that of the second moment, to probe into forms of European subjugation of African peoples; and that of the third moment, to focus on types of European exploitation and repression of African peoples. These moments of theoretical inquiry – always already traversed by male supremacist and heterosexual supremacist logics – overlap and crisscross in complex ways, yet each highlights a distinctive dimension of the multi-leveled oppression of Europeans over African peoples. (1988: 22)

There seems, indeed, a shaky security in attempting to reclaim a word whose position in discourse is difficult to discern, and whose meaning easily slides into extreme negativity in so many cases. One writer protests the use of black along these lines:

So when someone says, “I am black and proud” I have to ask is the choice of the word black the most productive one? On the one hand that person is stating a fact. He is dark skinned and he is proud, but the word ‘black’, in my opinion, tends to undermine his claim to equality simply because in the world of human language and perceptions ‘black’ is the most negative descriptive word in existence. In other words it generates unequal evaluations of things. (Williams)

The writer suggests, tongue in cheek, a less compromising alternative: “I’m from the cool band of the rainbow!”

Perhaps in a more realist mode than either Hock or Smitherman, John Baugh (1991) points out that there may be important differences in the status of a term (whether or not it qualifies as injurious, harmless, or negative, for instance) among ingroup and outgroup populations (ingroupness being defined as a degree of intimacy with slave descendants). He also reinforces the view that experimentation with language goes on in private, whereas many other accounts of reclaiming (Cameron and Hock, for instance) would seem to locate its origin in an idealized moment in which the group decides to send a linguistic message to the outside. More importantly, unlike Hock’s proposal of a

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I am indebted to Martina Tissberger for bringing this to my awareness.

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176

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seemingly punctual, complete (note his use of the words “previously”, “brought to a halt”, “now”) and pervasive (“has replaced all its predecessors”) shift in time, Baugh – while also stating that black is by “now acceptable” (6) – proposes a temporal progression for the dynamics of acceptance of African American in private and public contexts, a phenomenon whose slower dynamics were vividly enhanced by the profiling of the use of the term by the Reverend Jesse Jackson in 1988. Baugh’s diagram concerns two dimensions: much or little intimacy with slave-descendant (sd) culture, and private/public domains. In his view, the reclaiming of terms pertaining to “American Slave Descendants” black proceeded in four stages, from the originary private-ingroup settings; to public ingroup settings; then to public outgroup settings; and finally to private outgroup settings.8

It is of consequence that of the scholarship that I managed to locate which discusses black, none of them seems to rely on verified accounts as to whether the usage of the word black was in fact derogatory - otherwise put, that it was used dominantly and precisely for pejorative purposes; rather, the derogation seems to be assumed. For instance, Smitherman, in saying “black was not so beautiful”, seems to hold back from uttering in clear terms the negative meanings of black itself. In 1967, a Black Panther publication read, “The hangup is that they have tried to sweep ‘Black’ under the rug for

8 Baugh’s account however seems to imply, in my opinion wrongly, that there is a period in the development of the acceptance of the term in which the public accepts a term and the private group does not. In the case of black, it seems that his proposed model cannot represent what happens, as there was no taboo on black that shifted unilaterally from the outgroup (nonblack public cannot speak black) to the ingroup (blacks cannot speak black). I would suggest rather that the private acceptance is ongoing – or at least in ongoing debate and experimentation, while what is novel is that the public experiments with a newfound freedom with the usage of the term.
all these years and can't stand us digging 'Black is Beautiful'.”

Deborah Cameron finds in *queer* a closer parallel with *nigger* than with *black*, because in her opinion *nigger* is more “in your face” (1995: 148).

There is a sense of *mutedness* in all of these references to the historical usage of *black* (by whites), and they seem not to be all determined by a euphemistic impulse on the part of the writers. Rather they seem to suggest that the meaning that is cited in a use of *black* “with pride” has not been so polemic to start with.

What might this “uncertain past” suggest about that scholarship, then, that *black* is viewed as an exemplary case for reclaiming? The same scholars who did not apparently confirm *black*’s derogatory history moved willingly to see the *word* as the very thing that was *re*-claimed and *re*-valued. I would suggest that it is because they took a language-specific view that they effectively *denied* the possibility of this reclaiming’s cross-modal character at the same time that they *rewrote* it as a same-modality phenomenon; in a sense, they had to recuperate non-linguistic forms of devaluation into a linguistic circuit of exchange before the devaluations could be effectively responded to. In some sense, then, linguists applied anew the idealization of speaker-hearer conversational exchange, but this time in a macrocosmic expansion, an idealization of one community taking turns speaking to another, where in this case the turn exchange – from, say, whites to blacks – occurred in the 1960s, the time of the Black Power Movement.

Unwittingly, then, and in spite of their tendency to recast things in linguistic terms, these scholars did manage to perceive and respond to an important aspect of reclaiming – they “lost” the very cross-modality of one of their signature cases of

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"verbal" reclaiming. Let us recover this lost crossing now. If we consider the significant possibility that black did not have a concrete history of derogation, then it would seem that black must have been understood by its reclaimers (and to later scholars) to be potentially pejorative. It was the symbol black's status as potential instrument, that lent black this object quality of something that needed to be reclaimed. Hence it became the visible or audible sign of the claim itself: "Black Is Beautiful."

Robin Lakoff (1975) suggests a broader definition of reclaiming than the one that focuses on a formulaic "reaction" to derogation. In her case, reclaiming would seem to include all references that could be construed as instruments of derogation, even if they might never have been used as such. Crucial to such a definition is the linking of perceived stigma with the identity of some group, and the conveyance of a sign of this relation. Lakoff shows in particular how terms used to refer to any stigmatized, or lower-status, group (such as terms pertaining to women) are reclaimable in this sense. The merit of Lakoff's account is that it moves reclaiming away from a merely "reactive" act safely contained in a purely linguistic domain to something that may be initiative as a linguistic act. One effect of this broadened definition is that reclaiming then may, in addition, work across modalities: it is a definition that opens out to semiotics.10

10 Lakoff is careful not to place inordinate importance on reclaiming itself. In a discussion of the reclaiming of black, she writes that "linguistic and social change go hand in hand: one cannot, purely by changing language use, change social status.... Since great headway was made first in the social sphere, linguistic progress could be made on that basis; and now this linguistic progress, it is hoped, will lead to new social progress in turn." (R. Lakoff 1975: 41-2) It is unclear whether Lakoff rhetorically or substantively separates linguistic and social progress. But the possibility that linguistic progress may be separated from social progress raises the question: To what degree might we see linguistic reclaiming itself as a "mover" of social progress, even if its own effects could not, in essence, stand on their own?
Under this account, even if a seemingly original derogation has occurred “outside of” explicit speech, a reclaiming act may be performed in speech, as well as on posted signs; even, too, on physical territories. In October, 1999, the Southern Baptist Convention distributed a pamphlet portraying Hindus as having “darkness in their hearts that no lamp can dispel” and being “lost in the hopeless darkness of Hinduism.” Members of the Hindu faith who protested the pamphlet acted in a number of domains, each of which might be said to be a kind of reclaiming: a move to be re-subjectified in the collectivity’s representation by others. Demonstrators strode in circles before symbolically prominent buildings of the Baptist Church, bearing signs that displayed affirmative statements about Hindus. One Hindu interviewee said to a television news reporter, “We have a value system people crave in this country. We teach respect for others, for marriage vows, for elders.” Indeed it seems that the interviewee was not simply being informative; a move was made to change or challenge Hindus’ representation in the eyes and minds of others. By referring to a system that “people crave in this country”, the speaker attempted to highlight a link between Hindu cultural practices and the American ethos.

Cameron, writing in sociolinguistics, defines reclaiming as “proposing deliberately to ameliorate [taboo words and insults],” without promise of success (1995: 147). Compared with euphemism, reclaiming would then seem to operate directly on lexical meaning rather than, as in the case of euphemism, to leave it alone. Cameron’s usage of “proposal” points to the dialogic nature of reclaiming – specifically, the need for corresponding meaning change on the part of some hypothetical hearer (broadly put, “reader”). She sees such intentional linguistic acts as deserving a place in political
strategies of intervention, and rejects what she perceives as a claim in linguistics that intentional individual acts cannot hope to change permanent structures of language, because change processes rely so much more on the arbitrary or universal principles over which individuals have no control. “There is scope, albeit not unlimited scope, for effective intervention in language.” (1995: 18)

It is further well worth asking why reference is held up so often in these accounts (Hock and Smitherman both expressed this point of view) as the ideal final stage for a term. There is, certainly, a very proper expectation of the linguistic status of reference, or neutrality, in cases where reclaiming happened in the context of a political movement for equality. This might first seem to be true in the case of black, since there is a loose historical coincidence between the reclaiming of black and the Civil Rights Movement (though the impulse of reclaiming emerged somewhat after the impulses in the Civil Rights movement). But this coincidence may not be meaningful: the reclaiming seemed to occur in the context of a movement (Black Power) that at least partly rejected the assimilationist appearances of civil rights efforts.

But perhaps – and this is not to say that the civil rights movement did not make sense or was regrettable in any way – it is relevant that civil rights aimed to work with a system that was already in place, and that, at least comparatively, Black Power eschewed such engagement. A related question is, from the point of view of linguistics, why is it that a neutral, or referential, stage counts as a successful result of reclaiming, a stage from which we may say a term has been reclaimed? More importantly, for whom may we say a term has been “rehabilitated”, has, effectively, lost its potency? And to whom is the achievement of these final stages credited?
There are, indeed, striking differences between the verb “reclaim” and the present participle “reclaimed.” The first is, in my opinion, much more broadly applicable, since it may fairly apply to both individual and collective acts. But it seems the second may only apply to the collective. The participle “reclaimed” further presupposes a certain narrative in which a final stage has been reached, whereas the first does not assume any kind of finality; and it casts implications about what “success” (presented as obviously to be desired) is – in this case, that the word has essentially been bled of affect, and further, of a certain self-conscious history. This understanding of “success” invites comparisons to discussions around, on the one hand, assimilation, for it is assimilationist perspectives which desire a word to neutralize, and certain culturally bounded discourses which desire words to shed affect, or formally cast off affective words to the domain of “feminine discourse,” and appropriation (in the sense that word usages particular to minority groups submit to acceptance by the dominant discourses) on the other.

A related question to ask is whether taking recourse to a particular narrative in which reclaiming develops in fixed stages - such as, for example, derogation, reclaiming, positivity, then reference - is the best strategy. I think it can be so only under certain conditions: If we take our understanding of reclaiming as templatic and portionable, and if we further understand that such multiple stages, say, from derogation to reclaiming to reference, are idealizations that likely have less legitimacy for individual experience than an ability to be imagined by reclaimers and observing scholars alike, then I think the model can remain useful. I do believe that, given that the overwhelming number of cases may be represented only by a portion of the template suggested above, our only chance to study them adequately is to accept the likelihood of partiality from the very outset, and an
ultimate recourse to nothing more than the semiotic circuit of exchange, which has no beginning or end.

Besides imposing a temporal narrative, and idealized end stages, there are still other ways that predominant characterizations of reclaiming “lose” certain cases that bear direct relevance. I refer next to a recorded discussion between a friend and me concerning language use in the summer of 1997. (I have given them abstract names and removed the local identifiers so as to maintain anonymity.) As will be seen, this is not a self-evident instance of reclaiming, since it is a non-member of the community who cites the word, and may well have been ill-disposed toward describing his action as a reclaiming. Yet in some sense the term is being made good; or, to use Cameron’s words, “proposed to ameliorate”. To introduce the following portion of text, A identified as an “out” lesbian, and was then aged 40. She had a friend of several years, a male immigrant named B. B was of a similar age, and had been in the U.S. at least 10 years, speaking accented but fluent English. That summer, A was seeking various odd jobs, including light construction and landscaping. B took it on himself to further her employment. A recounted to me, for a second time, B’s own account of his phone conversation with an acquaintance who had revealed that he was looking for a worker (this initial story I did not record). Suggesting that A was a good candidate, B added an item to her list of qualifications, saying “She’s a bulldagger!” (bulldagger). Below, A for the first time explains her reaction to the event.\(^{11}\)

\(^{11}\) Note that A refers sometimes to an earlier exchange between us, which I did not record. Specifically, her “she’s a bulldagger” in this text is a casual citation of her previous recounting; to my regret, this recorded citation did not have the original emphasis, which as I recall she clearly attributed to B.
[M: I just wanna know how you felt it]

A: No, I was proud, I thought that was really great, I mean, it was um, it was paid as a compliment, and I took it as one, and, you know I laughed out loud I thought it was, I, I liked it.

[M: what do you think he saw in you that was meriting...] [the label ‘bulldagger’?]

A: oh, that I could work hard, and that I was proud of being able to work hard, and... I'd never... y'ow, kind of lay down and say oh, I can’t do it because I’m a girl or whatever. He could count on that not happenin’ an... he was doing it this guy call - told the man who was the contractor of the job, she can do it, she’s a bulldagger, so I liked it also that it was, [B] already knew this, but he was informing somebody else. Like, he wasn’t only, not only paying me a compliment, he was like, there are some women out there that have this property, and it’s good, and now I’m showin’ you, why it’s good, you know it was like it was really affirming, and it was cool. And the other guy’s not particularly open and supportive of the gay community, and [B] didn’t give a shit. It was like, it’s time for you to wake up. And that was nice. I mean that was a very friend thing to do.

(Interview with A, 1997)

Though reclaiming acts in fact vary as to whether or not explicitly positive values are attached to signifiers, most reclaimings are nevertheless conventionally viewed (and thus often intended) in this way. The preceding example is one example of explicit “good”-application. Secondly, note that A’s observation that “that was a very friend thing to do,” refers both to B’s affiliative and supportive move on her behalf. I claim that this affiliation is what cements B’s counting as “ingroup,” or at least, for the moment, sympathetic enough to “speak for” a member of that group. Also, interestingly, note that this usage would seem to violate Baugh’s suggested temporal development for the reclaiming of black: It is not clear that “bulldagger” has been to any significant degree reclaimed within either the lesbian or the gay male communities, or, for that matter, the queer community. And yet B stepped in and performed something that looks very much
like a reclaiming (especially in the sense that it would be hard to deny that some ameliorating revision was being proposed).

Thus, the identity of the “I” behind the reclaiming act, the ingroup identity that would have been sought for this case by a conventional reclaiming account, seems not to make sense here. Indeed, any conventional division of selves or groups simply does not operate. The fact that this act does not, however, neatly fit into an idealized template, and yet, for instance, participates in the possibility of meaning change, opens the possibility that this act, like the “marriage with a monkey” example of Chapter 1, bears an important relation to the ideal. At the very least, it serves as a “boundary” case, and as such it can be informative. And to the extent that our interests lie in the possibility of long-term linguistic and social change, or in the possibility of the local impact of a symbolic manipulation, this example stands to inquiry as much as any other.

Meaning Change and Performativity in Reclaiming

The previous example, in its problematizing of the self-evident ingroup “I” who enacts a reclaiming, raises deeper questions concerning language acts and their role in instituting changes in “reality” as its users know it. It is useful at this point to take up the discussion on performativity that was opened in Chapter 1. While many discussions are in order, I focus on just one here: an interpretation of reclaiming that understands it as being (on top of other things) about a code, a normative system, such that that system is being proposed to change. As we have seen, reclaiming can be characterized as an appropriation of the right, or power, to name oneself; in particular, of the right to construct meaning itself. This is an authority reminiscent of that indicated in traditional definitions of linguistic
performativity, in which the conditions for the use of an utterance must be correct and appropriate — including, for certain performatives, use by the socially-designated "authority" (e.g. the correct civic/religious authority granting marriage in Austin’s canonical example). But is there any authority to speak of? Wouldn’t Austin reject this case out of hand, given that such reclaiming impostors to authority seem much closer to performing a mockery than a convention? We need not; rather, in reclaiming by a disenfranchised group, one can imagine that this performativity, far from being a socially granted contract, represents complex and subjective conditions of authority, which contribute to the effectivity in any instance of reclaiming.

Reclaiming also merits study as a kind of performativity in the sense that it is a linguistic act which bears some intent toward the manipulation of social reality. Reclaiming is so clearly a social act, far from being a utterance that aims merely to report or represent (such as, for instance, Austin’s constatives). Judith Butler’s “performativity” centrally refers to subjects’ repeated and failed attempts (performances) to attain norms, thereby reinstating those norms as idealized schemes. In a discourse perspective, this amounts to the recirculation of new (non-normative) significations in new contexts. Hence new meanings are actualized which, in their turn, condition what we understand of social constructs. So too does reclaiming, at the least and on the whole, appear invested in the recirculation of new meanings and realization of some form of social change. In strict definitions of performativity, as we have seen in Chapter 1, intention, convention, and utterance are aligned; and, even if failed performatives are allowed for, the conventions themselves are taken to be stable (Austin 1955). Building on the critiques of Austin’s inordinately “socially clean” account in Chapter 1, this chapter departs from his
definitions in that it attends explicitly to the reflexivity of performativity: how structures that operate within performativity are themselves renewed and/or changed in every instantiation, in this case the performativity of social change itself.¹²

I suggest we retain a notion of a “conditioned authority” (opposed to Austin’s authority, which I will call “conventional”) that, similarly to prestige, conditions the strength of a contribution to changes in social or conventional reality, where the symbolic value of language is a part of that reality. But what is the authority that persons in this example may claim to have? In ingroup engagements of Baugh’s reclaiming “experimentations”, we might use Brown and Gilman’s (1960) sociolinguistic concept solidarity (opposed to power) as a kind of starting point. In their paper on the relations of power and solidarity in pronominal use, Brown and Gilman show that certain pronouns (T and V, based on the French “tu” and “vous”) can be used to indicate solidarity or deference. What they do not cover is the possibility that “tu” and “vous” pronouns may also be used cynically, or ambivalently, depending on how the context serves the use of language. If we invert the use of specific linguistic items to create solidarity, and instead explore solidary contexts in the making of meaning, it would seem that one’s very being in an ingroup does have some kind of authorizing effect, albeit not one formalized and legalized as Austin’s example of marriage vows, but similar in the sense that the authority is conferred upon a speaker by others in the community.

¹² Butler attends in her way to the reflexivity of the performativity of the body, in claiming that Bourdieu, who himself appeals to the notion of performativity in Language and Symbolic Power, takes for granted the role of the body in affirming and validating a performative act. The body is thus an invisible mercenary to the performative act, and yet its own self-renewal is never assured.
This solidarity continues in communications to the outgroup (as we have seen in the earlier examples), only the hearer is not appealed to in quite the same way; hearers are not understood, for example, to share the positivity that they attribute to the speaker’s uttered instance of the term. As Austin’s pastor has been conferred authority by participants of these social conventions, so might an ingroup member, especially one in good esteem within the group, be conferred a kind of “lexifying” authority, or, more generally, authority to influence usage and, more broadly, symbolic meaning. This kind of authority is similar to that which is afforded to a more esteemed member of a social circle, so that they may perform a range of determining, representative, and influential actions. Such an authority is particularly widespread – and especially in individualist cultural arenas of the United States – over the apparent domain of the self – that is, if it involves a ‘mere’ self-declaration, an acting on oneself, as opposed to the naming of, and acting on, another person; and acting on meaning in contexts of self-reference.\footnote{For Butler, authority can be at least partially appropriated or mimicked with real effects: “[I]n laying claim to the right for which she [Rosa Parks] had no prior authorization, she endowed a certain authority on the act, and began the insurrectionary process of overthrowing those established codes of legitimacy.” (Butler 1997:147)} Of course, while that authority may be given, it does not come without its risks.

The transformative power of “outing” oneself as a gay or lesbian person has been much discussed, and demonstrates that even this kind of act under this kind of blurry authority has real-world causality. But “conditioned authority” differs from “conventional” authority (in Austin’s sense) in two ways: first, given the compromised public authority of a publicly unauthorized person, the conditioned authority is generally limited to within the bounds of ingroup communities. The relation is asymmetric:
Conventional authority is not a priori blocked from operating in “public” scenes (for example, straightness, whiteness, or maleness is not a priori disenfranchised; some might say it is enfranchised by default) and may thus have access to many (and more powerful) forms of signifying realms to which relatively disempowered groups have complex, or nonexistent, access.

But finding some way to effect Austin's normally-binary notion of authority in these uncertain conditions only takes us part of the way. It is also necessary to answer another question: does the speech situation – the “context” – satisfy the demands for proper uptake of the performative in question? Already, “context” has been a growing preoccupation in linguistics, having been taken in increasingly complex steps from a templatic view of a categorizable setting (home, library, school grounds) with categorizable speakers (mother/child, librarian/borrower, girl/boy) to notions of staging and identity or subject position, all of which may change within the course of a single conversation. But we run into a real complication here: there are no formalized scripts for the proper invocation of a performative, whereas there do exist such scripts in Austin's socially ritualized performatives (marriage and other civic ceremonies like naming). What might we say, then, needs to be true for a reclaiming to 1) be understood as intended; 2) be “effectual”?

We might take – for the sake of argument – a two-part schema of context, or speech situation, and utterance: the audible stream of speech (more broadly, the concert of symbolic acts), at least in part perceived and parsed as words (more broadly, signifiers), which is likely especially true of tabooed, derogatory or other injurious words, possibly strengthened in their identifiability by gesticulation or vocal emphasis during
their utterance. Given this way of understanding speech acts, then reclaiming, as is true of some joke genres, in fact depends pivotally on this (speech/social) context. But unlike garden-path jokes ("The horse raced past the barn fell") and other decontextualized, cited jokes turning largely on narrative, reclaiming relies on utterance history only secondarily. That is, the immediate history of the reclaiming act is operative only however much it services the setting up of group (and ingroup) identity and affiliation—things that dress, facial expression, accent, intonation, and other things (such as an explicit statement of affiliation) may equally well establish. Reclaiming also, differently, requires a self-evident (to the hearers) relation of identity or affiliation between the speaker and the derogated group, at least in what we might call its "early" stages (though of course it proceeds at different rates, at different times, within what we imagine to be an entire "community"). I state affiliation intentionally: We have already encountered in the case of A's "bulldaggah", above, a reclaiming that was made to work by a non-member of the derogated group; it succeeds, however, precisely, I believe, not because of any generalized "lexifying" authority but rather because a move of affiliation is made—an associative one—that still falls short of community identification, and has its own authorizing effects.

As with jokes, reclaiming does seem to operate by way of disruption, which presumes the existence of an overarching context whose expected terms are violated in some way. At the simplest level, discourse, or symbolic, appropriation disrupts folk beliefs which isomorphically bind language to identity and to political beliefs: "discourse-style-reveals-identity" and "discourse-style-reveals-political stance." The disruption may be as simple as a moment in which a person who appears for a comfortably dominant
member of U.S. society to be an abject immigrant, comes near and suddenly, simply, speaks. The pragmatic or social context of the reappropriation is crucial to disruption as follows: at the moment of the novel act which could be depicted as a reclaiming, an unfamiliar ambiguity is created by the relative impossibility that the full implications of the discourse would “fit” entirely into the present context, leaving the listener with a choice between imputing (to the reclamer) either a claim, or a self-devaluation, if the symbol “claimed” is already devalued. But this ambiguity must also be understood to be more or less strong depending on the strength of the positivity of the context. For example, if one heard “I’m black and I’m proud,” spoken to a black audience such as occurred in the 1960’s, one might imagine that the audience of this act is significantly more likely to attribute positivity to the exclamation than negativity. “I’m a queer and it sucks” is more likely to induce a negative reading. However, the first example would seem much more likely – all else equal – to be viewed as a reclaiming than the latter one. Note that this “choice” may not be a conscious one; we could imagine that in the early stages of reclaiming, the ingroup context forecloses the possibility of a devaluing interpretation. I address this point later in the chapter.

**Case Study Two: Semiotics And The Reclaiming Of Queer**

Having addressed performative authority in a partly linguistic-pragmatics, partly semiotic-theory way, we are now prepared to turn more fully toward semiotic accounts of reclaiming, accounts which extend far beyond language in a linguistic sense (but which, I maintain, would still “work” only under the constraining conditions of authority outlined above). Our discussion centers around the reclaiming of *queer*, a rather complex case of
reclaiming, and an identity label about which queer politics' use as identity has remained ambivalent. I begin, first, with a performative account of queer.

For Judith Butler, the local power of the semantics of a word in its context is clearly subordinated to the contextual history of the word’s utterance. Furthermore, it would seem that the intentionality of the speaking subject she describes has little to do, if at all, with the workings of reclaiming. It should be noted that for Butler, the nature of a subject differs quite radically from that of a cognitive-linguistic subject, in the sense that for Butler the human subject is seen as an effect of a discourse with little control over that which it is created by.\textsuperscript{14} Thus, in Butler’s view, the place of intentionality is naturally minimal, if not totally irrelevant, to issues of “success.” But her stance is not simple pessimism. In terms more closely linked to discourse theory, Butler suggests that reclaiming is part of a broader, ongoing resignification over which participating subjects cannot have “sovereign” control, and in which they cannot be fully aware of the terms of resignification, but through repeated recontextualization a word may hope to be rehabilitated in a limited sense. In a chapter entitled “Critically Queer” Butler expresses a qualified optimism about the term queer as follows: “[A]gency is derived from limitations in language, and... limitation is not fully negative in its implications.... The

\textsuperscript{14} It is worth noting that while linguistic and Foucauldian-tradition discourses clearly differ, I do not think this “subjected and delimited” aspect of the human subject that Foucault and others offer, necessarily opposes that in sociolinguistic and cognitive-linguistic conceptions. In linguistics the subject is certainly painted in different terms and from a different social-theoretical perspective. However, relevantly, linguistic competence is seen as part of communicative competence, which is itself a component of social competence. While the norms of competence are described without necessary reference to the institutional motivations for their structure, they are clearly not understood as open to arbitrary manipulation by the human subject. In this sense, strong, pre-determining limitations to creativity are seen in both Foucauldian articulations and linguistic
resignification of speech requires opening new contexts, speaking in ways that have never yet been legitimated, and hence producing legitimation in new and future forms” (Butler 1993b). It is not only grammar that determines a subject’s choices for perception (Whorf), hones a subject’s thinking for speaking (Slobin), nor is it only experience that forms a subject’s grammatical and conceptual building blocks (G. Lakoff), but power and discourse in the Foucaultian sense. Thus, we may consider structures quite beyond the subject as we normally imagine it, structures that not only influence that subject, but set the conditions for its very existence.

Butler’s emphasis on a broader set of structures that necessarily circumscribe subjectivity and agency manifests in her use of the Freudian notion of repetition compulsion. For Freud, a subject who has undergone trauma continues to experience a sequence of unconscious-driven reenactments of that injury (rather, its condensed or displaced symbol). These reenactments are called repetition-compulsions, or, “repetition with a difference.” It is only through psychoanalytic work that the subject can bring the trauma out of the unconscious, by “recollection, repetition, and working-through” (to cite the title of Freud’s relevant essay) the injury in order to identify the original trauma, bringing it into consciousness and thereby securing recovery from it. In engaging this Freudian concept, Butler suggests we see reclaiming, or its wider phenomenon - the repetition of “recited and restaged” injurious words - as a necessity: “Indeed, their repetition is necessary (in court, as testimony; in psychoanalysis, as traumatic emblems; in aesthetic modes, as a cultural working-through) in order to enter them as objects of another discourse” (Butler 1997). But in order to make this claim she has needed to make conceptions alike.
a certain assumption: that societies, or groups (or, perhaps, cultures), can be seen to possess their own collective psyches – ones that can experience trauma, and can, in working-through, bring things into consciousness. If we do not read Butler this way, the only other way to understand what she has said is to imagine an individual subject repeating the sign of an individually experienced verbal injury, which I think would be reductive considering the whole of Butler’s text. While I entirely agree with Butler’s suggestion that reclaiming is part of a broader, ongoing resignification over which participating subjects cannot have “sovereign” control (in some sense this resembles Cameron’s and other linguists’ position, though in different terms), and in which they cannot be fully aware of the terms of resignification, I nevertheless feel it is worth asking whether it is necessary to take recourse to a notion of the collective psyche to explain how linguistic injury and responsive acts do their work. To what distinctions might we turn if we desired to differentiate experienced injury among individuals? Indeed, it might well seem that the undifferentiated, templatically vulnerable subject, once again as an individual, no longer has access to anything but being injured.

Eve Sedgwick, evocatively, depicts words as “fraught” by their association with social conditions: “A word so fraught as ‘queer’ with so many social and personal histories of exclusion, violence, defiance, excitement – never can only denote; nor can it only connote; a part of its experimental force as a speech act is the way in which it dramatizes locutionary position itself.” (Sedgwick 1993b:9) Thus Sedgwick alleges that queer’s denotative meaning cannot simply be treated independently of its many connotations (what she calls “social and personal histories of exclusion, violence, defiance, excitement...”). Sedgwick seems to follow the conventions of the
poststructuralist discourses in which she writes by imputing specifically structural meaning to words like “queer,” preferring to characterize the word itself as fraught with histories. Again, this perspective derives from a markedly different philosophy of language than that of cognitivist linguistics: it is one where words themselves carry power, are, in their own way, constitutive agents in the world of meaning making. While I agree with what is implied in the use of “fraught” – that no analysis can be simple or straightforward – I can still only accept that a word can be “fraught” insofar as it is so fraught for and by one or more agents, agents who attribute such “social and personal histories of exclusion, violence,” and so on, to a word. If these denotations and connotations are not available cognitively, then I would suggest they are not available at all. My justification for this perspective is that “meaning” itself is meaningless without essential human referentiality.

Butler and Sedgwick’s depictions of queer’s meaning are worth setting into historical context, beginning with a brief historical account of queer’s meaning. For centuries in English usage – specific dates are inconclusive – the word queer, as an adjective, meant “strange, odd, peculiar, eccentric, in appearance or character,” and only secondarily “homosexual” in the United States. In this basic or former sense it has been observed textually since the 1700s. Then, owing in part to nationalist impulses from the

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15 The Oxford English Dictionary defines queer as follows:
(kwr) Forms: 6 queir, queyr, que(e)re, 7 quer, 7- queer. [Of doubtful origin. Commonly regarded as a. G. quer (MHG. twer, see THWART), cross, oblique, squint, perverse, wrongheaded; but the date at which the word appears in Sc. is against this, and the prominent sense does not precisely correspond to any of the uses of G. quer. There are few examples prior to 1700.]
crisis of the 1929 stock-market crash through the alarmist and paranoid McCarthyism, in which heteronormativity was held up as a necessary condition for national strength and survival, this term, *queer*, that broadly signified "strange" narrowed in a number of contexts – not abandoning the “former” sense, but existing beside it – to mean sexually non-normative, whether in behavior, affect, or biology. This narrowed use was indeed pejorative, and hence tended not to be used among gays or lesbians. By the 1970s, perhaps incited by increased interest in visibility in the wider public, the word *queer* began to be used self-referentially by some gay men. Today *queer*’s generic adjectival meaning of “strange” continues, albeit in limited discourses, alongside the “sexual” meaning, which is presently conversant with gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender identity.

The self-aware queer “community” known today grew at least partly out of gay and lesbian coalitions in the 1980’s who began self-referring as *queer*. Since the early 1990’s, the queer community is purported to include all forms of sexual minority: homosexuals, bisexuals, transvestites, transsexuals, and others who simply identify with

1. a. Strange, odd, peculiar, eccentric, in appearance or character. Also, of questionable character, suspicious, dubious. *queer fellow*, an eccentric person; also used, esp. in Ireland and in nautical contexts, with varying contextual connotations (see quotas.).
   b. Of a person (usu. a man): homosexual. Also in phr. *as queer as a coot* (cf. COOT n. 2b). Hence, of things: pertaining to homosexuals or homosexuality. orig. U.S.
   c. In U.S. colloq. phr. *to be queer for* (someone or something): to be fond of or ‘keen on’; to be in love with.
2. Not in a normal condition; out of sorts; giddy, faint, or ill: esp. in phr. *to feel (or look) queer*. Also slang: Drunk.
3. *Queer Street*: An imaginary street where people in difficulties are supposed to reside; hence, any difficulty, fix, or trouble, bad circumstances, debt, illness, etc. slang. (OED Online)
4. Comb., as *queer-looking, -shaped, -tempered.*

non-normative sexual practices. It is highly relevant, then, that the queer community known today has been ambitiously named from quite early on. In the nineties, portions of this group (however limited) grew in visibility in public arenas and mainstream media. Organizations such as Act-Up! and Queer Nation had as their goals the establishment of political rights for sexual minorities, including transsexual health care, legal discrimination protections, the provision of resources for AIDS-related research and medical care. It was in the early 1990’s that slogans like “We’re Here, We’re Queer!” were encountered in demonstrations and other public forums. Some further examples of the use of queer, taken mainly from political slogans used in the early 90’s, include: Queer by Nature, Proud by Choice; Loud and Queer; Jesus Was a Queer Jew!; We’re Here! We’re Queer! (- Get Used to It!, - And We’re Not Going Back); Queer Without a Cause. For many, utterances like those above both represent and played a significant political role in the activist movements of that time. What is the transformative investment, if any, in such an utterance, and what are the cognitive devices that are imputed in reaching these aims? How is it that queer, today, refers to a broader set of identities than gay men, as was true of the 1970’s, or gays and lesbians, as was true of the 1980’s?

For fair understanding of its meaning and use, it is important to situate queer’s place within queer theory and politics, which profoundly informed how queer was meant in political scenes. Queer theory’s version of queer identity is purportedly inclusive of

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Some would say queer theory differs substantively from traditions of feminism in its goals and intended reach. Indeed, unlike the fixed categories upon which many feminisms have rested, some versions of queer theory insist that all identity categories are fictive at best. For instance, even as feminism challenged the binary divisions between
those who continue to fall “in between” categories of identity: multiple gradients of sexuality and gender and an assertion that neither of these may be essentialized. Within the narrower confines of queer theory writing in academia, queer is cannily understood (or, according to a number of dissenters, only aspires to be understood) as whatever is not normative, or whatever falls out of normative rigidities, as Sedgwick suggests: "Queer can refer to: the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically" (1993: 8). David Halperin (1994) depicts prevailing views within queer theory: “Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers. It is an identity without an essence,” or, one might say in linguistic terms, an adjective without an object to modify. If this is so, suggests queer theory, following poststructuralist revisions of the idea of identity, then the signifiers are not only mobile, but in another sense, the subjects who pronounce them are too: subject positions are up for grabs.

The optimistic depiction Halperin recounts remains a theoretical promise not quite fulfilled in practice, over-optimistic about its capacity to avoid essentializing identity discourses altogether. We might say that denotatively, queer’s function as an adjective is to modify an attached (implicit or explicit) noun concept – in particular, to select the peripheral aspects of meaning of, say, “heterosexuality” or “sexuality”. Queer therefore functions to shift meaning to the side of a normative interpretation, away from meanings masculine and feminine gender, it often failed to challenge binaries of male and female “biology.”
associated with the notional center. Besides its "denotatively perverting" meaning, queer's apparent mobility of meaning benefits further from its prevalent (and historically deeper) grammatical use as adjective, rather than noun. It is, hence, a function. What Halperin means by its being an identity, is that this function has been refigured into an identity. (However, I feel that queer, as an identity, remains sexually specified; in this case there is "something to which it necessarily refers": I am a queer [sexual person].)  

Indeed, (Walters 1997), (Halperin 1994), and (Cohen 1996) reject the "non-essentialist" or "anti-essentialist" postures of queer politics, suggesting that it is just as essentialist as any other in that it poses an essential/identificational "queer" against an implicitly essential "heterosexual". Thus, queer theory has been perceived to shift between the positions "we are all queer/non-normal/perverse" and "heteronormativity is false, pervasive and oppressive". I think that if we look only at the use of language, or the role of language in queer politics at large, these scholars are correct in their analysis of queer exactly insofar as it partakes of identity politics.

These accounts are informative, but they also invite consideration in linguistic terms, particularly with regard to language change. Let us first examine a recent trajectory

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18 Thus, while queer theory's questioning of what is "natural" resembles (and likely inherits from) feminist inquiries about what is considered "natural" about women – and the ways in which women themselves are produced as "nature" (see de Beauvoir and Woolf), it also departs from traditional feminism in its refusal (again by promulgation, if not in action) to advocate, or politically favor, any particular category other than the (sexually) non-normative. While there is much to celebrate of queer activism's effects, not least of which is the emergence of transgendered identities that do not easily permute combinations of sexual and object-preference binaries, the claim that queer theory and politics was somehow radically different from traditional feminisms was belied not only by its obvious inheritance of feminist practices of deconstruction, but also by its having reproduced certain aesthetic, behavioral, and even sexual-orientational norms within its
of *queer*’s usage and meaning within queer, gay and lesbian, bisexual and transgendered discourses. In Susie Bright’s collected sex-advice columns from the late eighties to the early nineties (published in the lesbian magazine *On Our Backs*), she seemed to prefer *dyke* as a *validating* (in a sense, positivizing) title and mode of address rather than *queer*. This was not only a particularizing response to the largely lesbian character of her audience, which could inspire positive affect among those who identified in particular. Rather, her uses of *queer* seemed to be primarily devoted to alerting the reader to a *larger* body of people, one with a particularly *diversified* set of identifications and experiences: a more strictly referential use, in the sense that it does not inspire any significant fluctuation in affect.\(^\text{19}\)

I noted, in Bright (1990), only four tokens of *queer*. Two, which I judged as referential, are quoted in the text, and the third also seems referential: “Straight women take their femininity for granted. This is particularly fascinating to lesbian butches. *They* are so utterly cool and unquashable in their womanhood, never troubled by a tomboy image or a queer’s insecurity. Any Liz Taylor movie will prove this.” (Bright 1990:43 (1985)) Only one of these seemed to connote the negativity of *queer*: “It’s assumed that the fans would all lay down and die if they knew that the biggest names in pom are queer. I rather think they’d be gladly educated and titillated. In an industry where everyone’s so sexually liberated, there’s a vicious double standard. The men I talk to from the video companies are almost in awe of all the actresses they perceive to be gay, but if any one of those women said, ‘Yes, I’m lesbian and proud,’ she would bear the burden... Bubbles would be burst, crosses burned.” (Bright 1990:98 (1988)).

In Bright (1992), I found only two tokens of *queer*. Note that the audiences for these articles were, differently, not lesbian-exclusive. Was she simply being more cautious? Of the two *queer* tokens, one seemed to echo the negative connotation: “Masculinity in the nineties has been erotically revived and challenged from unexpected quarters: women and gays. A lot of heterosexual men find this ridiculous, offensive, and even amazing. After all, what does being a man have to do with girls and queers?” (“A good butch is hard to find: masculinity in the nineties”) and the other seemed to be a reclaiming use (her first clear example): “‘If you two are together, then what was I apologizing for, calling you a fucking dyke! You’re the queerest thing on this street!’” (“Lynnie is the Queerest Thing on this Street”)
In my recent observations among diverse queer communities in the Bay Area from the late 1990's to the early 2000's, explicit identificatory statements like “I’m queer” have been used in ways that referred to the generalized alternative-sexuality identity without an apparent affective impulse (derogation, or other kinds of negative or positive value). These uses have not necessarily been ironic or used to make salient political statements; that is, they have been conducted in such a way that a strong injurious load is not taken to be present in the utterance. I presume this is especially true in ingroup contexts – among lesbians and gays, in queer youth groups, for instance; but it also appears to be true of certain mixed urban contexts, college student populations and high schools. As an example of referential use, Bright wrote, “I don’t know quite how they’re figuring it all out without the benefit of herb teas and consciousness-raising groups, but I see more queer young things running around today than I did ten years ago.”

“Leaving the buzz of Dykes on Bikes was a little like leaving an orgy – that post-performance letdown. I was just another queer in a sea of 260,000 others. But in mid-droop I noticed a group of feverish frolickers pointing and screaming in my direction.... ‘She’s a girl!’ one of them gasped.” (Bright 1990:109 (1988)).
Note, in this second example, the use of queer as *noun* rather than adjective. This is characteristic of another trend within queer discourses – the deadjectival nominalization of *queer*. The nominalization of *queer* as a member of an identity group, today, is also accompanied by the relatively widespread (rather than “nonce” innovation) appearance of the verbal use of *queer*, especially but not limited to queer theory, with meanings that pointedly refer to sexuality and gender. Examples include Jonathan Goldberg’s introduction to the essay collection *Queering the Renaissance*: the essays seek to "queer the renaissance... in the recognition that queer identity is far less easily regulated or defined in advance than legislatures and courts imagine, and that literary texts are far more available to queer readings than most critics would allow or acknowledge" (1994: 13). A Canadian organization named QUAK (Queers United Against Kapitalism), has used the motto: “We seek to queer the radical community and to radicalize the queer community.”

If we may treat these observations as evidence of a referential and/or diversifying trend within queer communities, I take this to mean that the removal or loss of *queer*’s derogation – in the sense that an abstract template of use may be understood by a potential user to be attached to the term, thus it is associated semantically with a stereotypical user of injurious intent – has been partly achieved along *some* paths. What

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Note though that besides the still manifesting non-sexualized or gendered verbal use of *queer*, which according to the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (4th ed., 2000; Houghton Mifflin) means “ruin or thwart” or “put someone in a bad position”, we also find contemporary crystallizations of both adjectival and verbal forms of the earlier sense of “queer” in the idiomatic British phrases *Queer Street*, meaning “where the debtors live”; and *queer the pitch*, meaning “ruin the plan”: “Assuring that it would do nothing to ‘queer the pitch’ for the peace process, Pakistan has
looks like a standard temporal development – derogation, reclaiming, then reference – at least within some queer communities, may explain why the slogans above and a great many uses in other contexts in the early nineties were ones that had the form “I am queer”; while today, we see a diversification of constructions in which queer appears, including a range of uses where it is not participial.

Fig. 2. QUEER stages of reclaiming.

Note that, while the path of semantic change looks very much like the idealized template offered earlier, it does not reflect outgroup behavior in any way; that is to say, while the fixed-stages view certainly makes some sense, and may well be held up to operate in limited social paths, it also does not speak to the ongoing experimentations both within and without “the” queer community, nor to the diversity of its language users. Indeed, a semantic analysis cannot be reached without reference to fundamentally social and cultural constructs. And if we observe an “ingroup” use of the identifier queer, it is

suggested chances of an agreement with India on the Kashmir issue are better than ever before.” (Thurs, May 15, 2003; http://news.indiainfo.com/2003/05/15/pak.html.)
well worth asking: Is there a (queer) community, and what, and where, is it? Otherwise put, what makes it controversial as to whether a queer community exists in the political sphere, are the obstinately present explicit and implicit “boundary-policing” operations that seem destined to exclude people who believe they should count as members of the group. To wit, the term queer’s claim to universality or inclusiveness has been criticized for its underhanded repetition of women’s, and people of color’s, political invisibility, leading to doubt as to the very existence of a queer community.

Linguists ask what aspect of language makes people members of a so-called “speech community” – shared language practices, a shared productive grammatical system, a common vocabulary, a common political geography, or some set of these. And over the case of queer, these questions also cross fortuitously: What is it about language use that may function as exclusive or inclusive (both of which the term “queer” has been claimed to effect)? Besides being highly relevant to how we might think about the construct “community”, this study also invites us to consider the systems and sociolinguistics of one of reclaiming’s definitions - “proposed” language change - that occurs quite outside of government language planning.

As I suggested, “community” is a complex notion in linguistics. It is well accepted that the conventional or standard linguistic definition of “speech community,” as those whose grammar, speech practices and social systems of reference are shared, will never find a perfect “real-life” example, since individuals are always members of multiple speech communities, and hence will never share all aspects of language with another. Yet as a construct, “community” is difficult to avoid. “Community” can, in popular parlance, refer to groups which assemble themselves around a banner of geography or identity; for
linguists, "community" can refer more specifically to groups most crucially unified by a shared set of linguistic practices and conventions, where identity and culture may be treated as secondary factors (for more on the analytic problems with "community" see Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992; for direct concern with the queer community, see Zwicky 1997). Queer politics, especially insofar as it involves explicitly naming oneself the same name as the political identificatory banner in a variety of speech situations (as in "I am queer") touches the intersection of these two definitions of community. Is it from this intersection that new communities may be forged, with a significant role lent to verbal practice - because, suddenly, it becomes the most material means of all?  

A Cognitive Grammar Account Of Queer

At this point we are prepared to turn to cognitive linguistics to provide an analysis of the reclaiming of queer: a cognitive grammar analysis of the different grammatical uses of queer, that is, as verb, noun, adjective, and so forth.

To revisit Walters and Halperin's critiques around the essentializing tendencies of the queer identity, I would like to suggest that their observations may be explained, indeed substantiated, from a cognitive perspective, specifically one that is sensitive to grammatical structures. Since queer now appears in different forms, namely as verb, adjective, and noun, it is useful first to review the cognitive-linguistic characterizations of generic word classes. Briefly, in Cognitive Grammar, verbs are defined as processes -

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23 A (1996) paper by Rusty Barrett, Robin Queen, and Keith Walters, presented at the American University Lavender Languages and Linguistics conference, makes a fair case for the possibility of queer language practices (that is, on the basis of a shared queer community). Strangely enough, it neglects the specific practice of self-identification as queer as one sign of the construction of a shared community.
that is, dependent on some time relation—and nouns, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, etc. are atemporal relations. When predications—the semantic structures corresponding to expressions—are relational, they involve the profiling (salience, emphasis) of interconnections; when they are nominal, they involve the profiling of a given conceptual region.

The implication for language interpretation, or language use more generally, is that words used along certain grammatical conventions, inspire conceptualizations that have some slant or another, depending upon the convention. For example, Chapter 3’s placement of a marriageable woman in object grammatical position for the verb “give” in “Who gives this woman away?” effectively cast her as both a notional object and in objective perspective. From another angle, using the same word in verbal position (“queer the Renaissance”) or as a noun (“a Renaissance queer”) poses strong constraints for how it will be conceptualized. Though some degree of linguistic creativity is always possible between two speakers, including second-language incursions into normative grammar, many of the basic grammatical conventions are very difficult to violate while still being “understood”, precisely because they reside deeply in the linguistic “unconscious” (as defined in Chapter 1) and are hence likely to be taken for granted. Cognitive linguistics research is exploring the many aspects of “unconscious grammar”, though the degree to which it is unconscious and for whom it is such—in a word, its own normative character—remains in question.24

24 A number of studies in cognitive linguistics today take a critical, crosslinguistic approach to linguistic gender.
The following Fig. 3 works off a discussion in Langacker (1991: 75) about conceptual relations between the adjective *together* and the noun *group*. Langacker shows that *together* and *group* share common conceptual material, as both concern the notional proximity of two or more conceptual events. These shared conceptual events, basic to both *together* and *group*, are most closely represented by box (a) in the diagram. *Together* is most closely represented by box (b) in the diagram, but since *together* is relational, the links among the elements, rather than the elements themselves, are what is profiled. The noun *group*, however, profiles the gestalt ensemble rather than the individual elements themselves or their interrelations, hence the circle surrounding the group in (c); it is this circle that bears the conceptual salience, though the diagram does not show this. The figure subsuming *all* of these represents the denominal verb ("denominal" meaning, a verb which has resulted from "de-nouning", i.e. "made up out of" a noun), *group*; the activity of the verb is realized as a conceptual *process*, whose stages proceed in the diagram from left to right. Given that the entity being depicted is a verb, this time the *timeline* is what is profiled; the dynamics of the verb are dynamically bound to time in ways that *group* (noun) and *together* are not.

The concept (and cognitive-grammar depiction) of denominals becomes important in the later discussion of *queer*.
Langacker explains his own diagrams (a) through (c) in the text below; once again, they are highly similar to (a), (b) and (c) above, except that the above figures do not show any individual profiling. This does not take away from Langacker’s exposition. Note he is careful to assume the inherent dynamism – indeed, fleeting character – of conceptualization itself, that is, e4, e5, and e6 are not ongoing concepts for the individuals they denote, but rather events “whose occurrence constitutes [their] conception.”

Let e1, e2, and e3 stand for those cognitive events whose occurrence constitutes the conception of the three participating individuals (taken separately). Further, let e4, e5, and e6 stand for the coordinating operations responsible for establishing interconnections between each pair of participating individuals; in the present case, these operations amount to assessments of spatial proximity – e.g. e4 is the cognitive operation that registers the spatial proximity of the individuals whose conception resides in the occurrence of e1 and e2. Figure (a) then diagrams the essential conceptual content shared by together and group, expressed in terms of the requisite cognitive events. This entire complex of events figures in the
conceptualization of either notion. (1991: 75)

Since the verb group is perfective (it has a sense of completion), there are non-identical states of progression, represented, from left to right, in the three individual boxes. From the first to the second, a connection of notional (not necessarily physical) proximity is established between events e1, e2, and e3. But together they do not yet constitute a “group”. From the second to the third, the three events are further fixed into a meta-relation among them – a group relation – denoted by the addition of the surrounding circle.

I now return to queer, in particular to explore its shifting meanings in a context of its participation in a political identity movement. Highly visible identity movements, while they do not always attempt to name an identity, above and beyond their (in)ability to fix the meaning of a name, certainly also do not have perfect control over whether that naming will occur and how it is performed. Indeed it seems a political movement would be hard pressed to avoid names entirely; as long as one must articulate a political demand on the basis of a group of persons, a “we” (as in “we want”, “we demand”) in some way begs further specification of that “we” – for instance, that that “we” has some heretofore-unacknowledged characteristic that, under some generalized cultural frame of rights and privileges, binds it to a group that already enjoys legitimation or privilege. Such a description is also under pressure to be linguistically economical (e.g. as in a “sound bite” or a “motto”), particularly in this day and age in U.S. politics. Hence one is likely at some point or another to name persons (whether individuals or groups) by the descriptive adjectives used to characterize that group or its political assertions. How is this done? In formal terms, naming occurs by nominalization, which is defined as a shift, with minimal
change in form or conceptual characterization, toward noun status from another word class, or by a combination of any set of word forms to form a composite noun.

There are, in addition, purely linguistic pressures, which is to say outside of specific cultural or political demands, for noun forms to be innovated. These demands of expression range from the relative articulatory expediency of a single noun form ("queer") over adjective-noun combinations (as in "queer person"), to the relative subcategorizational independence of a noun over other word classes (transitive verbs subcategorize for, and hence "seek" for completion, grammatical subjects and objects; adjectives and adverbs subcategorize for, and hence "need," nouns and verbs respectively; and so on). Nominalizations, then, will function to fix, stabilize, and most crucially, enable bounding, especially for countable nouns. The fixing and stabilizing normally comes from deverbalization: If a noun transposes from a verbal form in particular, then basic dynamism — the verbal temporal aspect — is removed by "dropping" the verb’s inherent time relationships, because that noun can no longer be a process.

Thus, to use a word in such a way that befits nominal grammatical status ("the queers", or even, probably much more likely, noun phrases that include adjectival queer, as in "Queers for Christ"), is to encourage a bounded reading of the concept’s content, and hence — this is no minor consequence — to render identities finite. It is further, in cases of deverbal nominalization, to de-temporalize a form so that it refuses a dynamic reading. To the extent that nouns can serve as identities, that is, to the extent that nouns invoke conceptualizations that a person may identify with, then to subordinate his or herself to that identity is, I would argue, to subject oneself to the loss of dynamism and the boundedness of that noun. While that person’s "self" cannot be but a blend between
that person’s acquired identity – the prepackaged, sometimes stereotyped identity – and the rest of their sense of self, to identify with such an identity seems to me a very real risk, for it is not clear which aspect of self is dependent on which other.

It is worth noting, further, that verbs or adjectives can quite easily be nominalized, either through innovation or through long-term development. For instance, the verb “move” may be bounded as a deverbal nominalization: “Cray’s move went smoothly.”

Queer, then, may be opaquely “fixed” (opaquely, because it shows no phonological modification, and hence betrays no cues toward its own modified meaning) in at least two ways: first, the modifying adjectival queer can be nominalized by the metonymic naming of the thing modified by queer, with the modifier itself, which is a common process (consider, for instance, calling women “blondes”); second, the verbal queer (which may in itself be formed by deadjectival verbalization, as in “beautify” or even “yellow”: paint yellows when it ages) can undergo nominalization, as in “the one who queers”, often realized phonologically by suffixation with -er (“the eater”). Its nominal fixing can be compounded by pluralizations, such as queers.

**Queer’s Multiple Senses: Grammatical Description**

In the diagrams that follow, Figures 4(a) - 4(e) represent various instantiations of queer. In most cases, these are relational concepts, except for 4(b), verbal queer, which is a process comprising developments of relations along a time path. In cases 4(b) and 4(c), the landmark (lm) of a relation is that entity that is “being queered” by the trajector. In cases 4(d) and 4(e), the landmark is an implicit “queered” category; the trajector is a member of the category, situated non-normatively in relation to the landmark.
Fig. 4. Queer’s multiple senses.

GUIDE TO DIAGRAMS
(Figure) Use/Meaning
(a) Adjectival (historically dominant)
(b) Verbal (the use encountered frequently in queer theory and politics)
(c) Noun (deverbal nominalization) – profiles the result, i.e. landmark portion of the final stage, of the perfective verbal process
(d) Noun (deadjectival nominalization) – profiles the “thing” that is characterized by the adjective
(e) Plural noun (pluralization of (c) or (d))
We can define the images as follows. 4(a) represents a prototypical use of the adjectival queer, as in “queer man”. As an adjective, it is a dependent structure in the sense that it requires a noun to modify. The two concentric circles of the image suggest that the adjective “selects” everything but the center of the noun category that it grammatically modifies. In 4(b), the queer-theory verbal use, as in “queer the academy”, shows a process: the trajector is the agent of the process, for instance the queer theorists; the landmark, “the academy”, is “queered” with time: in the central relation, its normative center is excised; in the rightmost relation, the “new”, peripheral region is selected and made cognitively salient. Figure 4(c) shows the “resultative” deverbal nominal – the noun that can be made out of the landmark after its undergoing the verbal process of 4(b). The interpretation, however, for 4(c), given that it conventionally stands for the identity and not “academia” or some other concept, is that the trajectors that have operated on that landmark through the queering process have been the self, in case a queer casts his or her sexuality as a matter of choice; or some external concept like society, in case a queer chooses to describe him or self as having been “perverted” by outside forces. Note that 4(c) has lost its dynamic quality; it is fixed, timeless. Figure 4(d) is another noun that can result, by making a nominal form directly out of the adjective. This is also a timeless relation. Here, “queer” is a trajector who stands in a peripheral relation to the landmark normative center. In 4(e), this deadjectival nominal is pluralized: queers. All stand again in a peripheral relation to the central landmark.
**Queer “Materiality” and Grammatical “Forgetting”**

Something has been missing in the account up to this point: the preceding diagrams, along with their associated clearly distinguished meanings, are somewhat utopian. They represent an idealized version of the meanings of *queer*, one perfectly in line with the intentions of queer politics. They are optimistic, in particular, about the presence of kinds of memory needed to “know” what *queer* means in the way it is intended. As cultural terms, instances of use of *queer* invoke intra-cultural (and hence eccentric in many public or outgroup domains) frames of reference which may not, for all queers – or in all contexts in which queers may appear – be so easily accessed; and in their place other, more normative, cultural frames may get invoked. One of these normative, cultural frames, which plays some part (even if a contested one) in seemingly all identities formed in the United States, is that of the *self*, that is, as an entity that is non-dependent (hence independent), as well as self-formed; and one that is present in time, that is, owes no sense of its formation to a past trace in time. This is true of both dominant identities (male identities/ white identities) and subordinate identities (female identities/ people of color identities), such that women, and people of color, are so often blamed for their ills while men and whites are systemically credited for their successes.

Hence it is in the dominant public discourse (which again, is the risk of any movement which reaches for the public word), that the atemporality of a noun, and the atemporality of identities in the United States, collude quite insidiously to cut identities off from their roots. There are many forces that make this so – I do not wish to be reductive – but I believe the quieter workings of linguistic structure are less noticeable, and as such certainly less available to intervention. There is a further risk for *queer* alone:
The very condition for its definition, that it be defined in relation to the norm, is easily made opaque by a re-normalization of the category queer itself, which is that it must have a center and a periphery. The brilliance of political movements that have enforced center-periphery structures on such complex entities as the nation, or the people, and so on, has been that they take advantage by making implicit appeal to a folk structure of categories: the belief that any given category is simplistically structured by an essence. It does seem that by most findings, nearly all categories are arranged in terms of center/periphery: generator categories, family resemblance categories, stereotype-based radial categories, and so forth. This means that the center-periphery structure is one which can be easily exploited as a basis for implicit reasoning. It is easy enough, therefore, to assume, unreflectively, that one who is talking about the “center” of any given concept is perfectly justified in doing so. So it is that the population of queers, under construal as a category, can easily slip from (a) to (b), “losing” their relationality – or, more dramatically but no less plausibly, from (a) to (c), re-infused with dimensions of center and periphery:

Fig. 5. Re-normalization of category queer.

(a) queers (tr) against general populace; normosexuals (lm) serve as landmark
(b) queers, non-relational predication; relationality is “forgotten”; history and relations are made opaque
(c) queers, non-relational predication; imputed center-periphery (folk) category structure

For more on category structure see G. Lakoff (1987: 121).
Here, too, is a case where, in the minds of humans who use language conventionally, a nominal category can “forget” its origins or its history, particularly when there are not adequate supporting models (as in, for example, a surrounding culture infused at all levels with queer sensibilities that would support the revisionary meanings of reclaimed queer). There is, in other words, a very “real” way that the partiality of “queer materiality” has effects – of forgetting. While it first seems that “restorative forgetting” – the spontaneous imputation of normative category structure – could happen at any time, and in apparent “ignorance” of other signifiers present, ultimately it becomes clear that the surrounding social and cultural context has everything to do with the affordances and effectivities of semantic change.

The imputation of “reclaiming” to a group presupposes that the group has been disempowered in some way, and has an investment in regaining agency. If their actions are phrased in terms like “reclaiming,” we are invited to construe the group as either lacking, and hence partially constituted, not whole; or perhaps more accurately, to be associated with loss.26 To the extent that members of the group “inherit” its grammatical character as identities, this is a loss which is hardly chosen.

26 I am grateful to Judith Butler for her opinion that loss, rather than fragmentation, may more adequately characterize the scenario of reclaiming, and I largely agree. I would add, however, that such loss can be read more literally as self-fragmentation, when the object lost is viewed as so essential that its loss may leave little intact. It is interesting to compare self-fragmentation to the conventional ability, widespread cross-culturally, to perform linguistic self-splitting: “I told myself I shouldn’t do that,” “I banged myself up pretty bad”. Unlike these examples, the splittings of self in reclaiming are hardly conventional, in the sense that at least in some cases, groups are afforded less than “complete” or “adequate” subjectivities, whereas in conventional self-splittings all the resources are there; they are simply presented as sectional and organized in relation to one another. On the conceptually-linguistically split self, see: G. Lakoff (1992).
In the case of *queer*, sexuality is seen as intolerable in its most readily material attribution – sex – to the extent that coming out is in itself understood as “having sex” – thus, as a taboo, it is relegated to a certain freaky invisibility. In the case of *black*, the ready association of blacks with all the flying signifiers of “poverty” and “drugs,” “dirt” and “crime” – means that the word *black* is, while not necessarily tabooed, then in a position to wrestle with imposed abjection. Both *queer* and *black* further carry negative affective loads, which I believe continue today, contrary to many contemporary accounts. And due to norms of politeness, items with negative affective loads are only pronounceable in certain restricted conditions, for instance in self-descriptions or when outward insult is intended.

But there are ways that we also cannot treat *black* and *queer* similarly, just as we cannot treat their related discourses of race and sexuality the same way. Notwithstanding the insistence that many (sub)groups appear to be practically and effectively left out by the identity label *queer*, the label is itself rather queer. As a relatively recently constituted category of social identity (at least, in its non-gender specific present form) – and as a category which only recently got a name, *queer* may not enjoy “material” existence to the degree that, say, the two dominant gender identities (male and female) do. There are a number of perspectives from which this may be true. The frequency with which a still-tabooed term about gender and sexuality such as *queer* appears in everyday speech and in the prevalent forms of media, is certainly less than that of *male/man* and *female/woman*. In the case of *queer*, too, it would seem that the infrequent act of naming a category *for which there are no other names* (note that unlike *black*, there are no clear-cut euphemisms for *queer*) consigns it to a reduced existence, a reduced cognitive salience.
Indeed, in a cognitive linguistics perspective, there are direct relations between the possibility of *lexicalization* – the engendering of a relationship between a phonological form and a cognitive entity or concept, in a linguistics community – and the degree of *cognitive entrenchment* – the strength of a concept, as determined by its presence in neural pathways and its frequency of use in an individual. Lexicalization is a collectively shared cognitive entrenchment (hence a conventionalization) into an explicit linguistic form.

If we return to entertain an early meaning of “materiality,” understood as referring to physical form, and put it in conversation with notions of visibility and presence, then the utterance of a name – as a physical manifestation of a concept – thus may have significant import. Given the conventional import of names, and especially of names for groups of people, it could be argued that a group that *has* a name has, in Western cultures, a higher potential visibility, a greater material existence. Given the non-self evident membership of the queer community, it is worth asking whether “queerness” may well be constituted more verbally, and more on-line (“live”) than other kinds of identity whose utility as a “prepackaged” – entrenched, standard – social resource is more immediate.\(^{27}\) This near-, or partial, materiality does not seem to be easily explained away. But I suggest that rather than affording “special” status to these objectified, or abjected, groups and their tabooed labels, as if they were too mysterious to address or pronounce, we ask what makes them *seem* partial in existence, and hence see as our goal the revealing of the *immaterial supports* of all entities and identities – those having more to do with belief.

\(^{27}\) I am grateful to Eve Sweetser for providing me with this useful notion of prepackaging.
than with physicality on a material scale. Indeed, "queerness’s" own celebratedly "queer" conditions of existence, which at first seem unique, merely are similarly present and operative in other cases, but simply remain "quiet" or "backgrounded": for instance, fluctuating membership, unclear satisfying conditions for membership (what is "alternative" sexual behavior, what is "a" skin color, what is "gender"?).

So the optimism of queer theory as it applied to identities was, at its high point, quite overblown. The forces of "buzzword politics", individuality, nominalization, and its own "partial materiality," combined to fix queerness, and further, to impose a structure on it which by definition it wished to refuse. This is, in effect, one way of saying that what is counted as social change may well often be those phenomena, or those groups, that were already privileged in one way or another – to be visible; to be afforded authority; and so forth. This is why, in the early part of the chapter, I suggested that those groups who are said to reclaim are precisely those who have already attained a threshold of political enfranchisement. Implicit reference frames make a profound difference; and precisely because they are implicit, not all can be addressed and modified at once. This is not to deny the potential effectivity of intentional change; it is only to say that very little can be changed at once. Those who accuse others, as did the Black Power Movement fault civil-rights activists, of being assimilationist have a certain point: change is difficult to attain when one works to change social norms while working intimately with normative social frames. But it is also true that radical politics, without reinforcing its ideas with a rich and broadly radical subculture, exposes itself to rewriting by implicit cultural frames.

Returning to Figure 5(b), verbal queer, note that while it is assumed that queering could (and perhaps should) be an ongoing process, the recursivity that is often assumed of
queering is possible only if the re-normalization of a category can occur. What the
diagram represents, then, is one idealized and terminable “step” of queering, one
operation of de-normalization of a category, a step that, once a deverbal nominalization
(I’m a queer) is made or a perfective queered is claimed, becomes the final step.

The Mental-Spaces Technology Of Reclaiming
A close examination of queer’s grammatical categories, using Cognitive Grammar, has
suggested much about queer politics; but such a localized view of language cannot hope
to explain too much, either. At this point we broaden our perspective to investigate the
multiple dynamics, and the multiple contextual factors, that inhere in verbal reclaiming.
We do so with the other cognitive linguistics framework, which, as suggested in Chapter
1, is better suited to the accounting of cultural frames, multiple perspectives, and multiple
interpretations: mental spaces theory. As a dynamic theory of meaning construction,
mental-spaces theory and frame analysis are especially apt, I think, for the treatment of
identities, in their belief-borne instances, and, thanks to the expanse of interpretive
options inherent to every mental space configuration, also appropriate for the
encompassing of “partial materialities” such as we have described. Below I analyze a
single example using Mental Spaces, turning afterwards to related issues such as ironic
use, cognitive entrenchment, and the relation of “visible acts” to social change.

As seen in Chapter 1, individual mental spaces come together to form meaning
blends. Recall also that frames are one of the major constituents of mental spaces; and
while I have mentioned them briefly previously, they are a particularly crucial construct
in this analysis. Recall the frame-dependent online blend highly relevant to our study,
“lesbian marriage” in Chapter 1. In that discussion, I wrote that the strangeness of the phrase is partly due to the “ill fit” (from a normative perspective) between lesbian partners and the conventional, heterosexually specified, marriage frame. The strangeness is also due to the general inutterability of a largely taboo (for some) word and topic which, in its rarity, reinforced the marginality, ambivalent presence, and felt strangeness of whatever “phrase” could be said to exist. Each interpretation, or attempt to resolve the strangeness, is only one of several possibilities, as we have seen in the previous chapter’s discussions of objectifying blends. Furthermore, we must remember “the human behind the cognition”: crucially, the conceptualizer is often in a situation where he or she is motivated to “understand” what is communicated to him. It is highly possible that a resistant conceptualizer (a resistant communicator) or a taboo-sensitive individual will succeed in blocking a working conceptualization from being finalized or apprehended—a kind of micro-cognitive conservatism, or willful ignorance (Sedgwick). But, by and large, some interpretive possibility will arrive with less conceptual effort than we might imagine. While I remain cautious about some interpretations of reclaiming—that a negative affect is, in a sense, “hurled back”, or “reversed”, I also feel that it is far from implausible that the discomfort that inheres in the disruption will destabilize, will incite a discomfort, in its hearer.

The kind of novel, implicit blend characteristic of “lesbian marriage” is in fact what I will show to be the case with reclaimings in general. Before moving on, please note a few features of such a blend: the notion of “surprise” or “disruption” (partly

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28 Note that this is not necessarily the same as to say that he is assuming the Gricean Cooperative Principle applies, that is, that his interlocutor is intending to be
because, as discussed earlier, these words often function as marked phenomena), the marked need for meaning *imputation*, an active filling-in, rather than the cognitive calling-up of a relatively pre-defined unit of meaning, schematic only so far as the rest can be easily filled in by the pragmatics of the performance context.\(^{29}\) What will be explored in the coming example will concern what *nature* of meaning may be filled in, in the case of reclaiming, and how we might think about cognitive limitations on that imputed content.

**Mental Spaces And “Queer”**

Below are laid out a number of instrumental elements and events in a hypothetical instance where a pejorative label – or, again, a symbol - is reclaimed by members of the stigmatized group as a self-referential term. In Figure 6, a highly generalized example of a (cognitively) “reappropriative moment” is shown; in “unpacked” form it lays out much that is often left implicit in the communicative and interpretive effort. This unpacking also importantly demonstrates that there exist many – rather than just one, as most accounts of reclaiming have suggested – possible interpretive options, hence many options for just which factors may be foregrounded for the interpreter and hence serve as explicit symbols for reappropriation; and which others may reside in the background. The diagram also helps to make clear that what is intended to be conceptualized, or experienced, may not always proceed as intended.

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\(^{29}\) Fauconnier and Turner (1996), by exploring the creativity and radical unpredictability of everyday word compounding, show that the idea that pre-defined linguistic concepts are called up in their wholeness is a limited and overly programmatic representation of cognition’s highly creative role in language processing.
Such reclaimings are also treated as an instance of performativity, so as to be able to systematize components of linguistic-social action and to schematize any act as part of a change-in-process. A number of recent works have discussed various kinds of “queer performativity”, some of which adhere more closely to traditional definitions (Austin 1955), and others which only remotely derive from the metaphysical intuitions of Austin’s work. But some theoretical intervention is necessary here, as performativity is not readily understood in cognitive terms and, similarly, cognition is not directly coded in the pragmatic terms employed in accounts of performativity. Hence I use a mental-spaces implementation of performativity (see Sweetser 2000 for an in-depth mental spaces application), one that is already somewhat pragmatically specified, to facilitate a cognitive-linguistic specification of the possible objects and manipulations of reclaiming practices. Below I show how the cognitive elements of the reclaiming act may be tied to social matrices of identity and power, elements which in fact are crucial to the “effects” of the reclaiming.

There are many ways to define performativity as it might be represented in mental spaces – just as there are many performativities to speak of. In one way, mental spaces enacts performativity through specification of viewpoint – in essence, reinforcing templates of “use” – for certain linguistic items. In mental spaces theory, one might conceive of the performativity of resignification as specific kinds of mental-space construction, that is, informing the meaning of a sign with elements of one’s own viewpoint under conditions in which it has a real potential to “take hold” in a community

30 See e.g. Livia and Hall (1997), Sedgwick (1990, 1993a, 1993b), Leap (1997), Butler (1993b); I do not exhaustively review these interpretations here.
of any size.

The diagram is not meant to be exhaustive or true for all cases; rather, it is meant to represent multiple possibilities. Because possibilities for interpretation often directly correlate to which mental spaces are understood to be operative (the focus space) for the interpreter, I made a point to identify those mental spaces I see as representing at least some options for interpretation. All potentially “instrumental” mental spaces are located above the dotted line (excluding the blend).

[figure following page]
Figure 6. Representation of the mental-spaces manipulations by S2 of the \textit{SPEECH SITUATION} space – the hearer – upon a reclaiming utterance S1 -> S2, “I am queer.”

Following are brief explanations for each mental space in the diagram.

- a prototypical \textit{SPEAKER-HEARER} or “communication” frame, which is an input to the blend that constitutes any speech situation (even if “hearers” are a collective conglomerate); assume Gricean maxims of communication and other general pragmatic phenomena apply. This frame is always implicit to any mental-spaces rendering of an utterance.
• the **THEM** viewpoint which normally informs (and has historically informed) the meaning of the term. The announcement of negative judgment from such a viewpoint can function as insult or derogation.

• the **COMMUNITY (US)** viewpoint, counterposed against the THEM viewpoint, and which is blended, along with the solidarity frame, into the speech situation. Included in this viewpoint are definitional views of what essentially constitutes the identity named by the label, and other encyclopedic knowledge about that identity.

• a **SOLIDARITY** frame which also blends into the speech situation. Our assumption here is that solidarity rather than exclusion is assumed or is being communicated. Implicit in this frame is a value judgment of each member in the frame as “positive” or “good” — or, if this strikes the reader as a coarse or incorrect gloss of solidarity, *evenness, levelness*, very broadly construed\(^{31}\). The diagram is meant to suggest a kind of shared positive identification that has consequences ranging from positive affect, to positive value judgments applied to moral and ethical character.

• the **SPEECH SITUATION** itself, where S1 utters something of the form “I am X” — crucially, claims the identity to S1’s self, in a communication directed toward S2. This is the space elaborated in the mind of the listener, S2, during S2’s real-world conversation with the speaker. Crucial to this space is the sense that both interlocutors are aware they are identifiable as members of the label, have an interest in their shared membership\(^{32}\), and feel reasonably positively about this identity. This sense of sharedness will permit the blending of both the “us” community viewpoint and the solidarity frame;

• the **CODE** space, which contains form-meaning correspondences for lexical items, or signifier-signified correspondences more broadly;

• the **LEXICAL SEMANTICS** associated with the phonological form of the label, inside the CODE space, which, due to its outgroup history of formation, includes “normative” viewpoints, including positive/negative evaluations of the respective groups (indicated, for lack of a better means, as “good” and “bad”), as well as the power frame;

• a **POWER** frame, which is part of the blend that constitutes the normative lexical semantics. We assume that the power frame’s use as an instrument of derogation\(^{33}\), can at any time pragmatically inform the semantics of the term such that it will derogate, will “cite” subordination. (I believe this is the equivalent of a claim that a word “carries” an injury with it, or “is” a derogatory word). I have schematized this, again, in terms of “good” and “bad”, such that the speaker, who is

\(^{31}\) While I realize it is debatable, for reasons of consistency and simplicity, I will choose the “positivizing” interpretation of solidarity, rather than the “neutralizing” one, in this chapter. The “positivizing” version has been argued in Cameron and other sources, while I have not come across “neutralizing” explanations.

\(^{32}\) We might otherwise claim that this is one of the functions of particular reclaiming utterances — to gesture at shared membership. Then do we have a problem with teleology or circularity? My suggestion is this: Assume that this element, whether it appears as an explicit communication from speaker to hearer at the moment of the utterance, or is an extant part of the hearer’s beliefs about the speech situation, is nonetheless present by the time T1. This point also indicates a larger argument about causality in naming, and the social construction of identities through naming. I leave that discussion for other work.

\(^{33}\) Butler (1997: 18), describes Mari Matsuda’s definition of “linguistic injury” as the performance of “social subordination;” she critiques this view’s implication that the social subordination is simply repeated, however.
understood to be in the more powerful station, is in the “good” position; relatively speaking (sometimes oppositionally, depending on the conceptualizer) that person who is normatively understood as less powerful is attributed a “bad” position.

Note that each of these spaces may or may not be able to be called up to consciousness. But they may still be called conventional, because their structured content operates more along the lines of conventional belief (for instance, the kinds of “myths” and frames that reside in conceptual metaphor) than any other “scientific” understanding of the human condition. That is, what fills these spaces are a conceptualizer’s normative knowledge.

For instance, with regard to the POWER frame, even if the “expert” constructs of power (e.g. that of Foucault) may envision power as a highly distributed and ultimately unpossessible entity which comes alive only through exchange, it is the popular vertical model of power - that it can be possessed, that it can be exercised, that some can have more than others and abuse them by using it – that informs the POWER frame and the semantics of words or signs which it underlies.

Let us now revisit the interpretive possibilities laid out by the various accounts, introduced earlier. I enumerate them below for later reference. Note that any number of these may be attributed to the reclaiming instance, barring certain strongly contradictory readings. But contradictory readings, in Mental Spaces, are always possible as well.

Possible Reclaiming Interpretations
1. an amelioration (e.g. Hock).
2. a proposal for amelioration (e.g. Cameron).
3. a drawing of a community boundary (e.g. Bourdieu).
4. a reversal of the values, as in a return of the insult (e.g. Cameron).
5. a neutralization of values (long-term view).
6. an ironic reading.
7. a de-stabilization of the normative meaning of the term (e.g. Sedgwick).
8. a simple positivization, without the accompanying negation (e.g. Hock).
9. a self-demeaning (a failed, i.e. misunderstood, reclaiming; repetition compulsion)
Recall that in mental spaces, the component frames are highly underspecified, lending high importance to context. This is one reason the interpretations remain quite open: rather than what a traditional view of lexical semantics might claim – that word meaning is called up from a mental store – they simply cannot be determined in advance.

Let us explore just one of these interpretations. The following Figure 7 represents one particularized reading, Interpretation #3 above, and one choice of “packing” Figure 6; it is one kind of interpretation under which group identity is primarily important, specifically, it makes the symbolic drawing of insider/outsider boundaries, or “community boundaries,” more obvious. Let us assume (though it is actually not necessary) that one ingroup member is reclaiming to another ingroup member.

Fig. 7. “Packed” version of Fig. 6, representing Interpretation #3.
I show that in this interpretation, the role most strongly played by the context is the provision of an *ingroup (solidarity) frame*, which forces a certain reading.\(^{34}\) Note that this is also to claim the implicit existence of group-type entities which are available as conceptualizations to subjects; it is further to imply that reclaiming is sensitive, and inalienably tied, to group-based identity. That is to say, I am reclaiming with reference to my identity as a member of a group. It is therefore appropriate (regardless, for instance, of the theoretical complications of identity politics) to consider that an appeal to the ingroup identity may be *catalytic* to at least some reclaimings; it could be argued (though I do not here), in fact, that this is true of every one of the interpretations above. We have on the one hand, then, a manipulation of meaning, and on the other an appeal to the group identity, which I claim work together to make reclaiming possible.

In interpretation #3, we can conceive of the listener's radical choice (regardless of their group membership), faced with the strength of derogation (and of negative affect), between attributing to the speaker either an ironic reversal (in the sense outlined elsewhere in this chapter) or a self-devaluing internalization of the "harmful" viewpoint. The un-unifiability of the viewpoints implicated in the lexeme *queer* and the queer-community viewpoint presumed of the speaker forces, or at least invites, the hearer to construct a blend to resolve what might otherwise be experienced as a violent positioning\(^{35}\). Note, too, that I have used the word "violent" to describe the "queer" blend

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\(^{34}\) The ingroup frame functions similarly for a whole group of terms of solidarity that are polysemous to the degree that more negative attributions might be made to the term by an "outsider." See Sutton (1995).

\(^{35}\) This resembles a Gricean treatment in the sense that it would seem that *some* "maxim" of self-presentation is flouted, and resolution is necessary. However, Grice's
but not to describe the "lesbian marriage" blend. This derives largely from the sense that
queer has been used in a highly derogatory sense, whereas words other than lesbian have
been used to derogate lesbians, notably dyke and bulldyke. There is a sense, then, that the
violence of the injury is not lost in a reclaiming, in the sense that the hurling, offensive,
objectifying and finger-pointing affective force is imputed into the new usage, even if the
terms of that usage are different.

What constitutes the conflict between the spaces in this case? Returning to Figure
6, the "viewpoints" mentioned above are inscribed inside the LEXICAL SEMANTICS
and SPEECH SITUATION spaces. They crucially contain different valuations of the
queer objects or the elements that commonly define them. Though we might describe the
clash in a number of ways, in Figure 6 it seems most readily evinced in the
unacceptability of the link across the LEXICAL SEMANTICS and SPEECH
SITUATION space, between S1 of the SPEECH SITUATION space with the IN­
MEMBER of the LEXICAL SEMANTICS space, in which the different S’s – again
crucially – carry clashing (non-unifiable) sets of properties. Even though the clash is
between valuations, we must not lose sight of the more general phenomenon which, I
believe, makes this clash what it is. In other words, the un-unifiability may be seen as a
clash of frames: solidarity, and power (it does not appear to be simply a clash between
ingroup and outgroup viewpoints, at least it does not seem to be centrally operative in this
view). In the expected case, the hearer, due to the solidary context, prioritizes the
solidarity frame (as previously explained) and its accompanying valuations over the
power frame implied by heteronormative viewpoints and the lexeme they associate with (another way of stating the ironic reversal vs. internalization choice), and constructs the lower space, a resultant blend, by a later time T2.\textsuperscript{36} Note that I have integrated the direct-meaning-revision aspect of reclaiming by including in the blend a code frame. For some this will represent the function of reclaiming as a proposal at the level of \textit{form-meaning} associations; so what is at work here are conventional myths about language structure – that words “mean” things, that they “have” meaning, that for every word there is a unique meaning. Over and above the implicit manipulations of word meaning in every usage, these conventional myths can also be recruited and foregrounded to be the stage for a proposal of an explicit revision. Again, for some – in interpretation #6, for instance – the reclaiming act will be understood rather as an irony without effect intended beyond the immediate context of the utterance. We might think that the code space in the “ironic reading” case may remain relatively untouched. But it is also true that it cannot be but touched in some way. No cognitive experience may proceed monolithically, as if “irony” may be mobilized and “code” one of the fixed givens on which that irony may operate. Like dynamic computer memory, elements of meaning are continually made, remade, 

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\item Note that two possibilities exist, both of which still “use” the solidarity frame. If the hearer identifies as also an ingroup member, they are included within the solidarity frame and more correspondences among elements in the spaces of Figure 4 are possible. However, if the hearer identifies as an outgroup member, they have to reconcile their position vis-a-vis the viewpoint of the reclaiming speaker. They may compensate by attributing the semantic revision to the speaker but not adopting it themselves. This amounts to cognitively \textit{distancing} themselves (or their group) from the act, from the resignification proposed of the term itself, as well as from the viewpoint, a move that is reinforced by the drawing of a community boundary that would a priori exclude them. Alternatively, if they are nevertheless sympathetic, they may, against the grain, move to attempt to adopt that viewpoint (But note how disfavored this would be, given the contradictions about “identity” and “belief” involved). In both cases, “reading solidarity”
\end{enumerate}
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reinforced, and modified. It is only the degree and nature of these modifications that is in question. Those who read direct revision are those whose attention is most drawn to that aspect of it. Certainly their consciousness of a foregrounded code element may have its unique effects on the code space, as compared with a case when the code space is backgrounded or not even quite onstage.

In the resultant blend, then, the positive (or neutral), ingroup evaluations imported from the prioritized solidarity frame may propagate downward, while the negative ones from the power frame are blocked from projecting to (being incorporated into) the blend. In general, ingroup evaluations from the queer viewpoint can associate with some of the “original” elements of meaning imported from the listener’s understanding of the stereotype/ shared model/ speaker’s conception of the “oppressor’s” understanding of “queerness” – namely, some defining notions and structures of sexual difference from what was originally the only viewpoint attached to the lexeme queer. As an example, ‘non-normative’ things can come to be seen as positively valued. For men, excessive femininity may become valued rather than devalued, as can be seen in drag queen competitions; across gender borders (but perhaps differentiating in race and class), many aspects of what is considered normative sexuality – heterosexuality, monogamy, and families – may be re-judged as negative.

Finally, it is appropriate to mention just one more highly important factor in the choice of interpretations. Returning to John Baugh’s conception, we can imagine that the choice of responses is delimited by the membership configurations “claimed” or “imagined” of the participants in the reclaiming act (hearer and speaker). In fact, a has been instrumental for the drawing of the community boundary.
mapping between, on the one hand, the “intersubjectivity” configuration of spaces (that is, self, other, self-as-other-sees and other-as-other-sees) and the public/private/ingroup/outgroup four-square matrix, are imputed as part of the language interpretation (meaning construction). The attribution of membership in these cases, precisely because reclaiming is premised on certain identititarian boundaries, is highly relevant to the interpretation which results.

**Reclaiming As (Re-)Subjectification**

So far I have not addressed, in cognitive terms, the sense that reclaiming, in some sense, constitutes a repossession; and further, that it stands as a “kind of animated subject-making”. Could it be that some cognitive entity is being shifted on some imaginary landscape, repossessed in the sense that that object is pulled closer to that self?

One example can be found in the “unpacked” mental-spaces diagram. For those who are not ingroup listeners and who, more importantly, do not see themselves as participating in the solidary frame itself, there may well be a (imputed, protective) distance between their own code “queer” and the one attributed to the speaker. This may be a kind of objectification, in fact, of the speaker (or their viewpoint) by the responding hearer. But, regardless of such distantiation, the reclaiming speaker has claimed the author-role of defining (writing) some semantic space. As a result of this redefinition performed in the reclaiming, whether or not the hearer adopts that redefinition, the speaker can now, legitimately and coherently, say “my queer as opposed to your queer”. This possession takes advantage of a certain kind of closeness, an intimacy of authorship, a very similar kind of “notional closeness” to the one that pragmatic metonymy exploits.
In this case, the represented possession "my queer" depends on a historical claim, which the moment of authorship itself enacted.

More generally, reclaiming is a move to bring pejorative, stigmatized, or harmful symbols (that "carry" injury because of the intent of those who have been "behind" their performance or surfacing) closer to the groups that have been named by them. Here, the closeness is realized in a doubled fashion. First, within the strict code (form-meaning) space, the conceptual configuration associated with the form "queer" accepts entrenchment with the subject-face citing the label; it is thus subjectified, and hence re-associated contentfully with the groups conceived as subjects, groups as subjects rather than objects. Second, the speaker conceptually reverses the speaker-hearer template that normally accompanies the uttered lexeme. She thus plays on the conventional belief – entrenched in the Conduit Metaphor - that the speaker is "here", and delivers a possessed object to a hearer, "there", who receives it. The object then travels from the agent, who has possessed it and has also shown the power to manipulate it, to the patient. What happens when it is re-cited, this time in reverse? The speaking reclamer now has possession of the verbal ball. The ball itself (the term), is now, at least for the moment, hers to manipulate; and there is no reason to imagine that she is giving it back up. It may constitute a turn invitation – but it may not be a collaborative one. In any sense she has certainly demonstrated her ability to use the term; she has pressed her agency, and hence her subjectivity, as a member of that group (which we know at the strict informational level "I am a queer"), upon the stereotype.

Further reclaiming examples include a passage of Frantz Fanon, from Black Skin White Masks:

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"The white world, the only honorable one, barred me from all participation. A
man was expected to behave like a man. I was expected to behave like a black
man – or at least like a nigger.... What! When it was I who had every reason to
hate, to despite, I was rejected? When I should have been begged, implored, I was
denied the slightest recognition? I resolved, since it was impossible for me to get
away from an inborn complex, to assert myself as a BLACK MAN." (1967 [1952])

Thus the narrator symbolically claims the identity that so many conditions have made him
reluctant to claim. Note his distance from the “stereotypical” identity itself – and his
ensuing choice to enter it, to adopt it.

The movement of cherished symbols closer to one’s “self” can be seen ultimately
as an effort toward re-subjectification. This is the only explanation, I believe, for a scene
in the 2003 Brazilian film, “Madame Sata,” whose description in my own words follows:

Joao, the protagonist, has just finished one of his new drag shows in his friend Amador’s bar. It
is late at night. Having changed back to his usual street clothes, but not shed of his drag makeup,
he and Amador celebrate, dancing and singing together on the main floor. Off to the side, a third
stranger remains at the bar drinking when all other patrons have left. The stranger speaks:
“Another drink...” Neither hears him. They continue to dance and sing. He moves around the
corner of the bar, and rings the bell for service. Amador breaks away and goes over to serve him.
Then the stranger, who now appears heavily drunk, begins to hurl insults at Joao. “Queer!” At
one point: “Were you dancing as a woman or a man?” Joao turns, recognizing the threat. The
stranger approaches him. A further exchange ensues, and physical and verbal threats are
insinuated. At one point, the stranger is face-to-face with Joao. He places his hand on Joao’s
cheek, ambiguously, since he does not strike him. Then he wipes it across Joao’s face harshly,
jostling his head. He looks at his hand: “You have more makeup than the cheapest whore in
Lapa!” In reply, Joao calls him a little toad. He returns, “Queer!” and unleashes anew a barrage
of one-word nouns, all insults. Joao finally comes close to the stranger’s face, and says, “I am a
queen by choice!” Hence, Joao has not only claimed the identity of “queen”; he has – perhaps
more deeply – subjugated his representation, contesting the objectified form which the drunk
has just cited. Note that Joao might well be taking advantage of one folk theory of language,
which is that one word has one meaning – and in some way, by using the same word he forces
the stranger to re-assess it at least as an identity that might be chosen; at the same time, Joao has
humanized himself as an agent of choice. In sum, Joao’s reclaiming, it seems, is both about re-
subjectifying the abjected object of his self, and furthermore, explicitly turning an object into the
same subject: I am a queen by choice!"
Ambivalence

Erving Goffman, in his 1963 work *Stigma*, writes that reclaiming negotiates the structures, both social and personal, of ambivalence. “Ambivalence” may be a useful articulation in the sense that it captures the uncertainty that a word carries—of its “proper” speaker, its proper hearer; its work of subordination, its hapless repetition; its spacious rehabilitation or its diseased, repressed past. What to make, finally, of accounts in which reclaimings are necessarily, in some sense, *ambivalent*? What to make of such fundamental juxtapositions, posed here, in the depraved-but-reclaimed language of sex-positive feminists; in the positive value attachment to clearly degraded racial and gender labels? What does it mean to scoop up a word that has been, by all measures, expelled from what is constructed as acceptable, valued, dignified, respected?

In investigating the implications for certain kinds of ambivalence, it seems apt to visit Bourdieu (1991)'s notion of “strategy of condescension.” In discussing such strategies, Bourdieu insists that hierarchies are maintained even when they are superficially rejected, because the borders that define the hierarchy, being presupposed, are hence reinforced. Butler makes a similar gesture when she asks if a word can ever lose its injurious content. Cognitively, both of these perspectives make some sense. Ironic uses, if transparent, invite two alternative interpretations, perspectives, value judgments, and so forth; and to the extent that a hierarchy, or injurious history, is held up at the moment it is rejected, it remains present, cognitively. It may be recruited for transformations in meaning, but presented as such it is certainly not to be forgotten. Bourdieu’s example (68) suggests that a French government figure’s use of some village patois in a speech to the village denizens, seemingly a symbolic offering of identification,
neither upsets nor transforms the conventions of official language use, but rather does
quite the opposite of what it seems to announce. In fact it restabilizes and reifies the
barriers of distinction, and in the disparity between the apparent togetherness it announces
and pleasure it affords and the hierarchy-maintaining work it effects, it is better described
as “a strategy of condescension”. If Bourdieu is correct, then it would seem that laying a
claim under the name of a selected group that announces its lack – even if, to use the
example of the village patois, it gestures at identity with the privileged group – implicitly
fixes a constitutive boundary between that group and the group which already possesses
the asset. But applied to the insistently variant processes of reclaiming, Bourdieu’s
analysis can only be reductive. While a community boundary may well be inferred appear
in many of the readings, it is not necessarily the case, as was seen earlier in the mental
spaces analysis of queer’s multiple reclaimings. Such a reading is therefore far from being
determined in advance.

There is another, related, case attached to Bourdieu, this time concerning meaning
that is denied and hidden. Bourdieu criticizes Heidegger’s special terminology, a
terminology which, in its idiosyncratic redefinitions of words recruited from existing
domains, has to explicitly say “I do not mean...” – but in so doing carries the trace of the
“forgotten” meaning, and hence, to Bourdieu, does not really leave that former meaning
completely. But this example, it seems to me, is all about explicit, rather than implicit,
denial, if that distinction may be made; and so the history of the word is not hidden so
much as held up to be negated. Such kinds of meaning, meaning which is mentioned and
then expelled, clearly cannot easily atrophy. But Bourdieu, despite so clearly indicating
that what makes the negated meaning “stick” is the explicit synchronous denial of members

237

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of the discourse, seems to assume that words, “carry” past meanings that do not get addressed, as if to adopt a psychoanalytic approach to repressed meaning in language.

But I suggest such recourse is unnecessary. Given Heidegger’s vocabulary’s need for explicit negation, it seems to me that there really is no shadow to worry about. He in fact presents a scenario which involves a synchronous juxtaposition between expert and lay language, which may be denied or not; this is as explicit as one can get. What if, however, that explicitness is lost? What if Heidegger’s special term now fails to make a self-conscious reference to its negative (the expelled lay version)? In this case, I believe the ambivalences Bourdieu would attribute, become insignificant. I do not adhere too tightly to the Saussurean vision of language that all signification relies more on contrast than on its “own” positive meaning. The cognitive linguistics research on the embodiment of meaning, and the role of embodiment in the genesis of meaning, shows little evidence for such strictly structural configurations, which quite entirely deny the role of the body in the production of meaning. Indeed, a view of organic development of language necessitates the material, and transformative, effects, on language as a whole of children’s acquisition of language; crucially, children are not passively subject to impermeable linguistic structures; rather, linguistic innovation is always a continuous process, open to all, at least in some sense. While the powerful effects on the distribution within discourse of center and periphery, and the inheritances of authority, are not to be minimized, I would still insist that not all of language structure is fated to participate in that individual’s disenfranchisement, subordination, and subjection.

It is of further interest to address a question that has both theoretical (because it may inform us about language change) and political import (in that most activist
strategists have some theory or another about the potential of language-based agendas): Without taking recourse to an assimilatory “bleaching of affect”, what success could reclaiming have semantically – employing the understandings we have reached of community and injury – and what hope might it have of “removing the injurious effect”? To this end, a discussion on irony is highly appropriate: Reclaimings have been explicitly defined as ironic expressions, and yet in conventional terms, irony invites interpretations of fecklessness, rather than substantive intervention. Though many definitions of irony exist, the commonly referenced cognitive pragmatic definition offered by Sperber and Wilson (1981) and Wilson and Sperber (1992), applies easily here: irony is seen as “a variety of echoic interpretive use, in which the communicator disassociates herself from the opinion echoed with accompanying ridicule or scorn.” (1992)

Inferring from Sperber and Wilson’s model, we could then describe “irony” as the contraposition of two things: a new instantiation up against an old instantiation -- a figure against a ground, in an apparent clash of natures, such that the figure – is at once associated with the speaking self, as well as with some attitude which is alienated from the echoed instantiation. For a reclaimed term to function radically, that is, to challenge rather than simply repeat the derogation of that group, it still needs effectively to call up its “nemesis,” its challenged object – the re-cited insult. But they are also correct that “there is no such thing as a fail-safe diagnostic of irony. All communication takes place at a risk.” (Wilson and Sperber 1992) This is precisely because an ironic communication is

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37 Some of these attributions of “uselessness” derive from a general belief in the fecklessness of language in itself, such that material intervention (like guns and bricks) is somehow more “weighty.” In this view language intervention, much like “political correctness,” cannot possibly compete with either direct intellectual negotiation or
in fact no more than an invitation to enter a dialogic process, which all language interpretation involves: “The recognition of verbal irony, and of what it communciates, depends on an interaction between the linguistic form of the utterance, the shared cognitive environment of communicator and audience, and the criterion of consistency with the principle of relevance.” (278)

**Injury Past and Present**

Judith Butler inquires in “Critically Queer” about queer’s (in)ability to “overcome its constitutive history of injury”. On this note, I believe that to some degree the “fading” of injury depends on the extent to which self-announcing, or foregrounding, takes place during a reclaiming. Below, in Figure 8, Langacker’s use-based model posits that new usages in new contexts are gradually strengthened, with frequency, in terms of the neural pathways they alert. It might first seem that reclaimed forms in their novel contexts would, with increased usage, be strengthened neurally, while the “old” usage weakens (as in the top figure).

![Fig. 8. Langacker’s model of “use-based” changes to language structure:](image)

physical action. Language is “light”, it only “expresses” things, rather than “does” things.
But it also seems strongly likely that both meanings are strengthened at once, particularly when affect is high. To the extent that a reclaiming involves a surprising contrast between figure and ground — for instance, between a positive and negative meaning, between two kinds of authorship, or between an expelled history of loss and a new appropriation, the effort to change would seem to have relatively little capacity to "forget" one of the elements of the juxtaposition. The effort to change things consciously, seems to involve entrenching (to use Langacker's cognitive terminology, this means the strengthening of a neural path) both opposed elements together, entrenching the very contraposition of the two opposed elements. If figure and ground are renewed together, the ground cannot be lost, or we might say, atrophy away.

Fig. 9. Reclaiming as a contraposition.

Indeed, language, the more it names, and the more it is pronounced, resides increasingly along a cline of obviousness; to the extent that this obviousness is used to
name a state of affairs in which a particular group is disadvantaged, the more it seems that a single language act can neither rehabilitate a condition, nor rehabilitate a word's meaning. It seems that to the extent that language is quiet – that it avoids outright naming, but that it manipulates ownership without announcing its investments – it has a real chance to rehabilitate politics, and thereby perhaps also to rehabilitate referential language, while forfeiting its chance to rehabilitate language directly. It is only, it seems, by *indirection* that language can hope to avoid its own ambivalence, its own ability to condescend. And, to return to the themes that motivate this study, such is the purchase of alienation. This is not to naively celebrate the “distant,” “outsider” stature of alienated beings in a naive way that only seems to mimic the prized objectivity of scientific discourse; rather, it is to see the inherent political promise of intervention from “other” / alienated modalities.

... I remain skeptical of strategies of reversal when they are not intricately woven with strategies of displacement. Here the notion of displacement is also a place of identity: there is no real me to return to, no whole self that synthesizes the woman, the woman of color and the writer; there are instead, diverses recognitions of self through difference, and unfinished, contingent, arbitrary closures that make possible both politics and identity. (1992: 157)

I am reminded here of an indirect strategy in which I delighted while reading Audre Lorde's *Zami* (1982): in Chapter 3, the young black female narrator Audre’s disciplinarian Catholic-school nun, a teacher who separates good children from bad children into “fairies” and “brownies” respectively, categories in which the narrator documents her own shifting membership, is first introduced as “Sister Mary of Perpetual Help” (twice), only later to be dubbed “Sister MPH” (three times), then to be called simply “Sister”, only to jump to “Sister Mary of PH” three more times. This series of
unpatternable namings is lent further meaning in the fact that earlier, Sister Mary of Perpetual Help had prominently disciplined the narrator for not only writing an “A” as instructed, but having the audacity to spell her entire name, an act which the Sister only acknowledges as writing the *wrong letters*: “A U D R E L O R D E.” In spite of those silencings, Audre continues naming, and extravagantly so; by being a florid namer of Sister MPH she positions herself in relation to her; and by privately naming – again, in another modality – she regains or reestablishes her own center, her own mode of resistance. For some of us the critique can take another dimension: by naming Sister in so many ways, namings that are all “valid” in that they all easily attach to the very same Sister, perhaps even evoking a road sign along the way – Audre’s name-meandering exposes the hidden ambivalences of any apparently fixed and secure self. With her outright segregation of herself as an authorial and authority figure, her willingness to engage others’ multiplicity by dispelling and shuffling kids from the categories of “fairies” to “brownies” and back again, truth is revealed: Sister Mary is herself made up of ambivalences. She cannot control her Self in the eyes of the Other – she cannot control her Self in the eyes of Audre. As in multiple other instances of reclaiming that explicitly name, this serves to me as an example of what Trinh T. Minh-ha calls (in a discussion primarily about self-reference) “the necessity of re-naming so as to un-name” (1990).

To emphasize that effective discursive interventions must often happen by indirection is also to repeat the point, made by so many poststructuralist theorists and no less by the evidence of lived lives, that modalities – discourses – disciplines – are not hermetically sealed, but that they live by the illusion of an “I” while constantly exchanging and redefining, expropriating and appropriating, under the covers. The
categories of linguistics, then, might benefit from recognizing the ways that a priority for the vividness of outright presences and historical “givens” not only risks expelling “other” hidden presences as outside of linguistic language, but furthermore risks repeatedly misappropriating them. Perhaps this dynamic is best captured with an example. A recent textbook in cognitive linguistics includes the following early comment:

The principle of expressibility means that we can ‘point’ to things in our scope of attention. We consider ourselves to be at the center of the universe and everything around us is seen from our point of view. This egocentric view of the world also shows in our use of language. (Dirven and Verspoor 1999)

Even if one wished to be attentive to the disciplinary meaning of the linguistic term “egocentric,” in this case the authors’ very effort to explicate, referring to the general tendencies of a “we”, raises questions. One must ask whose perspective informs this motivation for language use, and, by extension, for whom egocentricity has served as the best explaining factor for language behavior. For whom, then, is non-normativity in social contexts constantly brought up as a reminder of one’s own exogeny; whose minority consents are silenced by such a “we”?

**Permission to Subjectify**

Cultural frames that register the conditions of disenfranchisement, expulsion, or abjection, are able to “remember” loss in a limited sense, and to encode it. It is only in such a context that gain, as such, can be understood as recuperation, rather than simple acquisition. The problem, then, with attempts to change society from within, are that one’s own disenfranchised group knows intimately this history of expulsion – but the outgroup does not have access – at least not conscious access – to the same kinds of
knowledge, the same cultural frames. This is above and beyond any possibility that a dominant group has an investment in inclusion of what it thinks to be “others.”

With regard to reclaiming, it seems particularly risky to be at once onstage, (believed to be) constitutively fragmented – or at the least, in want of something (rather than in command of it already); and in a reclaiming act, to pose oneself as in control of one’s own discourse could well contradict the fact that one’s lack has just been announced. Representing this partial materiality is to speak in terms of “almost as” and “almost for.” It is also, hence, to speak of an intensity of anxiety and/or of negative affect in association with a particular conceptualization, however precise that image may be. In my view, we can schematize the sense of “not quite” in Langacker’s terms of notional distance: an a-priori alienation from the center of a category of speakers, such that one who speaks in a domain not quite theirs is already de-authorized. If the conditions are right – if physicalist metaphors are made to be warranted – what falls out of such a distance is a loss of specificity of that object – which serves dominating ends up to a certain point.

Given the strength of cultural forces and the elaborated demands of participation in modern economies, there is something disheartening, in the end, about having to be depicted – in moments, but even worse, to be duratively so – as “other”, or in the position of “them” to an “us”. The psychodynamics of abjection are of interest in this regard, particularly as they help to explain the coexistence of two “strange friends”: descriptive particularity and expelling othering. Mary Douglas, in *Purity and Danger* (1966), points to ways that the boundaries of the body can stand in for boundaries between “purity” – that is, cleanliness, cultural rectitude, and “danger” – that is, cultural pollution. Julia
Kristeva (1982) renders abjection as a process by which things that may well fall within the self, are expelled and concomitantly re-defined as other, while in the same moment the self's own contours are re-defined. By emphasizing the possibility that cultural repulsions are themselves constructions and employing Kristeva's idea that the boundaries between self and other are always open to reconstituting shifts under threat, Butler (1990) works the concept of abjection into an exploration of the use of the body's interiority and exteriority as "natural" (hence incontestible) givens upon which ideologies of sexuality are written. As Butler writes, informed also in part by Iris Young:

Regardless of the compelling metaphors of the spatial distinctions of inner and outer, they remain linguistic terms that facilitate and articulate a set of fantasies, feared and desired. "Inner" and "outer" make sense only with reference to a mediating boundary that strives for stability. And this stability, this coherence, is determined in large part by cultural orders that sanction the subject and compel its differentiation from the abject. Hence, "inner" and "outer" constitute a binary distinction that stabilizes and consolidates the coherent subject. When that subject is challenged, the meaning and necessity of the terms are subject to displacement. (1990: 134)

If we accept these insights, then sexually, sexuality-, or racially abjected entities or beings can be cast in one of two ways. First, they are cast in abjected terms, which is to say, defined precisely but consistently in ways that were described at length in the previous chapter: as dirt, feces, vomit, animals, and so forth; this is a condition of being afforded some kind of self-definition, but one which is wholly unacceptable, and imposed entirely from without. The other alternative is to be "outside": to be unable to find one's self in the normative cultural frames that circulate and surround. The implication for linguistics, as seen in the previous chapter, is that it is in speech that names and hence objectifies that the former can be found (recall object-ification); the latter manifests in the quiet invocation of or distantiating perspectives, mass numbers, or, finally, framings that,
in their imposition as the apparent set of conditions for lending meaning to their participants, are no less linguistic (recall objective-ization).

Fig. 10. “We”, “them” and the struggle over contentious objects.

The image above is not new. It simply represents an effort to place both the objectifying acts of the previous chapter and the reclaiming acts presented in this chapter in common context, as well as to depict the kinds of forces that I have addressed which circumscribe, and potentially counter, attempts to re-subjectify – especially, as I have suggested above, self-evident attempts. In resembling a pair of mental spaces, as well, it is meant to evoke the ways in which mental-spaces reasoning, by expelling subjectified, “native” elements away to objectified spaces, and reshaping those spaces in the very act, can have material effects. In a sense, the play of politics can occur on a conceptual stage, where elements are simply mis-, dis-, and re-placed strategically in the spaces and framings of one’s imagination.

A center and periphery structure which is overwhelmingly supported by cultural institutions legitimates authority in one place and assigns deference in the other. It is not
hard to imagine that a visible effort by a negatively objectified or abjected self, one who has been defined as “them” or worse, to re-subjectify will be, by “us”-agents who act under the norms of meaning determination, immediately re-expelled, either in the sense that that resubjectifying act is denied or rejected wholesale (consider the outpouring of hate speech delivered in the immediate vicinity of the funeral services for Matthew Shepard), or in the sense that “us”-agents retreat from the claim to the territory momentarily inhabited by the reclamer. The Star-Belly Sneetches of Dr. Seuss’ *The Sneetches* (whose excerpt opened this chapter), upon finding out that the Plain-Belly Sneetches had purchased their own stars from a capitalist entrepreneur with a star-affixing machine, simply removed theirs.

But such acts were made visible in one way or another – for Matthew Shepard, the intense media attention; in the case of the Plain-Belly Sneetches, their own insistence that they now had a right to join the Star-Belly Sneetches’ frankfurter parties. To the extent that the claims I make throughout these chapters have made some sense, and without wishing to render as hopeless any stalwartly visible acts, for they, too, assert a place in the stage of participation and intervention – I do genuinely hope that there is some purchase, after all, in “invisibility”, in “silence”; in the possibility of doing work that may never be seen, heard, known.

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Sally McConnell-Ginet writes “the standard... meaning can be thought of as what is recognizable solely on the basis of interlocutors’ mutual knowledge of established practices of interpretation”; thus “men, with superior extralinguistic resources and privileged discourse positions, are often less likely to treat perspectives different from their own as mutually available for communication, [their attitudes are] thus more likely to leave a lasting imprint on the common semantic stock than women’s.” (McConnell-Ginet 1999)
Chapter 5. Conclusion: Identity on an Interdisciplinary Surface

At one point when I was unable to write, because, I explained, I didn’t know “what it was”. Dev listened and then said, well, this is the way it’s supposed to be, isn’t it? What would it mean if you saw it clearly? He was speaking of interdisciplinarity, that there was something about it necessarily being "lost", without a priori organization. (personal notes, 8/6/2003)

This project has been presented as a critical exploration of the meanings of “subject” and “object” and the relations between them in language events, whether textual or spoken, whether “scholarly” or “lay”, whether contemporary or historical, whether saliently perceived or without notice, whether among familiars or across borders. To compare such events side-by-side was to allow explorations of the contiguities between them, and hence to suggest sites in which the skewing or “theory-effect” of at least some of the binary oppositions structuring thought and language may occur. As a “critical” project this might well follow an expected pattern of engaging structures in order to reveal their irregularities or implicit heritages at a closer glance; yet at the same time, its critical bark may be larger than its bite, for it has been possessed less of a disciplinary center than those with certain critical projects might wish. Be that as it may, I do hope that at least some of its claims remain useful and practicable; that they “make sense” under a “different” code of disciplinary rigor.

The dissertation began as a project with clear intentions to be centered in cognitive linguistics; later, as the work began to emerge, so many implicit assumptions I had made began to become clearer. The very identities of my “subjects”/ “objects” of study, secure in one disciplinary perspective, began to falter in the light of other disciplinary perspectives. The challenge seemed then to engage my own dialogic politics...
around the study of “shared objects,” and continue to allow what looked like a heterogeneous effort to develop. The application of specific methodologies I had once envisioned was faltering, and as my personal notes above register, I wonder if such a sense of loss was necessary for the project to go on. Was choosing such a project, such a study, such objects (who were also “research subjects”), with such a subject (myself, who also bore a more-than-incidental relation to the objects), setting a rather teleological tone for an eventual “reflexive implosion”? If this thesis work became its own reflexive mirror, if it became lost on a surface of disciplinarity, then what could it finally have the authority to say about its purported objects?

Under such a view, it then goes without saying that, also by necessity, this study was equally informed by a deeply personal engagement with questions of “subjectivity” and “objectivity”, whether in my research; my analytic process; or the very writing of the thesis. While this dimension was only sometimes articulated explicitly in the work, it informs everything that is written here.

For the very reason that there can be no conclusory, nor—because it would be ungainly—an exhaustive review of disciplinary facts that have emerged from this work, this “conclusion” is a false one in some respects. For, rather than distilling, summing up (though I make some effort below), it seems even more to suggest that for whatever can be made of it, it is necessary to turn back to the chapters themselves. But it also offers some of the formal properties of at least some conclusions: it closes a written body by offering an outward look that precisely employs a form like the one which occurred at that body’s beginning, in this case a personal anecdote. I hope that it can be a way of “departing” the project that is grounded in a personal presence. And for all the seeming
chutzpah of “putting one’s self all over the page”, in this case it felt like a gesture of both humility and necessity. I do hope this choice, or this gesture, would make sense to the reader.

Finally, this conclusion is schematic, also, for the simple reason of time constraints. More work on the subject-object process will be forthcoming; and more articulations of its role in interdisciplinary studies will be left for future work. The remainder of the conclusion comes in two parts, each of which frames a brief retrospective: “objective” and “subjective.”

“Objective”

I have tried to show concretely how it is that subjectivity and objectivity in language are dynamically – and to some degree independently – produced, augmented, or constrained, a claim which I supported by use of both relatively naïve examples, as well as some which depart from the expected recourse to what have been presented as the essential sets of experientialist conceptual metaphor representing entrenched, embodiment-based knowledge structures. At the same time, this work has tried to suggest the presence of centers and peripheries still residing in cognitive linguistics, and what of otherwise inherent interest within disciplines stands to be “lost” due to such forces. I have tried to point out in particular a few ways that cognitive linguistic research may unwittingly service the reproduction of center and periphery, ways that do not contribute to its overarching investments as a discipline.

In recent years there have been many new approaches, or returns, to the “body”, since its determinative and material presence had been for a long time excised from the domain of what counted. One source of this historical loss was the Cartesian separation...
of mind and body and the ensuing privileging of mind to the extreme in centuries of Western philosophy and thought. When “primitive” civilizations were studied, their peoples were understood as collective bodies lacking “higher” rational capacity; indeed, much of this attitude continues to prevail in lay Western thought. For the philosophical subject, rationality was all, and theories of language that partook of rationality hence implicitly represented the human agent as underlyingly and essentially rational. Adding to this pattern was Saussure’s formative and intensely “exported” structuralist work, which emphasized the importance of determining the makeup of an otherwise invisible system, one unavailable in its entirety to an observer, but one which had to be deduced from evidence – from numerous real-life utterances which could and should not aspire to be as seamless as that system. Rather they were “nonce”, subject to frivolities of context, to intrusions of error.

The consequences of such distributions within linguistics – of center/periphery, of mind/body, of us/them; and then within linguistics of system/nonce, intangible/tangible – included a priority on “system” over nonce use, and of mentalist visions of human communication over the role of the body itself; the body’s role in the production of language should only be seen as mercenary, fleeting and full of interruptive “noise”. Where does the body stand today? I believe it has been to a large degree optimistically and indeed gainfully recuperated – from perspectives ranging from neurobiology to conceptual metaphor – but has continued to be neglected where it comes to emotions, and also has a tendency to be invoked as a “past” source of experience for “present” language-bearing mental configurations, which ultimately have the final weight in language making or language understanding. One significant – and presently flourishing
- subarea in which this latter claim is not true, however, is studies in gesture and sign language, where gesture is seen to take equal part in the body’s expression as well as the mental structures that correlate to the gesture’s status as derivative language.

“Subjective”

In thinking about the process of bringing interdisciplinarity to bear on a study of alienation, it well seems that my own positionings within disciplines had palpable effects on my own attempts to “identify” and “dis-identify,” both with the subjects in my research as well as with those theoretical perspectives that I needed to employ as resources and hence accommodate. Of particular interest is how, as a researcher and as a writer, I experienced the very sense of center and periphery which I impute to my conceptualizing subjects; the sense by which I feel I have, in describing their interpretive options, “written” them; and the doubling effect which, because I have identified with many of them through my own similar experiences here in the United States, made me wonder if I had, indeed, written myself (and then written over them, etc., etc.). And of course there is the sense that this dissertation writes my “self”, as I am in academia. This kind of discomfort which I describe is, I feel, precisely what impedes certain kinds of interdisciplinarity – whether of the provocative type of project I have chosen or not: internalized center-periphery structures, identifications with a periphery and vulnerabilities with being there, and consequent de-authorization of the self – self-silencing – as a writer of a discipline.

While I have attempted to reflect on constructive ways that the disciplines of thought engaged in this work may broaden their traditional fields of inquiry for the
benefit of the study of shared objects, this chapter is also, no less, about my experience
with these structures – disciplines, theories, subjects, objects – and to what extent and in
what way these structures were deeply felt by me in writing, identifying with, and, in
some way, inhabiting them. From my perspective in retrospect, it seems that over and
above the insights of a reflexive anthropology, interdisciplinarity, and disciplinarity itself,
cannot be but “personal”.

To the extent that I was writing about language, alienation, identities, disciplines,
and subjects and objects, I was inevitably to be (and I felt these positions so deeply I am
almost embarrassed to report them) a subject of objects, a writer of language, a writer of
alienating language, a writer of identities, in identification with a discipline, and most of
all, in writing about queers and race and the experience of alienating and de-alienating
language in relation to those formations, to risk becoming my own object. Briefly put,
this dissertation became for me almost fatally – criminally – reflexive.

There is, in interdisciplinarity, the perpetual possibility of an endless confusion of
subjects and objects. One might feel: “I” am a subject of my discipline, the contiguous
“I” who performs research and does the writing attached to this research occupies this
subject position. Or, my subjectivity, the subjectivity that is written, shall “occupy” this
method, or that theoretical viewpoint. Or, my “proper object” is that which is dictated by
that shape of the history of objects within this or that disciplinary field. But in
interdisciplinarity the question may well be: what if I replace that object with one from
this field instead? Is the responsibility thus formalizable, submissible to a set of mapping
functions that would elide the tension? Does, in fact, the convention of “writing a
dissertation”, one that is generally to remain maximally legible, and which attends, in
marked cases where “common sense” is not shared, to identifying the presumptions, methods, subjective intrusions, and objects of the research, forestay such problems? To some extent it does. But I think, when considering the responsibilities of this particular document, there has nonetheless been an invisible “I” which, unless its presence is explicitly addressed (and further, I believe, performed), is itself to be presumed as implicitly bound, with no question of its own possible fragmentation. To the extent then that such an invisible “I” can then further be mapped to a normative writing subject, a work that partakes of recombinatory disciplinarity by assuming (assuming: grasping outward from a completed body, enrobing its self) new “packages” of subjectivity (method) and objectivity (identification of “proper objects”), may well stand to implicitly “assume” a particular nature: given the voraciousness of disciplinary identities, in the eyes of the reader or the discourse itself, “it” becomes one or another unitary writing subject. How many of us ask the question, is there someone (some one) beyond? Does not our surprise when that someone is revealed, and our wish to remap the contents of a work when its author is better “known,” bespeak the normative presence of the assumption itself?

Hence my vulnerable and I hope not entirely misguided decision to reveal subjectivity in its fuller sense: my identification of (author’s) motive in the retelling of my own loss of speech that opened this document. Such exposure of subjectivity is not to promise completion by interweaving that “truth” with other “truths”, so much as a simple offer. Within that offer lies both convention and intervention. The convention is the anthropologist’s reflexive gesture (now an accepted part of anthropological discourse) that reveals my conditions of subjectivity as I move to study the hearts and minds of
"others”. The intervention, the presence of self, is an attempted opening to the heart and to the body (as well as “my” heart and “my” body) that moves past the opening acknowledgements into the central text itself and stands beyond the intellected text: it is to allow a more palpable shadow there, a shadow that might ordinarily be excused from the document, presumed silent, committed to the external realm of circumstance. But at times -- in fact, mostly -- just a shadow seemed all I could afford. If that shadow were to bear flesh, it was associated with fear, it became the embodied threat of a failed document, a failed act of research, a failed act of writing. The challenge then was to mediate the presence of this shadow: not so absent as to be forgotten; not so present as to invite condemnation and expulsion, as the uttering of a taboo sometimes risks the marking of the very subject of the utterance as other (in this case I suppose the dissertation might inherit that responsibility). My solution, which may well be naïve but which seemed to serve my wish as well as any other, was to sprinkle the text with personal tales.

Is injury owned by its experiencer? Is emotion owned by its experiencer? This question became highly salient for me as, while considering the possibility of injury, I wondered whether I had the right to write legitimately about others’ injury. To write about the injuries of the kind elaborated in this dissertation, was also to write about my own. But if injury is owned, why then even attempt to approach others’ injury? On some strict level it seemed I may not write of others’ injury since I do believe others cannot and should not be strictly “spoken for”. To the extent that an injury is my own, then to speak about it is to make a choice between two positions: 1) to accept that I am already alienated from it, or 2) to insist that I subvert the silencing of an injury by being within it.
even as I speak. In the end, I remained uncertain of my capacity to speak “next to” (Trinh); my best hope was to try to speak of the conditions of injury. But what is the codifying of harm itself aimed toward? As in legal attempts to identify the intent to hurt, this, too, this has been an attempt to codify malice, or the structures in which malice may participate.

Postscript

I have chosen to end, finally, with a revelation of loss whose tenor echoes the opening one. The path of formation of this dissertation went as follows: a highly technical (and perhaps paranoid) description of the technology of alienation in relation to that thing over there: identity – but others’ identity. “I” was nowhere to be found, nowhere to be seen, except as a passionless agent of thought and articulation. Technique and technology, for me – though they needn’t be, came hand in hand with my paranoia about being “discovered” to be, in fact, vulnerable, communing with my vulnerable kind. All of my feminist lessons, loved in the learning and still now, were nevertheless rendered powerless in the face of the swirling specters I bore of the Linguist, the Cognitive Scientist, the Disciplinary Theorist, the Practitioner, and the Empiricist, none of which I should even hope to approach for membership since I was already scrappily mixing genres. An inordinate sensitivity to the macro in the micro – the arrogance of seeing a world of disciplinarity in a 200-page document which few would ultimately read in its present form – had once again made my life difficult. At some excruciating point, I could take it no longer, and my sense of confusion and loss broke through my insistent attempts
to identify with this and that. Ironically, it was this shame and loss, rather than confident pride, which became my enabling agents.

While the writing of “that” first attempt, “that” technology-piece, had been difficult in its own way, a real pleasure in another, and also an act of love, something was missing from both the implicit subject and the object of the document; I felt I had to address this absence before allowing the document to be declared (at least from my own perspective) as “final”. But how was something missing? It simply did not feel acceptable for me to write of discomfort without permitting my own discomfort to breathe in the writing. Even if the whole of the writing up to this stage had been clearly laborious and uncomfortable at times, it felt unjust, somehow, to digest all of it and put forth a clean, flowing, perfectly comfortable and comforting manuscript, even if every writer who wishes to put forth a presentable product has done something like this in one way or another.

In the course of a few days, then, I literally took out my books, one by one, selecting them - as if in preschool - for the single words in their titles. Black. Woman. Queer. Sexuality. And let these beautiful things emerge from sleep and crawl once again into my fingers. Tentative notes were scribbled, on page 1, then 2. Feminism — I can indeed mention feminism here. And I can “be” a woman and write about women. In retrospect these elisions are incredible, truly so, given the sizable constitution of my committee by gender scholars, my accreditation by an excellent interdisciplinary gender studies program, my lived experience as a queer woman and linguist. What ever could have gone wrong? Rather than write this down to another shameful event for which I should hold up my own misguided hesitancy, it makes more sense for me to say: this can
happen; and it can happen when and where one least expects it. This is not to say that the dissertation might have been “wrong” with the elisions, indeed there are perspectives that identify the aleatory personal presence that appears in this document as particularly incorrect. It is only to say simply that the dissertation was not, in that form, what I believed I had set out to do originally. I believe this comes closer to it.
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