TOWARD AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF IDIOM

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at the
Australian National University

L.G. Cromwell
February 1982
This thesis is based on original anthropological research among Torres Strait Islanders in North Australia; the text constitutes my original work except where otherwise stated or other's work acknowledged.

[Signature]

Lawrence Geoffrey Cromwell
This is for the graduate students of the Department of Anthropology of the University of Western Australia who listened to the tales of the talk with no curves and the licensed silence and, with that cherished impoliteness of eager scholarship, pushed me to come to terms with the story of the idiom.

And for Kurt, because the happiest day of his life was when he was admitted to the study of man, because he understands the poetry that pretends science.
Abstract

Most studies in theoretical and methodological anthropology seek to contribute improvements in the systematic and rigorous collection of ethnographic facts. The present study seeks to redress what the author views as a chronic imbalance by attending to an exploration of the less systematic but no less rigorous task of presenting ethnographic facts. Using original research among urban Torres Strait Islanders in Australia's North Queensland, the author explores how it is that the ethnographer uses the language of ethnography—his own living native tongue—rather than the language of the people studied to present the ethnographic facts. It is a study of how to make facts make sense rather than on how to make sense of facts.

The principal exploration is of how it is that written words convey meanings initially foreign to the reader. Building on the concept of alterity—the capacity of language to depict events not actually at hand—the author proposes alterities: possible outcomes of activity which have not actually come about. It is by attending to alterities, by identifying and analysing them, that anthropologists put the case of the other culture; by discerning specific alterities within that other culture's frames of reference, the ethnographer begins to build a whole and detailed picture. This 'picture' comes alive when it begins to communicate to the reader how the other culture predicates sensible action. By exploring how ethnographers and others use written language to build on things known and familiar to the reader, the present study identifies some fundamental properties of texts and languages, and of how initially strange human actions of another culture are made sensible by explicating what it is those actions are predicated on.

The study explores the nature of texts, especially of ethnographic texts, and of the relationships between written texts and spoken language. It argues for the careful use of non-positivist ethnographic presentation in order to capture on the printed page as much of the living spoken idiom of any people studied. The author has found the basic act of social predication to be that enacted in the telling and hearing of any society's living stories, and suggests that the story form may be the minimum necessary vehicle for alterities. He argues for a principal responsibility on the part of the hearer of stories over that of the teller and extrapolates from this to an argument for the principal responsibility for the making of ethnographic sense to be on the part of the reader. The implication of this is for the establishment of a genre of ethnography responsive to its readers, a genre which values making sense over making facts, and which is prepared to harness the idiom, the human sense-making institution par excellence, in its task.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
<th>page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>(iii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1    Just Passing Through</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2    From Here to Alternity</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3    Of Wrist-Things and Islandtaim</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4    On Education and Expulsion</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5    Bar kak mir. To talk with no curves.</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6    The License of Silence: Means of Inaction in Torres Strait Talk</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7    Meriam to Meriba (the motion of the contentious self)</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion   STORYTIME: Toward an Anthropology of Idiom</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The notion of witness has become considerably debased. The first thing that occurs to us when we hear the word is the witness we may be called upon to give when we have been present at some event. And so we develop a tendency to think of ourselves as recording-machines, and to treat witness as the mere playing-over of the record. Hence we forget the really important thing about witness; its attestation. That is the essential here. When I attest, I bind myself, but I do it of my own free will. In this sense it brings into being the closest and most mysterious union of necessity and liberty. There is no act more essentially human than this.

Gabriel Marcel,  
Being and Having
PREFACE

'Jump, Pluto. Jump!'

There are two ways of doing ethnography. One way is to take the words of another people, their names and labels and concepts, and bring them surrounded in the language of the ethnographer where they are made to do a kind of *danse macabre*, dancing without heads or feet to a foreign tune. The other way is to take the words of the ethnographer's descriptions, the very language of ethnography and bend it, stretching its syntax, wending its grammar a new way until old words strain to new meanings and take them in.

The risks are different. In the first way it is ensured that the Others will always be strangers, partible objects of types and traits. They will always be there, inert and ready for ever more precisely honed analytics; they will never be here. While there is no risk of ever losing those objects who are the ethnographer's subjects, there is little chance of ever gaining the subjects who are the ethnographer's people. In the second way little is assured. In making the Others no longer Strangers, failure to make them familiar will make them forever strange. And in making living people of these ethnographic subjects, failure risks consigning them to the truncated existence of paper subjects, apparently real but only in their pages.

With the first way the risks come all at the end of the endeavor. It becomes more and more difficult to make analysis fit reality exactly; and if ever it finds such a fit, there is the grave risk that the reality which has been ever more accurately analyzed no longer exists. Seeking to avoid doing disservice to his subjects and the culture they have entrusted to him, the ethnographer serves no man in the end. With the second way all the risks come at the beginning. Every time a word is strained to capture an alien concept it is
stretched out of shape, never again quite fit to mean what it means and nothing more. Seeking to avoid doing a disservice to his subjects and the culture they have trusted him with, the ethnographer becomes a custodian of the language he has dislocated, and serves his reader.

In this way ethnography is a theory of language. For me the first way of doing ethnography is doomed either to be never quite right or to be too late. It is also inhumane: respectful of science, it is expensive of persons. But the second way of doing ethnography is frightening. It makes of every ethnographer a reader of his own text: expending his own language, he must respect his reader and keep him close. The first way is to have lots of chances to get the ethnography right with the spectre of having it finally prove wrong. The second way means if you get it wrong the first time there will be no chance to get it right. The reason for this is that the 'it' that you get right or wrong is the capture itself, the first bringing of the Other into view. If the bringing into view means bringing into familiar language, then failure to make the reader immediately familiar with and sensitive to the Other relegates all subsequent attempts at correction to arguments about words in a sensibility which excludes people.

In ethnography proper there is only the writer and his reader. Because this is so, and due to the extraordinary burden on any writer who would put the Word of others with his own tongue, there is a risk that my reader shall find these accounts a little strange. This risk, one which is known to us both, is preferable to the more commonly taken less well-known risk of the ethnographer who pales the very Otherness of they of whom he writes in his own terrible wish to be well understood. This paling is abhorent, not for the merely moral culpability of anyone who would press Others, unwitting and unpresent, into his own service, but for the irrevocable disservice to his own reader whom he has impressed as an accomplice. Swayed by
the former, and eschewing the latter, I may put myself too much into
the text.

I mean the present work to enter the consideration of how it is
human beings come to know the things they know. Because this is my
intent, and since I know that it is always the reader who puts in the
meaning (this is why each ethnographer must be his own first reader,
so he can see how his text reads when meanings are put in), I
sometimes spend a great many words making sure of the sorts of things
I do not mean. For instance, I do not mean for the present work to be
seen as ethnography: quite simply, because it is about ethnography it
cannot itself be an ethnography.

For another instance I should not like the more philosophical
among the discussions which follow to be read as out of place here.
Philosophy is as you find it. I found it on my way to beginning an
ethnographic account of towndwelling Torres Strait Islanders among
every word which purported Islander life in my early accounts was the
burden of someone else's philosophy, every piece of my prose came out
burdened with another's nuance. The act of writing an account of me
and the Islanders came to beg a prologue, a pro logos, literally a
word beforehand. Such a word, once past, promised a writing about
Islanders—an ethno graph—in which the writing-about and the
Islanders need no longer suffer from that dissociative 'about' ...a
writing in which Islandmen might live BOTH on my pages AND in their
Australian towns. Despite this prolegomenal nature, occasionally an
Islander or two may come to life on the page. But for the most part
such fortuitous quickness must wait until the present work is
finished.

Being about ethnography rather than about living Islanders, the
present work is about modes, codes, and nodes. These are words about
situated social interaction and could be said to be, in other words,
about the way in which, and in accord with what, and according to
whom, respectively, Islandmen get on about their business. Often it
is about Torres Strait Pidgin and the native languages and the
proxemics and kinesics which are the codes of everyday activity;
always, one way or another, it is about the nodes, these few persons,
all men, according to whom everything which amounts to anything
happens. And sometimes it is about how I came to understand
something of the modes of Island life.

It is to the last of these that the title of this preface, 'Jump,
Pluto. Jump!', alludes. Except for a short and largely anonymous
stay in Townsville early in 1976 I arrived in that principal city of
Islander activity on the Australian mainland with virtually no
knowledge of what made these island men the Islandmen. But for a
little reading of what Jeremy Beckett had written of these people in
the 1960's, and A.C. Haddon and his Cambridge Expedition members had
written of them a half-century before, whatever I was to learn of
them would be, necessarily and obviously, subsequent to my arrival.
What I did not then guess was that whatever this 'what' was that I was
to learn of the Islandmen, it would not be simply subsequent to my
arrival amongst them, it would be somehow pursuant to it. The
apparently simple relation of 'afterness' which obtained between
before-arriving and after-arriving fled before the complex mental
onslaught of the realization that I was to find the sorts of things I
was looking for in a people who would find in me the closest thing to
an ethnographer they could come up with, each of us constantly
rereckoning one another, and taking each other first understood,
then misunderstood, then understood again, proving 'that things both
can and cannot be'. (Quotations are identified in the Notes to the
Preface, which begin on p. 316.)

"Jump, Pluto. Jump!" is what Clyde William Tombaugh might have
muttered as he flicked the lever of his blinker, day after day.
Tombaugh was a graduate student, in 1930, when he discovered the
planet Pluto. I can't recall when I first heard the story; I first
taught with it when I was teaching astronomy laboratories around
1970. The version I shall use here comes from "The Case of the Planet
Pluto", a short section in Gregory Bateson's book Mind and Nature. Gregory died during the writing of this work, a work which his spirit pervades, and it is fitting that I conclude the Preface with a few of his words, words intended to illustrate in a context more familiar to most readers than may be the extraordinarily complicated one of anthropological fieldwork, the epistemological risk of thinking that we may so easily distinguish what we know from what we come to know, that we may so easily distinguish technique from method from process from theory. Gregory opens the Case of the Planet Pluto with these words:

Human sense organs can receive only news of difference, and the differences must be coded into events in time (i.e., into changes) in order to be perceptible. Ordinary static differences that remain constant for more than a few seconds become perceptible only by scanning. Similarly, very slow changes become perceptible only by a combination of scanning and bringing together observations from separated moments in the continuum of time.

Those familiar with Bateson's epistemology will recognize his style. What is less easily recognized is the anthropological application, that the differences in the ways of one people or another are differences only after some ethnographer, some human instrument, 'receives news of a difference' and passes this news along. We have lots of references to persons with blinkers on, meant to refer to someone or other who ought to have given us news of some difference. The curious twist for anthropology, at least as I have brought Gregory's story to bear on it, is that the ethnographer is the blinker.

From calculations based on disturbances in the orbit of Neptune it seemed that these irregularities could be explained by gravitational pull from some planet in an orbit outside of Neptune. The object to be looked for would certainly be very small and dim, and its appearance would differ from that of other objects in the sky only in the fact of very slow movement, so slow as to be quite imperceptible to the human eye.
This problem was solved by the use of an instrument which astronomers call a blinker. Photographs of the appropriate region of the sky were taken at longish intervals. These photographs were then studied in pairs in the blinker. This instrument is the converse of a binocular microscope; instead of two eyepieces and one stage, it has one eyepiece and two stages and is so arranged that by the flick of a lever, what is seen at one moment on one stage can be replaced by a view of the other stage. Two photographs are placed in exact register on the two stages so that all the ordinary fixed stars precisely coincide. Then, when the lever is flicked over, the fixed stars will not appear to move, but a planet will appear to jump from one position to another. There were, however, many jumping objects (asteroids) in the field of the photographs, and Tombaugh had to find one that jumped less than the others.

After hundreds of such comparisons, Tombaugh saw Pluto jump.

So, first the ethnographer is the calculator, surmising the disturbances in behaviour (once he can tell behaviour—meaningful activity from meaningless action: conspiratorial winks from nervous twitches—at all) as due to the pull of some other's behaviour. Then he's the methodologist, figuring out how to see behaviour in a way which will allow him to scan for news of differences. The problem is that the ethnographer's subjects are more like Walt Disney's Pluto than they are like Tombaugh's planet. And just when we get some behaviour accurately depicted, all set up for stage two of the blinker, the subjects jump off by themselves, not waiting for us to flick the lever. And after a few such retroductive exercises, we realize that in the world of real and very different people which is the world of ethnographic research, we don't have to flip photographs on the blinker to watch Pluto jump. Pluto is jumping all the time.

What we have to do, then, is to make as accurate record as we are able of Pluto jumping, and then treat ourselves as the blinker. The questions are not so much about how this society's 'jumps' are different from those of our own, but more about how it is that some of the jumps make sense and some do not. In order to avoid being condemned to see all practice as spectacle—to seeing Pluto's antics in the differences of others' socialities—we must begin to turn our attention away from the analogues which we so often proffer as what
we know and toward the dialogues which say so much about what we have come to know.

In what follows I try a view made more critical than it might otherwise have been by my readings of Bateson, and of Samuel Butler and William Blake and Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead, and of others, some of whom are directly referred to and many of whom may be read between the lines. They are 'a very great company, both living and dead: my authorities, my authors.' They have made me myself in ways that I know and in some ways that I doubtless do not, much in the same way that the Educated Men have been the authors of the society of the Islandmen. Because the ethnographer is the 'blinker', I have paid a great deal of attention from time to time to saying something of how it is that I, as the present blinker, came to be, in order that the reader may read through the impurities in the metal and imperfections in the lens. Sometimes, in my effort to explicate both why I see the way I do and why what I see looks like it does, I may fail in clarity, succeeding only in setting shadowy dramas moving in the background of awareness.

Where such a failure was avoidable, a shortcoming by dint of scholarship, I stand culpable; and where an effect of too much concentration on the agency of knowing at the expense of knowledge, there too I am to blame, and apologize. I have tried, in Chapter 6 The License of Silence in particular, to show something of the technical detail involved in winnowing out the merest differences which make everyday behaviour mean one thing and not another. In Chapter 5 Bar kak mir I have tried to set down something both of what it is to inhabit a society where meaningful speech has its own code and of how it was, in part, that I came to understand the awesome import of that fact and that code. Chapter 7 Meriam to Meriba is an argument for my own warrant, extant, for presenting anything of Islandmen at all, and begins a preliminary exploration of a theory of self based upon what it is persons are reckoned to be in our culture and in Islander culture. Other chapters deal with the 'jump' from
our notion of time to Islandtaim, the 'jump' from a common Western pedagogy to an uncommon Islander one.

My Introduction is meant to set out some of the difficulties inherent in any ethnological prologue to ethnography, and a few of the difficulties which I anticipate involving readers unused to anthropological writing which tries to make full use of language. The Conclusion tries to make some headway toward an anthropology of idiom, with particular mention of the use of stories. It is conclusive only in that it tries to wrap up both the bundle of theoretical and epistemological concerns which pervade the entire work and the bundle of specific ethnographic concerns to which I pay attention. In a sense, it 'concludes' the work by wrapping those two bundles up together and making of that larger bundle something of the tool, the 'blinker', which is always present. But if my conclusions are right, then in a much larger sense it is only a very small beginning, a beginning of studying Others to make them Us. In becoming mindful of ourselves and others, we may begin to see what a self is, and what a mind is, and that "all of what we are is what we are".
"Never trust the teller, trust the tale," said Lawrence.

Susan Sontag,
Against Interpretation

INTRODUCTION

Anthropology and Interpretive Essay

I mentioned in the Preface the modern citydwelling Torres Strait Islanders who are the subject matter of the present work. I should like to introduce, while attending further to the 'subject matter', what I might call 'the predicate matter' of the thesis. That is to say that these people from the Torres Strait who have come to town are, somehow, both the subject and object of the thesis-as-sentence, and that the remaining consideration is the verb, the predicate, the active link.

In a broad sense, anthropology is just such a predicative activity: Anthropologists have long engaged primitive peoples (and laterly others) as objects of research; recently, and especially since the advent of the emic/etic distinction, more and more anthropologists have sought to make these studied others the subjects of their own lives, intelligible to the layman as willful and learned actors in their own varied worlds. And the discipline of anthropology as a learned discourse has not only engaged other societies, first as objects and later as subjects, but also has attended to itself, to its own history, to the process of its own discourse. It has, further, sought to judge itself, to sit in judgment over the precepts of its activity and the behaviour of its practitioners. But it has been the normal practice to separate these acts of judgment—of weighing the worth of theories and suppositions
and presuppositions—from the actions of ethnography and ethnology proper. This dis-ease of separating has extended most rigourously to the division of ethnography and ethnological theory: A work is so easily taken to be either theoretical or ethnographical that those very words suffice as labels mutually exclusive...theory versus ethnography. And yet, the bases for all anthropological theorizing are found in the ethnographies, and all ethnographies are informed by some particular or general theory. It is my contention that much will be gained with the expansion of the anthropological discourse to include works which both recognize and assess their theoretical predilections and attend to their ethnographic facts. I propose this thesis as one such work.

Writing in a literary tradition, as I am, the selection of a form of writing in which to deal with theory and ethnography at the same time is neither wholly mine to make nor wholly the imposition of tradition. Moreover, there is a literate tradition within the anthropological discourse which offers certain forms. These are forms of essay, ranging from the straightforward literary-style essays of J.G. Frazer through the typically ancillary (typical of anthropologists in general, that is) essays of Robert Redfield and Oscar Lewis for instance to, say, the essays of Ernest Gellner and Clifford Geertz which, though very different, strike the reader as much less peripheral, much closer to the core of those writer's work.

It is in the vein of these last essayists (and perhaps back even to the Redfield essays on The Social Uses of Social Science) that this thesis is presented. It is presented in this vein for it intends to pay attention throughout to the value of the words, concepts, norms and forms of description of another people. Each chapter is an essay by virtue of its predication. But the chapters do not presume to adjudge their own value. Unlike literary essays, the interpretive valuation of these anthropological essays is left to the reader.

This leaving of assessment to the reader places a particular burden on the writer, for it prevents him from that fiction invidious in the so-called social sciences that he is somehow his own reader.
Which is to say further that it prevents him, once and for all, from the fiction that somehow it is the described society which is presented to the reader. It is not. What the reader is presented is a piece of writing. While it is most commonly true to say that it is the intention of the ethnographer to present the society which he has studies, alas he is unable to present more than a few words, arranged in sentences, lumped into paragraphs and arrayed on printed pages.

It is my contention that this makes it incumbent upon the ethnographer to consider the nature of the activity of writing ethnography, and to make his considerations plain to the reader. Were it the case that this analysis were commonly done within an established critical tradition in anthropology, it would suffice each ethnographer to make some brief orienting reference to whichever school of interpretive thought his work conformed. Since this is not the case, each of us faces this task. The task is comprised of literary, philosophical, linguistic and other aspects. For instance, in writing an ethnography in English of a non-English-speaking people, as I am, it is necessary that the ethnographer understand not only translation and the obvious errors to be avoided in simple word-for-word glosses, but also interpretation and the much more complicated errors which arise with the attempt to describe the exotic in a language which is inextricably laden with familiars. The problem, at this juncture, is taken beyond consideration of form of presentation into considerations of worth and value, of the philosophical grounds of what may be changed in order to present an understanding of the other society when it is impossible to present, in writing, a simple view of it.

Interpretation and Explanation

That ethnography, the very activity of ethno-graphing—people writing—has always posed fundamental problems of selection is probably nowhere any longer debated. The ethnographer as
observer/researcher sees, watches, participates in, queries and listens in order to get some comprehension of what it is that is going on in this otherness which is the foreign society. If he is sticktuitive, and lucky, he gets a comprehension. This is strictly a com-prehension, a 'grasp around' the other society. It is a big enough grasp to surround enough connections so that things which occur in one arena of the society can be understood in connection with theretofore seemingly unconnected things in other arena. Whether or not his understanding of how these connections work is the same as the studied people's is another matter. It has sufficed for the ethnographer to comprehend and to understand his comprehensions. For the matter of the understandings themselves, there have been famous debates within and without the professional reaches of anthropology since the last century. Debates over nature v. nurture, nature v. culture, emics v. etics, ethics v. 'value-free', functions v. structures and both against 'culturism'. But these have been debates over the nature of understandings rather than over the comprehensions of various exotic societies. Even Oscar Lewis's restudy of Robert Redfield's village produced only secondary, and then mostly minor, criticisms of Redfield's comprehension of what he had studied and participated in; firstly it was Lewis's uncomfortable task to criticize his mentor's folk model, the very understanding that Redfield 'brought back' and used to expose and explicate his village.

If this distinction makes sense to the present reader, let me suggest a further twist: If I am right in elevating the understanding-problem of the comprehension-problem, what if Redfield's comprehension of Tepoztlán was no different from Lewis's later comprehension of the same society? I think it is safe to imagine that such a thing is possible, if not between those two men then between others of us, and rather frequently. If so, then the problem becomes one not of understanding Tepoztlán, but of understanding the comprehensions of each other when we have both been to Tepoztlán and have both comprehended the society there. Or, put
another way, there is a problem of presentation when the ethnographer, the presenter, is aware that his explanations of society and culture are infused with his interpretations of what he saw going on when he was there and participating. And, to make the problem even more complicated (and more true to reality), the presentation problem is aggravated whenever the ethnographer is one who realizes that his readers' understandings of the explanations they are presented with will be in their turn infused with their own interpretations. If they, too, have 'been to Tepoztlan' their understandings of his explanations will be infused with their interpretations of what they saw there. This is the Lewis-Redfield case.

But if they have not been to Tepoztlan—as most readers of ethnographies have not—then their understandings of the ethnographic explanations will be infused not with interpretations of what they saw in a Tepoztlan where they had never been, but with interpretations of what they saw, or imagined they saw, somewhere else. And therein lies the more common problem: That most interpretations are built upon past interpretations which are in turn built upon, or based on, past experience. This is what I mean by their interpretations of 'what they saw or imagined they saw somewhere else'. For those readers who have not 'been to Tepoztlan', the interpretations which they bring to their reading of the ethnography must be from other readings (possibly, but not usually, on 'Tepoztlan') or from conversations (possibly, but not usually, with those who have been to Tepoztlan) or from imaginations of some utopia which turns out to have been remarkably like Tepoztlan.

It is with this realization that the presentation problem seems at its most insurmountable. We take it for granted that we can't all 'go to Tepoztlan' (more than this, in anthropology we normally discourage students from 'wasting their time' re-researching an already 'done' society). But we also take it as granted that somehow the ethnographer is going to present us with Tepoztlan. That is, somehow it is taken—or has been assumed heretofore—that the
explanations of all the Tepoztlans out there will come to us through the neutral filter of ethnography, and that they will be not only unencumbered by the authors' and our interpretations but also unencumbered by anything extraneous to the society itself. All of this in a form, the ethnography, which is fully known to be neither biography nor autobiography, neither history nor journalism. I have suggested here (and I am by no means the first to do so) that the simple fact that human beings understand things in light of their interpretations, interpretations both of the things in question and other, sometimes long-forgotten things, is a fact which riddles ethnography. More than this, it is a fact which, among the millions of facts at the hands of anthropologists, is the rare one in that it is always there. No matter whether the anthropologist is the observer-in-the-field, the reporter of his observations, the ethno-grapher, or the conversor on exotica, his comprehension and subsequent explanations are lit by interpretation.

Ethno- and graph: Text and writing

I have suggested that ethnography is known to pose fundamental problems of selection, and that among all the facts present there is the always inescapable fact that interpretation informs understanding. The selection problem is aided, in a sense, by the inescapability of this one fact, for it means that the ethnographer does not have to choose whether or not to select interpretation as one of the facts of his presentation. He can't avoid it. All he can do is choose whether or not to ignore it. As must be obvious, I have chosen in this thesis not to ignore it but to pay the strictest attention to it. I have chosen to pay such strict attention to interpretation as an inextricable part of ethnography because I find it so, and because I find ethnographies which do not pay attention to interpretation to be at best misleading.
I have talked here about interpretation without distinguishing the interpretations which the studied people make of their behaviour from the interpretations which the ethnographer makes of their behaviour from the interpretations which the ethnographer makes of his own behaviour from the interpretations which the ethnographer makes of his readers' understandings in order to write his ethnography. In each case we can say that the interpretations are made, following recent anthropological practice on both sides of the Atlantic, of some text. The studied people comprise, in their presence and actions and cultural accoutrements, a kind of text. This text is interpreted both by the people themselves (in their histories and stories and philosophies and sciences) and by the anthropologist. And the readers of the ethnography, coming as they do from a literary tradition and language commensurate with the ethnographer's own, constitute a kind of text (though not one normally thought of as so formally intact as the exotic-society-as-text). This text is open to interpretation by both ethnographer and reader as participants in it and by the ethnographer as he makes the interpretations necessary to write for any audience at all.

There is, however, an additional text, a third text to which much less attention has been paid by those engaged in anthropological discourses. This is the text of the ethnography itself, the actual words and sentences printed in the books which we call ethnographies. The title of this section, "Ethno- and graph: Text and writing" is meant to call to attention the relatively recent understanding that the "ethno-" half of ethnography—the people studied—comprise a kind of text which the ethnographer presents/writes/explicates/interprets or in some other manner "-graphs". I am in accord with this view, and this thesis is set in that vein, a vein not unlike literary criticism or hermeneutics in which the text-people are interpreted in written form (a form which is, in anthropology, the ethnography). What I want to propose for consideration is the further insight that the people are not really the text: the
**Ethnography is the text.** The relationship between text and interpretation is one which obtains between ethnography and reader as well as between people and ethnography. For the ethnographer who understands this relationship there can no longer be recourse to the fiction that it is the people studied who go onto the page he writes. What he understands is that it is a text that he writes, a text of interpretation which will be in its turn subject to the interpretations of his readers.

**Ethnography and interpretation: Text and reading**

If we understand that the ethnography is in itself a text, rather than some kind of uncritically imagined neutral conduit for some prior text (i.e. the people), then we can begin to ease the task of the ethnographer. The ethnographer's task is eased in that the nature of the enormous problem of selection is revealed, and by that revelation the arena of the selection activity located. The key selection is not the selection of facts and figures and bits and pieces of behaviour and activity of the studied people for inclusion in some compendium of such facts and bits called an ethnography; the key selection is the selection of interpretations for inclusion in a piece of interpretive writing called an ethnography. The criteria for selection become not any longer the criteria of how well the facts and bits fit together in the eye of the ethnographer who then records them as he sees fit; the criteria for selection become now the criteria of how true the text=ethnography can be made by the active writer. True is used here not in the sense of synonym for 'fact'—some kind of congruence with some putative 'reality'—but in the sense that the text=ethnography is true if the understanding which the reader gets of the people studied is true to the interpretations which constitute the text.

This does not mean that we do not seek some kind of congruence between the actual activity of the people studied and the ethnographic presentation of that activity. We do. But we are now...
obliged to pay strict attention to what in my idiom I may call "the truth of the matter". That is, when everpresent interpretation is considered, it is no longer possible to even pretend that what goes on the page is anything at all of the people. It is of the ethnographer. The only test of concordance or congruence is the test made by the reader, and even then only by the reader who understands that he brings his own interpretive predilections to the exercise and seeks to identify them so that he may assess the truth in their light. It is, then, only the reader who may say if a text is true.

This is not to say that the reader may judge whether or not the facts and bits of some society are accurate. He may do so only if he has been there, and even then only if he has taken into account the interpretive predispositions which he arrived there with (and, further, only if he has gained some insight into the very act of entering another society and what that act may do to his interpretive framework). Of course, as has happened many times, a reader or two who has had experience of some society may well want to judge the facts and bits in the ethnography. In the case of the present thesis, it might well happen that Jeremy Beckett, or Bruce Rigsby, or George Kearney, or others with experience in and around and of Torres Strait and the Islanders may take issue with some of the facts and bits of Islander life. But even these few knowledgeable persons will be able to do so only in so far as they are competent readers of the text which is the thesis and competent 'readers' of the text=society (or some past text, such as the Reports of the Cambridge Expedition under A.C. Haddon before the turn of the century). For the majority of readers, there will be no knowledge of the text=society to juxtapose with the text=thesis. For the majority of readers and, thus, for the readership to whom the author addresses his writing, there is only the text=thesis (or text=book, or text=article).

It is not my intention to elaborate the obvious; merely to bring it to our attention here. I want to bring it to our attention for it is one of those obvious limitations which has been given less than its deserved attention in the discourse which is anthropology. The
limitation is this: That the ethnographer is limited by those facts which he can bring to the reader with his text. I have said here with his text for two reasons. One, to distinguish the idea of a fact from the idea of a text. Among several distinctions, one important one is that the fact is something 'out there', or 'in the real world', or simply 'real', while the text is always something right here...the text may always be presently engaged, it is in front of us (or perhaps around us), always where we are and at the same time. And two, with the text is a phrase which speaks of con-text, of that which informs the text proper without being the words and phrases of it. Herein lies the particular problem of ethnology, and the problem which sits on the shoulders of the ethnographer: That the ethnographer must make a context—a con-text, must bring with the text—which is different from the context which the language of the ethnography brings inextricably welded to the page it sits on, the weight of centuries of shadings and meanings and connotations and lately, worse, denotations, which ride around on each word and make for each its own little con-text. So, the ethnographer must be not only the reader but also must he be the reader of his own text, for only he can see when the meanings of the English words shade into the meanings of the words of the people studies, only he is in a position to read both texts, to read both con-texts. And only in the movement between what the people mean and what the words mean, between what he means to write and what his reader will read to mean, can he search for the solutions to the problem of two contexts.

Idiom: Code, Mode, and Metaphor

What an ethnographer does is attempt an insinuation into the idiom of another society. It should be clearly understood that this use of idiom is a use from my idiom. What I am saying by it is more than I could say (in my idiom) by saying "an ethnographer attempts an insinuation into another society", or, "...into another culture". I wrote above that we are now obliged to pay strict attention to what
"in my idiom I may call 'the truth of the matter'". Idiom is not idiolect. In my use of 'the truth of the matter' I brought to the page a lot of recent American (and some other anglophonic) usage of that phrase, heavy with 'basics' and 'fundamentals' and even 'bottom line'. But since I used it with a slight skew it lies on the page with its context askew...it means something a little more serious and a little less jargonistic than it meant on TV or in the newspapers or wherever I last heard it. I laboured the change in meaning 'from the inside'. This, I submit, is the task of most ethnographers, to get 'inside' the idiom of another society, to get to where they can use the words and phrases and weight of meanings 'like a native'.

In part, this requires basic manipulation of the code, the language of everyday—or special—life. I do not think that it is requisite, however, that the code (the language) be a subject of study (or, harking back to my discussion of ethnography as the predicate linking subject and object, that it need be an object of study). In fact, if the point of the study is the illumination of an idiom into which the ethnographer has managed to insinuate himself, then to make of the code itself an object of study will actually prevent the study of idiom, for idioms exist only where languages are transparent. To study the language will be to preclude the study of the idiom.

Again we are met with the problem of selection. In this case, to select the language (as focus or subject of study) is to reject the idiom. Idiom is a code already a step inside a language. And the language can be treated more formally (idiom is a code which may encode the code which is language). Only in the idiom of American Blacks, for instance, can 'ba-a-ad talkin' be understood as language. Perhaps a more difficult example: only in the idiom of urban Torres Strait Islanders is it understood that 'language' equals 'langgus' equals 'langgwiz' equals 'mir'; that is, even though these words are 'from' three or even four languages, they are equivalents in the one idiom (though not in any of the separate languages). For those of us who work primarily with the spoken word,
in its social setting and cultural (etc.) context, this is where the distinction between idiom and language (or between idiom and slang, or idiom and argot) pays off. It pays off when it is clear that a community—such as the urban Torres Strait Islander communities in North Queensland—shares a code, a means of communicating, which seems to cut across not only dialects but even languages.

In North Queensland, as in the islands, there are a number of modes of social action. Persons act conspicuously 'Eastern' or 'Western', and among those two main areal distinctions may act or dress or cut their hair conspicuously in the manner of one island or another. In addition to these modes of dress and talk and action, the Islanders have brought to the towns of the Mainland two native languages and a number of dialects (or perhaps accents) of the English-based pidgin which is the lingua franca. And from each island group, and each language group, and each tribal group and sometimes each family, came metaphors...sharks for fierceness and pigeons for peace and north for heaven. Some are common to all (shark for fierce), and some have only been discovered as common since the Mainland communities have come into being; some are translated and shared around—the metaphor staying the same through numerous translations out of one tongue and into another—and some are shared around by the hearers listening and learning the original, so that Eastern metaphors pop up in Western conversations still clothed in the original Eastern words.

So it is the case that there is some communicational domain which comprises code, mode, and metaphor. An arena of communication into which one plunges when one 'leaves' one's own language. It is this, domain and arena, which I propose to call idiom. The present thesis becomes, then, an idiomatic exercise, joining their idiom with mine. And my obligation is made clearly two-fold: I must illuminate the urban Torres Strait Islander idiom, and I must pay strict attention to the explication of my own so that the finally unavoidable oscillation involving my context and theirs does not become irretrievably senseless.
Tale and Teller: The Story as Idiom

The major 'theoretical' proposition of the thesis has to do with stories, or with the story form. My problem was to find some idiomatically common form, a form common necessarily to my idiom and the Torres Strait Islander idiom, but incidentally to the anglophone/Western/Judaic idiom and most other cultures. In other words, having recognized that both explication and investigation were going to have to go on in some idiom, the problem was to find something which either crossed from my idiom to theirs or existed in both. The former is the easier course. And I was lucky in being an American, one of the same ilk who had readily hired and prized Torres Strait construction workers newly arrived on the Australian mainland. But though it did cross over it was a narrow bridge, and interaction was limited by my sparse knowledge of American construction foremen overseas and the Islandmen's knowledge of a few American things apart from overseas construction foremen. So, early in 1978 it became clear that there was no way that I could parlay the limited connection provided by my American-ness into a broad and far-reaching matrix which might 'connect' me to all aspects of Islander society. I had, then, to take the second course, the much more difficult (though more normally anthropological) course of seeking something which had presence both in the Islander idiom and in my idiom.

Three years later, late in 1980, I found what I had been searching for: the story. As usual when I did find it it turned out to have been there all the time. This is one of the problems with idiom—idioms can be as transparent as language. We in the anglophone West grow up filled with and full of and filling ourselves with stories. There is no question about what a story is, except from time to time when a writer of major impact does something that clearly reads like a story but may not be yet enfranchised by the culture-police to be called a story. (I'm thinking here of James Joyce's stories hidden behind
almost impenetrable language and idiom; or Henry Miller's 'autobiographical' writings, stories by virtue only of their incongruence with the facts of his own life, and in their turn making his life into theirs by virtue of his being their author; or of the ficciones of Jorge Luis Borges, some but a page or two long and so poetic as to straddle even the closest reading between the two forms.) In recent addition to the form which we know as the story, and including therein tales and nursery rhymes and fables, are movies and television, fraught with stories (though TV stories are largely lacking in con-text). And in writing there has been recently added the stories of the New Journalists, stories of real people and events which do not so much give the Who What When Where of front-page journalism but rather give setting and scene and situation and often take the reader into another life.

Clearly, story was part of my idiom, and just as clearly was a part not disarranged by my having lived outside my native United States for some years (not disarranged, that is, in the way that my diction and accent and slang have been). For me, story has remained idiomatically intact. What I did not know for so long, what took me years to find (or figure) out, was that Story is for urban Islanders idiomatically intact. And what is so clear now is that STORY is just about the only thing save biological relationship which has remained intact over the move from Islands to Mainland over the past three decades.

Of course, this all makes so much sense now, so much sense so easily that "Tale and Teller: The Story as Idiom", a title which has been taken from a section of the final chapter of the thesis, is one of those delightful rare titles that wrote itself. It connects the teller of [any] story to his tale while at the same time distinguishing them one from another; it connects Story and Idiom and promises for the nonce to consider the one as the other while at the same time permitting the primacy of Idiom; and by connecting the one pair, Tale and Teller, with the Story Idiom pair the title is an example par excellence of what it is that all language can do—it
makes a promise that what follows (the few paragraphs of this section of this introduction, or the body of the concluding chapter of the thesis) will be more than some simple exposition of the one-plus-one-equals-two 'arithmetic' of the pair connection. The title stands as a little map of what follows, a map of the movement which connects the parts and then joins them.

The epigraph for the concluding chapter is the one which appears at the head of this introduction. "Never trust the teller, trust the tale" was written around the time of the First World War. The writer was D.H. Lawrence, the work was his Studies in Classic American Literature which appeared in 1923 (NY:Viking). While I could have used the epigraph attributed to Lawrence, it seemed the more sociologically apt to use the quotation from Susan Sontag's 1965 collection of essays Against Interpretation. Sontag recognized the worth of Lawrence, and quoted from his Studies which the literary critic Lionel Trilling has said "for many years won but little regard...now thought by many students of American literature to be one of the most illuminating works on the subject ever written". My point is partly to use what seems to me the truth about how it is that societies gain the interpretations which make up the sense of the social fabric. Lawrence's Studies hung around bereft of publishers and readers almost as long as Lady Chatterly's Lover. Unless we seek them out, individually, we are not party to the interpretations—values, choices, texts and contexts—which Lawrence laid on American literature. But when a Sontag, a modern essayist, grabs a bit of Lawrence to say 'Here. This is a worthy interpretation' then we become party to Lawrence...except that it is impossible to see that early Lawrence except through the pane of interpretation with which Sontag frames the quotation. And in this paragraph I have added a smidgeon of a famous modern literary critic's interpretation which may have its own effect on the reader unfamiliar with Lawrence's Studies. What is important is that we remember always how complicated is the act of reading, how extraordinary it is that we can do it at all, and how thick words
are...can become...with the weight of centuries of just such thin layering upon layering of interpretations and hints of shadings of nuances of interpretation as I have done in this short paragraph.

(Let me add an aside here. It is for the reason that I am aware of how difficult any reading is, let alone 'reading' another culture, that I use so many modern English writers when I write. That is, I know from my studies that idiom is a supremely useful tool even when used consciously and carefully. But while it is easy to write in an idiom, it is very difficult to read it if it is not one's own—see, for instance, all the troubles readers had with Anthony Burgess's Clockwork Orange with its presentation of a fresh idiom. Because I hold that it is the task of anthropology to create idioms, I create an idiom for writing anthropology...only a new idiom can get beyond culture, can encode for others; reading the fruits of the experience of the ethnographer who stands at the same time outside his own idiom and not yet in the other. But the construction of this special idiom, this idiom of 'stories' and 'motion of self' in which I write, is a construction out of the materials of language from my post-war twentieth century American overlaid-with-Australian English covered-with-sociologese idiom as well as from the pidgin and native tongues of the Torres Strait Islanders. For the latter, since they are sufficiently little-known to warrant anthropological attention in the first place, I have the usual responsibility of any professional anthropologist to let my readers know what words are what and why they are used and how the speech works. But I have the same responsibility for the former. I am equally responsible to my reader for where my words and concepts come from. One of the ways to do this is to write in touch-points in the form of other writers' works, modern writers whose idiom and grasp of it is akin to mine. So for this reason, in order to let the unfamiliar reader know something of where to go in order to further investigate my idiom, I use writers of the present day. And because of my anthropological bent, because I value the anthropological imagination, I use modern writers who write of societies and cultures, writers knowledgeable
in anthropology as are Kurt Vonnegut and Ursula LeGuin, writers who essay society like Susan Sontag or Paul Goodman, and those like Tom Wolfe and Hunter S. Thompson whose job it is to keep tabs on modern culture.)

So the present work is a kind of abstracted storyline (a storyline is what scriptwriters use in abbreviated form to keep their dialogue going in the right direction... in a sense this introduction is itself something like a storyline or storyboard). It is abstracted in the sense that in one book there is not enough time to tell everything about everything. The simple choice is to tell everything about one or two things or to tell a little about a lot of things. Neither of these has been my choice. I have chosen to tell something of a few things of which I know enough about my own place in them to ensure that I am not getting any of the big points wrong. The stricture I have placed on myself is to not cheat the idiom. By that I mean that if 'the story' heads off in one direction momentarily when I would rather it continued in its analytically interesting direction that's too bad for me and I'll follow it where it goes. Sometimes this may strike the reader as unnecessarily peripheral, or as undisciplined. In some cases I think it is. The only guarantee I can offer is this: As far as I am aware, of all the stories of Islander life which I know these are the best selection of which I am capable for presenting Islander life in this work. This does not mean that my selection may not improve at some later day. Nor does it mean that my presentation may not improve. Well they may. What it does mean is that where I have erred I have erred in not being as able a reader of my own text as my readers are.

The Thesis: A story of Islandmen

Much of the thesis is couched in an idiom of movement. The first chapter, "Just Passing Through", opens a discussion of how it is that anthropologists may leave the circumstances of their own condition at all in order to pass through the lives of the Others whom they
study. The second chapter continues the discussion in an effort to come to terms with how it is, once loosed from his own circumstances, the anthropologist engages the "alternity" which he reports in his ethnography. Taken together, they suggest that in order to engage in present day anthropology we must have some idea of what minds are (or how they work); of what a person is, and of how it is that society makes persons and whether or not there is in any person a part reserved from society; of what the nature of communication is and how language and words and speech make communication; and of what meaning is (or how it works).

The central chapters are essays on present day Islander life in the towns of North Queensland. Each essay has a beginning and middle and end. In contrast with the explicit treatment of the motion of metaphor in the first chapters, the essays which comprise the central concerns are meant to simply move about the places and times of the Islandmen. They are intended as ethnography, to expose and explicate aspects of modes and codes and metaphors of urban Torres Strait Islander life: how time is called and organized; how groups are organized; how city life is rendered sensible at all to people with little English, few possessions, and a code of behaviour antithetical to life in the Australian mainland society; how political power is exercised, and how it is possible in the absence of almost all traditional political structure.

The last two chapters return to the notion of movement. But now that notion is no longer metaphorical. Chapter 7 lays the groundwork for a theory of self which will accommodate the very real changes which any ethnographer goes through, alone, as he moves from one culture to another. In doing so it seeks to explicate the 'movement' anyone feels who changes from one person to another; and it presents my own warrant for the veracity of my own claim that I do not cheat the idiom. It is an account of how I came to know whereof I speak, one which is made in greater detail than those to which anthropologists are accustomed, a detail demanded by an epistemological position not in vogue. In part, that position respects the knowledge of persons
over the so-called knowledge in formulae and encyclopaedias and other impersonal holdings. It holds, there, with people who are moved—by music, by sunsets and waterfalls, by the experience of love or ethnographic research—and affirms that they truly are moved, and that their 'motion' demands of us not some irresistible move into metaphor but a move toward idiom. It is a move not unlike that demanded so long ago of the first ethnographers by the very presence of Others who had to be surrendered to in order to be 'captured'.

The concluding chapter, STORYTIME, returns full circle to the considerations of "alternity" and what we glean when we 'pass through' another society. And it adds to those opening considerations some subsequent ones of where we stand when we address questions of speaking and language, of Others and ourselves. It suggests that the way to understanding the process of understanding is to watch very closely as we begin to make sense of original senselessness, and that the two practices of ethnography—the surrender to the societies we study and the captures we present in our writing—are perfectly suited to this path. It presents the theory that idiom is the principal mechanism whereby the individual encounters society, Self encounters Other, and members of a society severally engage their culture. It further proposes that the principal form of this mechanism certainly in the dyad of the Author-and-Islandmen and logically much wider, is STORY. Human beings make themselves into characters in their stories, and then act like those characters while trying to rewrite their stories. To understand the Islandmen we have to know which characters they think they are and who writes their stories.

Were the present work an ethnography proper—which is way of saying, were it the case that a genre of ethnography existed wherein new ethnographers could situate their own—this last would suffice, and the substance of the work would be an examination of Islandmen characters in their tales. But it is a work of anthropology, not ethnography, and bears a philosophical burden of explication. So, to
be explicit, this is a work about reading; and because it is about reading it is more about mechanism and process than it is about plots and characters. Because it is about reading it is more about the ethnographer, the one who tells a tale of readings, than it is about those who told the tales. And, because every telling is itself a reading, it is about the more important things.
I am concerned with changes in basic epistemology, character, self, and so on. Any change in our epistemology will involve shifting our whole system of abductions. We must pass through the threat of that chaos where thought becomes impossible.

Gregory Bateson,  
Mind and Nature

CHAPTER 1

Just Passing Through

This chapter is about—to borrow the words of Gregory Bateson—passing through the threat of that chaos where thought became impossible. The threat of chaos in the particular instance which provides both background and subject for this book was that chaos in the years of 1976 through 1980 where American-Australian-Western thought was useless to the point of irrelevance and Torres Strait Island thought was truly impossible. There were times, even months and months into the fieldwork, long after my wife and I had begun hanging around with Torres Strait Islanders, when the threat of that chaos was untenable. Winston Churchill's famous 'nothing to fear but fear itself' came to mind, but wryly, as do all those things which, ostensibly personal, are shown in the glare of the light shed by another culture to be merely the trappings of our culture, ineluctably social. Churchill's dictum was useless without the history, without the time in which it happened and the mentality which provides for its appreciation. And without its social use it was truly useless, as useless as it must have seemed to the RAF pilots and gunners of the time.

Unwilling to give up the fieldwork, to return to the world of Winnie's famous saying without bringing back something of the citydwelling Torres Strait Islanders who I had gone to study, I hung
on, and emerged from that thought-threatening chaos. These pieces of writing are about that going, and fearfulness, and emerging. They are also about the people known as Torres Strait Islanders. It would be (if I read some of my colleagues aright) both easy and expectable to say that this writing is as much or more about me as about Torres Strait Islanders. If easy, this would be said with the ease of accuracy; what it misses is that it is, since it is writing, as much about my readers as it is about me or Torres Strait Islanders. In part, this is a low-key caution about taking the whole of this thesis, or any of its parts, as other than they are. This caution is prompted by a concern that a genre of writing has come about which we might characterize as soulless sociology. It has been suggested by writers before me that the jargon of such a genre be called 'sociologese'. I would like to make two brief comments on the genre which has apparently come into being and about the criticisms of it which have been leveled at its excessive jargon.

In the past century or century and a half a number of students of society have written and published, have written to and against one another, have talked and talked about the problem of man, of humankind, of society, of societies. Sometime along the way a style of (mostly written) presentation got established, a dry and all-humanity-honed-right-out style which likely lay behind Edmund Leach's well-known (to fellow anthropologists) statement on how impossible he found other people's ethnographies to read. Doubtless his statement has become so well remembered because it says what so many of the rememberers have been thinking. There have been a number of critics who have proposed analyses of the problem of which Leach's boring ethnographies are a symptom. Among them my own view is closest to that of Ernest Becker, whose The Lost Science of Man is composed of two critical essays, one on "The Tragic Paradox of Albion Small and American Social Science" and the other a "Sketch for A Critical History of Anthropology". Becker traces, briefly, what he calls "the science of man as a Grand Vision" from Rousseau and the philosophes to the lament in critical historical essay of Georges
Gusdorf (1960): "Anthropology is becoming more and more of an exact science, but we know less and less exactly about what."^1

Conscious of the invigorating influence of our point of view and of the grandeur of a single all-encompassing science of man, enthusiastic anthropologists may proclaim the mastery of anthropology over older sciences that have achieved where we are still struggling with methods, that have build up noble structures where chaos reigns with us, the trend of development points in another direction, in the continuance of each science by itself, assisted where may be by anthropological methods.

Apropos this excerpt from Franz Boas' 1904 History of Anthropology, Becker writes, "What Herder, Spencer, and Tylor really achieved that was of lasting value, in Boas's words, was not a science of man but rather an attitude of historical, genetic inquiry, which 'sowed the seed of the anthropological spirit in the minds of historians and philosophers'.^2... That is to say, anthropology had hardly taken shape as a science when it abandoned its vision and became a method that anyone could use and that would be parcelled out to the other disciplines." Becker says, harking to the cognate problems of Albion Small and early American sociology, "It is almost as though Albion Small were speaking in an adjoining room, and we could hear his echo through the wall. Anthropology (sociology) has no business lording it over the older disciplines in an imperialistic, superordinate pose; the older disciplines have built up sound method, real scientific stature, which we anthropologists (sociologists) must now strive to equal, if we are to be respected and accepted. The one thing that anthropology (sociology) has to offer the older disciplines is a unique method or attitude, which will help them invigorate their data"^3.

What I am suggesting here is that the problem of boring and dull sociology and anthropology has been a normal outcome of a couple of disciplines which have for, say, the last half of the time since Rousseau, narrowed and specialized and imitated and copied other sciences until one of its historians (Gusdorf) wonders "whether the very word anthropology still has any meaning, and if it has, what that meaning might be". The present work is an experiment
(experience) in what that meaning might be. Recognizing what Becker called, in the conclusion to his Sketch, "The Enormous Dimensions of the Problem", this is an attempt to return to the eighteenth century, to where the science of man "took root" (as Becker put it). Behind the essays and analyses which follow are the questions What is man? and Who are we?—entertaining both senses of we: the 'we' that is versus all the 'them's', and the 'we' that all humankind might someday become—and what is Character, Self, a self, society, culture? The knowing risk is explicitly against that which has become so common, the ordinary risk of boring readers by being too narrow and too specialized and forgetting why it is that we do anthropology or sociology, of how it is that the 'problem' of man came about; my risk is rather that of the man who, seeing his target to be both enormous and amorphous, chooses a shotgun over a rifle and, though he succeeds in hitting it (How could he miss?), the holes he makes are so small and seldom that the light shed through them is negligible.

The problem for me, and for the reader, is that of telling the whole story. In one rather simple sense, the 'whole story' is the whole Torres Strait Islander story. But in the telling of it, or of what are necessarily only parts of it, I do so in English, using a modern language which is not part of the Islander story, and using words which each imply all others. To imagine that I was doing otherwise would be to imply a theory of translation where words could be shifted from one language to the next—from the pidgin and indigenous languages of Torres Strait into my own Australian-American brand of English—when I know this to be not at all the case. What can shift from one language to the next is a person. In the present work I have limited myself to those times when I can shift from some Islander language to English. (Were I writing for an Islander audience I would seek to limit myself to those times when I could shift from English into Islander tongues; and my ethnography would have a very different shape from the present one.) I have been quite rigorous on this count. Nothing that appears herein is the result of speculation. Nor should any of it be read as
implication. It is hard enough to tell a whole story without also implying and speculating other stories.

Throwing the 'Baby' Out with the Bath

"Give an anthropologist any problem and he will tell you," Jules Henry once wrote,6 "it cannot be understood unless the 'whole situation' is taken into account. This generally makes his 'more sophisticated' colleagues in other disciplines turn away in silence because they 'know' that most situations, particularly in our culture, are 'too complicated' to be grasped in their entirety. 'Too many angles,' of course, is what makes most people turn from understanding:

the international situation
domestic politics
local politics
how much they pay above the real price on installment purchases
the nature of the universe
advertising
their own children
adolescence

As Henry says, "we must not be bamboozled by the unnumbered crowds of Those Who Turn Away." Agreed. But what that leaves us with is the search for understanding the "whole situation" (or as I have put it, the whole story), for understanding what each and every 'whole situation' comprises. Henry's list of the international situation and domestic politics and the rest may be notionally duplicated for Torres Strait Islanders whose culture I tried to comprehend. It might look something like this:

the international situation in the Western Pacific
North Queensland black politics
Conspicuously absent in this list are "the nature of the universe", "their own children", and "adolescence" ("advertising" is missing also, but only incidentally). It is my understanding that categories of people such as children and adolescents (I think the distinction between adolescence and adolescents would not be important) are perfectly comprehensible within the Islander program for raising and educating children. Similarly, the 'nature of the universe' would be, I think, incomprehensible as an incipient question either because it was simply a misnomer ('nature' and 'universe' being redundant), or because 'the universe' is inseparable from what we, as outsiders, might call 'the Islander world'.

My point is that ethnography always tackles those things about another culture which have 'too many angles', those things which, if tackled in our own, would be greeted with the oppressive doubt of Those Who Turn Away. It may be that this is a not unfair characterization of the problem of too many angles in the human psyche until the advent of a Sigmund Freud. That is, part of the problem of the too-many-angles/those-who-turn-away paradigm lies in the second half, in the those-who-turn-away. And a large part of this problem is that the Turning Away is part of culture.

So are the angles. The task of the ethnographer is, then, (to continue the 'angles' metaphor) to establish a few points of reference for his readers so that they can follow his 'lines of argument' (and thereby see the angles). At least this is a fair geometric metaphor for what the usual ethnographies do. But one question presses itself louder and louder against the window of those who look out (of their—'our'—culture) into the cultures of others: Are these few 'concrete' points of reference 'out there'? are they
still 'in here' and we pretend them out there in order to describe the angles? or are they, as I suspect, on the window!?! By 'on the window' I mean what is commonly taken to be some kind of filter operating between things: between us and them, between you and me, between 'me' and my perceptions, or, especially anthropologically, between one culture and another. In that sense the window is this filter, this all-but-transparent-membrane separating one 'culture' from another. Within this metaphorical stricture (one which has held sway, in one comparable notion or another, for quite some time—Roy Wagner says since synthetic anthropology's first "historical-diffusionist manifestation" around 18717) I think my suggestion that the 'points' are on the window is a better metaphor. (I am reminded here of Clifford Geertz's note to his Notes on the Balinese Cockfight8 in which he puts, apropos his "coupling of the occidental great [Dickens] with the oriental lowly [Bali's cockfighter]" in discussing how social forms actually generate the subjectivities which they are normally taken only to display, the conviction, "for which Robert Graves claims to have been reprimanded at his Cambridge tripos, that some poems are better than others.")

But, better metaphor or not, resting in the metaphorical does not get us to where the fundamental questions of the comparability of cultures need be posed. As I prepare to attack this notion of 'the comparability of cultures', I ought to make clear that what I am proposing to attack (however briefly) is a thing of my reading; that is, it is from the way I read the people whom I think are holding for the comparability of cultures that I find the need to attack. I do not wish to mince words with anyone, nor to be read as attacking those who are fundamentally in agreement with me. What I do want to do is dispel the myth that cultures are comparable entities. In order to do this, I hereby attack those writers whom I take to be holding forth in the vein of cultural comparability. For this reason, I want to get out of the metaphor of the 'window into another world'. For in my investigations of Torres Strait Islanders and
their 'culture' I could find no membrane, no filter. And, it seemed, in finding no 'window' I could find no 'culture'. And, as it turns out, this was accurate. Cultures are functions of windows. Or, better, 'cultures' are functions of 'windows'.

By 'cultures' being functions of 'windows', I mean no more than the simple, and hardly uncommon, realization that the manner of observation has a great deal to do with what is eventually observed. In the grossest anthropological example of late, that of naı've cultural relativism, anyone setting out to observe the natives having already concluded their culture to be judgeable relative only to their own behaviour or society is bound to observe a society or behaviour which is relatively sound according to the lights of that culture. (The neatest mnemonic for keeping this kind of preclusion in mind is in that very use of "bound": he's bound to find what he seeks.) In one sense, this is always the problem of definition. That is, as we understand definitions in their common dictionary versions, they are not about—cannot be about—discovery; rather, they are always after the fact. Strictly, they are always after the fact of someone having used the word to mean that definition, and very good historical dictionaries even record the first known such use. It would not be a good plan, then, to consult a dictionary in order to make discoveries about the meanings of words—or, strictly speaking, about what people can mean with words—since the dictionary records but what has already been meant by someone or other.

By this crude analogy with dictionary definitions I do not mean to say that it is not a good plan for would-be ethnographers to read any of the 'definitive' ethnographies written in the vein of cultural relativism. What I do mean is that it is not a good plan to read them for what they define. It may be a very good idea to read them for what they say about their studied peoples. But to read them for definitions would be as silly as reading a dictionary to find out what a poet meant...all the dictionary will say is what somebody else meant, and then only in some truncated normalized context.
So the problem with convicted cultural relativists is not that they might find some society where action is truly assessable only in terms of its own culture. Certainly, a very great deal of what we find enacted by members of other societies is assessable only in terms of their own culture. No, the problem with ethnographers who pre-conclude relativism is that they preclude other means of assessability. In seeking to eradicate the crude and often ill-grounded theories of progressive social evolution, and the ethnocentricity on which most such theories rested, cultural relativists opted out of the assessment racket altogether. My contention is that this was unnecessarily wasteful; that in their initial eagerness to rid the discipline of one taint they introduced another. Let me suggest that the problem, in my view, with the social evolutionists and diffusionists was not so much in their mode of characterization but in their manner of observation. In this, I am not unlike the cultural relativists who also suggested that only ethnographers who get out there amongst the natives ought to be trusted regarding what they bring back. But I and the relativists part company when the relativists, seeing the Lewis Henry Morgans and others characterize native societies as more or less advanced toward civilization, want to outlaw characterization and I, embarrassed at the unreal goody-goodyness of the resulting relativistic accounts, want to pursue the investigation of characterization itself. Or, put another way, we part company when they, desirous of changing the wrongly-characterized theoretical bath of ethnology, throw out along with the water the baby—for me, the only locus of character whatsoever. Unable to see the 'true character' of the native-baby through the milky water of past theorizing, they have thrown out the lot. The problem is that it is not always possible to get a new baby. Much of the ethnographic 'baby'—the societies of undeveloped islands and highlands—is gone forever. There is no way to get at the 'true character' of those societies which, wrongly characterized from some current viewpoint or other, have changed or disappeared.
Such disappearances are bothersome to those whose notion of making original ethnographic contributions entails making studies of hitherto unstudied societies, and utterly torments those whose inculcated definition of ethnography includes an ethnographic present preclusive of entertaining any study where someone has been already. Others, content to do a 'restudy' of a society already the subject of published ethnology, have most often set about describing a baby which, though displaced a decade or two in time, is 'essentially the same baby'. And their studies have been often as concerned with the 'impurities' in their bathwater left by their forbear's erroneous theorizing as they have been with ethnography.

The Baby Is the Bath, Too

This is my suggestion for the eradication of the kind of problem which has plagued an anthropology overconcerned with its modes of characterization, its theories. More precisely here I refer to theoretical stances, or perhaps to theoretical camps. My concern is that the present study be not misunderstood as another deconstruction operation by a johnny-come-lately student armed with hindsight, a hindsight usually not even his own but that of his most recent mentor. So, for that reason, I shall concern myself only momentarily, and from time to time, with the differences between my way of going about ethnography and other ways extant, save this brief introductory discussion.

By saying that The Baby Is the Bath, Too, I mean to borrow the quick clarity of metaphor in order to fashion a perceptual hook on which to hang an ethnological distinction. My suggestion is that the 'baby', which I have made to stand for the subject matter of anthropology, or for the object societies of ethnography, or for the primitive peoples of 18th century ethnology, is not really the whole of the object of study: that in fact the theories and hypotheses and preconclusions that the ethnographer takes to the field (even where his 'field' is the armchair in his study or on his back porch)
insinuate themselves into the study, where they are little distinguished from the subject or object or primitive being examined. What this means is that the study—the ethnological treatise or ethnography or what have you—is actually the presentation of some native people and this native (albeit sometimes the 'natives' of the ethnologist's own society) people's behaviour and the ethnologist's rendition of this behaviour and his interpretation of what it means. Sometimes the interpretation is in terms of the native culture and sometimes it is in terms of some esoteric standard...often it used to be in terms of the ethnologist's own cultural standards—the ethnocentricism so objectionable to the cultural relativists.

So, harking back to my mention of character (I shall make more of this notion of character later on), let me put it simplistically: The ethnologist, who is a person of some individual character and characterized by his own society according to the tenets of his own culture, goes to observe and participate in some other society which he then characterizes, either according to the tenets characteristic of its culture or according to some others. What I have suggested is that the society is commonly thought to be The Baby, while the characterizations of it (and the sources for those characterizations) are thought to be the Bath (leaving the discipline of anthropology itself as the bathtub perhaps). My correction, then, is that we begin to realize that these distinctions are born of the artifice of easy theoretical—by theoretical here I mean impractical—thinking. That is, while it may be the case that there is some Baby in the field, some Baby which pre-existed the ethnographer, there is no Baby once the ethnographer gets there. No pristine infans, anyway. Once the ethnographer gets there it's his Baby.

Do I mean by this that there is no difference between the ethnographer and the people he studies? No, certainly not. Nor do I mean that ethnographers are not, by and large and by virtue of their avocation, able to distinguish their subjects from themselves. What
I mean is that their studies do not normally permit such distinction. A distinction which is permitted in the study—ethnography, or ethnological treatise, or whatever—is a distinction between ethnography and reader. And it is a distinction which the ethnographer may make while he is writing ethnography and the reader while he is reading. (And I should mention here that it is a distinction which the reader may be certain, in the case of most readers, of making only upon the first comprehensive reading. By comprehensive reading I mean the first time he knows that he comprehends what he reads; thus, what I have said is that the reader may know for certain that he is himself and that this ethnography is not part of him only until such time as he reads and comprehends it. After that, his certitude that he was one thing and the ethnography he has read was another is only as good as his memory.)

I shall return to the elaboration of this shortly. For the nonce, let me use this notion of ethnography as distinct from reader to inform my metaphorical suggestions about Bath and The Baby. In this case, the ethnography is The Baby. It preexists the reader, or at least it exists before he discovers it and reads it (a rare and special case is the ethnography-in-preparation which the reader awaits, and which he may have a hand in constructing or even writing). It will be there after the reader has read it, much the same as the societies which are the Babies of ethnographic research remain after we leave them. Now the question is where is the Bath? I said before the the Bath was the theories and hypotheses and predispositions which infuse the characterization of the studied society. But in the case of the ethnography, the society appears only as it is characterized—described, rationalized, assessed—by the ethnographer; there is no society, only a characterized society. The society and its weighted and coloured and otherwised characterized description come together, are together, are indistinguishable in the ethnography. This is the kind of relationship I allude to when I say The Baby Is the Bath, Too. The baby is always the bath, too. The saying about throwing the baby out
with the bath can only have come out of a time when there were babies before there were babies-in-baths. And this makes sense, since no baby comes with its own bath. But societies do. The idea of some society as an entity apart from the characterizations of any extant knowledge of it is suitable only for that sort of mythical idea. (And societies, or putative ones, of that ilk do 'exist': The Amazons, Atlantians, etc.)

It may be rightly inferred from what I have written that this opaque bathwater, as I have equated it with the characterizations which invariably accompany the 'description' of some society, is here to stay. Or, at least, that opacity is guaranteed, no matter that the theories and hypotheses which shall underlie the characterizations to come may well change. I think this is the case. I think, too, that if we see some society-Baby in some future study barely discernable through the bath-muck, and this Baby has only one arm, we'd do well not to theorize the other arm on the strength of what the Baby must look like. For we may well find out that this never-before-studied society has only the one arm, and does quite well in its sinister fashion. And we shall have nought to do then but throw the bathwater out if we wish to get rid of that theorized second arm.

While I don't mind working this Baby-Bath metaphor, I shouldn't like it to get out of hand. My simple point is that there is only ideal discrimination possible between theory and theorized object. And while this in no way hinders those who wish to do idealist ethnography, nor but little hinders those who seek to make pure descriptions, it renders all objectivist theoretical anthropology untenable. So, for those who, like me, wish to pursue theoretical anthropology, there is the requirement to find something other than objectivism.

I could rather say here that an objectivism which permitted as its object The Baby/Bath/bathtub/bathwater/and so forth, would be all right. But I suspect that such an objectivism would not be entertained by those practitioners who hold that there is some kind
of objective reality in the society (The Baby). In which case there is little point in entering some internecine objectivist debate over what exactly constitutes the Baby for, were I to win that debate, it would have to be determined thenceforward that EVERYTHING constituted the object. Of course, this is exactly what I think is the case. Or, more accurately, anything may constitute the object. This is, thus far, a strictly Kantian position, regarding the Ding an Sich, the thing itself, to be ascertainable or graspable only via the facts, and that we choose (in some sense) the facts of any Thing.

But I may do a disservice to Kant, allying him post mortem to my cause as I have done here. For it may have been that Kant thought that there was some Thing which was the object of investigation, and that he was somehow disappointed that we (humans) were stuck with getting at any Thing only through the infinite number of facts which we might choose about it. For my part, I am not disappointed at all, for I suspect that we do an idealistic disservice to the nature of knowing itself when we imagine there to be some object, some Ding an Sich Thing both different from and larger than the facts which we ascertain about it. The specific disservice is the confusion of knowledge and imagination.

Knowledge and Imagination

When we imagine there to be some opacity in the bathwater caused by nonconcordance of the theories of our practice (to wit: ethnology) with our practice itself, an opacity which obscures our view of the Baby we know to be there, that is when we do a disservice to both knowledge and imagination. For what is the case is that it is the water which we know something about, and the Baby which we imagine. But this is not a widely held view, and certainly not widely promulgated, so it may behoove me to elaborate. I may add, in passing but hardly incidentally, that this very philosophical first chapter is a case in point, an example of the way not to proceed normally with an anthropological thesis. Therefore, my elaboration of what I mean
by thus distinguishing knowledge and imagination will have something of the flavour of a justification in addition to its being an explication.

A good first question might be, How do we know what we know? Or, How do we know that we know? If we push this sort of question far enough, playing willy-nilly with subject and object, we can get to 'How do I know that I am?'...the question A.E. van Vogt called, in a recent novel, the "Zen placebo". So, though it may be an OK first question, as a way of going about questioning it may not be so good. If we let "anything" stand for [what we know] in the first question, we get, How do we know "anything"? This may be closer to a better way of going about this, leaving as it does the question of what the "anything" is to some later investigation. And since this "anything" can be, literally and virtually, anything, let's make this first question, How do we know? Now this is getting us a little closer to the kind of intellectual investigation with which I feel more comfortable. For I can understand this question as a response. And responses, existing as they do in the real world of debate and discourse and interlocution, are familiar and have recognizable contexts and situations. I can say,

We know that Torres Strait Islanders live in Queensland.

And you can say,

How do we know?

This is the sort of ordinary speech in which the object—the 'that' of How do we know that?—is made by the first speaker, and becomes the subject of the second person's query. And notice here how the normally taught bounds of 'subject' and 'object' start to fuzz. I can say that the grammatical understood object, 'that' (How do we know [that]?), is the subject of the question. And if I do it from the point of view of a reporter, or some other third person, it is even clearer how 'object' is subject:
The subject of the reader's question was the assertion that Torres Strait Islanders live in Queensland.

But I don't have to risk the objection to this wordplay that I am confusing grammar and semantics. I can simply offer these two typical descriptions of ethnographic research:

The subject of ethnography is the native society and culture.

The object of ethnography is the native society and culture.

Or, resuming my metaphor:

The subject of ethnography is The Baby.

The object of ethnography is The Baby.

I do not mean by these pairs to show that subject and object are interchangeable. And in fact, the feel of reading them suggests that there is a relationship of difference between them, that they are not interchangeable. There is a difference of predication. This is one of the hinges for my argument, and I shall return to it in order to discuss it in detail. For now, let me introduce it by the suggestion, which I have just made, that the subtle difference between using 'subject' (The subject of ethnography is The Baby) and 'object' (The object of ethnography is The Baby) lies in the different next-thing which each demands. That is to say that each of the two wordings demands its own closure. In the wording using 'subject', the sentence can stand on its own. As long as it makes sense, it can just sit there...the answer to some previous question; a title; an opening sentence for an unfinished treatise, or the closing sentence to a finished one. As a sentence it satisfies Ian Hacking's notion of "sentential knowledge" and may exemplify Karl Popper's "epistemology without a knowing subject". 9

The feel of the 'object' wording is subtly different, but much more demanding of a predicate. The idiomatic response which comes to mind on a third or fourth reading (i.e. after already being engaged in trying to get away from the pressure of the predicative demand) is, "So what?". And by come to mind there I mean it actually popped into my head while I was writing this paragraph, and after I had been
glancing at the sentence with the 'object' wording sitting to my left on the preceding page of the manuscript. For those readers acquainted with the American idiom, that wherein the idiomatic ‘So what!?’ resides, the 'pressure' I mention ought to be retroflectively apparent even if the pressure wasn't felt. 'So what' is a kind of admission of a failure of closure, a giving in to the inability to make anything of the sentence. It is, in its very frustration, an attestation to what I have called its predicative demand. It can't just sit there. Or, sitting there though it must (for I make it do so), it does so under an almost audible duress.

But consider how we might alternately predicate the sentence, in order to alleviate its misery. What if we say, instead,

The object of ethnography is the description of the Baby.
(The object of ethnography is the description of native society.)

Am I right in reading this with little or no ensuing unease? What if I conventionalize it even more, say,

The object of ethnographic description is the elucidation of native society and culture.

In one sense, with all the "description" and "elucidation" in there, and with the adjectival "ethnographic", this sentence will be bound to sound at least more familiar to most of us. And any 'pressure' or unease will be less for the familiarity. (If you don't think so, consider the sentence: Nazi technicians succeeded in exterminating six million Jews in the attempt to purify the Aryan race.) But there is, too, a reduction in the sitting uneasiness of the sentence. The next-thing which it demands is significantly reduced.

Now, let me suggest that the distinctions of reading which I have suggested (and which each reader may judge to be right or not) are not whimsical. They are not the result of some light play over the words. In the terms of the title of this section, they are distinctions known rather than imagined. And for my purposes it is important to bear in mind from the outset that reading obtains
knowledge rather than imagined things. This is, for me, an incredible realization (I use incredible there to signal a bigness whose notional limits are not yet known, rather than to indicate something strictly 'un-knowable'), redolent still of my discovery of it.

It seems to me that this has rather many implications for modern ethnography—this idea, or realization, that reading obtains known things rather than imagined ones. I suspect that this might, without some adumbration, seem to fly in the face of the commonest sense of what reading does. That is to say, for instance, if I write

Black bananas are best for frying.

you will read it and will, providing that you do not suspect me of being all this time a Chinese parodist truly interested in flying bananas, get a kind of initial orientation of domain; to wit, that I am going to say (write) something more about bananas, and about cooking them, and about how we can use the colour of the meat or perhaps the skin to tell which ones are good for frying. But there is a question for the asking here about what it is that you know from reading this sentence. My surmise is that the endless possibilities proposed by your reading of it almost mask what is it that is known by reading it. (And, in addition, my frying/flying addendum proposed a universe of parodistic Chinese-English of the 'flied lice' variety, and another of mounting bananas like broomsticks, let alone what variations on this absurd theme your own playful reading may have come up with.)

All of these possibilities have to do with imagination rather than with knowledge. They are all imagined. They all have some sort of subject or other—bananas, me the writer, me the cook, me the flying Chinese—and they all have some sort of predication—cooking, frying, flying, being best. Compared to the imagined stuff, the known things are few. Reading this sentence, we (I have joined the ranks of the readers now, reading from the top of this printed page rather than remembering what I meant when I typed the sentence in manuscript) cannot say that we know that black bananas actually do
make the best frying ones...though those of us who have been educated in one or the other culinary traditions of which this is a tenet could maintain that we do know this, though it wouldn't be 'from' the sentence. Nor can we say (or, we would do so only incautiously at best), that the writer means that black bananas are best for frying, because I, shape-shifter that I am, can become the writer again and say that I really am that parodistic Chinese and 'banana' is a kind of fighting kite...and add sheepishly that I mistyped the r for the l in "frying", and forgot the quotes around 'banana'.

This excursion into absurd sentences is not intended to pull the anthropologist reader by his ears into the realm of philosophy. A look at Donald Davidson on "Agency" or his "Action, Reasons, and Causes", and another at H.P. Grice's "Utterer's Meaning, Sentence Meaning, and Word Meaning" would suffice to familiarize the anthropologist reader with the long history of philosophical occupation with such matters as raised in my simple questions of what the black banana sentence means.¹⁰

My question is not about what I (as writer) meant or might have meant by that sentence. My question is about what we (you and I as readers) might know pursuant to that sentence. And this is where a kind of notional linguistic analogy fails the ethnographic investigator, for there is no good substitute for my 'pursuant' in that sentence, and even 'pursuant' brings with it a sense of after which may be misleading. For instance, we know something about "black", but our knowledge of black is in no way after our reading of the sentence. Yet it has only to do with that sentence after we have read it. (This is the sense of 'after' which is used to some avail when we wish to adhere to some particular and original usage for which we wish to acknowledge the author.) And with not very much wordplay at all we can make it that what we know of "black" is running after the 'black' in 'black bananas' in order to get at its meaning...or, rather, in order to use the congruence to get at the writer's meaning. In some (albeit from an ordinarily formal point of view, playful) sense, we can say that our knowledge of "black" is
literally pursuant to that sentence. But what we cannot say is that sentence teaches us something about black. Rather we must say that we use what we already know about black to decipher—to read—the sentence. But once read, the question of knowledge is moot. Imagination takes over. And pictures and images of nice juicy black bananas a-frying abound.

But here is a problem: When I wrote that sentence I saw nothing with my mind's eye of bananas, black or frying. In fact, almost immediately upon writing it for the purpose of this discussion of knowledge and imagination I saw the possibility of reading flying for frying and was already off and running, imagining some context for the typo. (Or perhaps the typo and the story in which it might figure all came to mind at once, so quickly did it all arrive in my awareness.) As is clear, I wrote the black banana sentence in order to make a few points about what it is that writing and reading do, and specifically about what it is that we can reasonable expect of the writing and reading of ethnographic writing. I, as writer, do not expect you to get the same kind of idea when reading that I had when writing. What I do want to do is make the best guess I can about the sorts of things you already know so that I can excite your imagination.

Normally I think this is the sort of arrangement which is taken for granted. But in the case of ethnography there are some things which must be spelled out, I think, very carefully. It may serve ordinary English vernacular for me to say that

Black bananas are best for frying

is a meaningful sentence. But the thing to remember is that such an assertion as 'This is a meaningful sentence' is a rare bird. It has some presence in language philosophy, but it would serve little purpose in the vernacular. The only time anyone has to say such a thing is when there is real or imagined, implicit or explicit contradiction to some sentence said. Perceiving (or imagining) this contradictoriness in his audience, the speaker can assert, meaningfully, "This is a meaningful sentence!" But, usually, because
we make our meanings as we go about the daily business of talking and being heard, there is little cause to assert meaningfulness. More than this, the only cause for the assertion of meaningfulness is exactly where we suspect meaning has failed. Only where there is no meaning must we resort to its name.

One of the common genres wherein meaning has no existence at the outset is ethnography. The subject (or object) of ethnography being something of an alien society or culture, there is a built-in restriction on the sorts of meanings. And because of this, perhaps an inordinate amount of page-space has been taken up by ethnographers discussing meaning (instead of simply being meaningful in whatever their exposition). As Gilbert Lewis has recently written, "'meaning' is a word of such easy virtue, we would do well to be wary of its temptations". And we hardly have to refer yet again to the collation of 'meanings' in Ogden and Richards. Pierre Bourdieu has recently brought into English writing the observation of Charles Bally that whereas the speaker treats language as a "means of action and expression", there is an incipient intellectualism (Bourdieu's emphasis) in always seeing language from the standpoint of the listener, for "the listener is on the side of the language, it is with the language that he interprets speech". For my purpose here let this be a reminder of the duality of language—speaker/creator and hearer/interpreter—and the problems this makes for all who would be unwary of meaning's easy virtue. In reference to the "disservice to knowledge and imagination" which sparked this discussion, however, we must have some idea how we are to deal with those things that questions like 'How does he know what he means?', or, even more of a problem, 'How do we know what he means?' are meant to get at.

Let me say that I have no problem in the area of 'knowing what I mean'. That is, for the duration of this piece of writing the reader is hereby licensed to take it as given that I know what I mean; this also licenses the corollary that I know what I am saying. (This leaves begging one of the commonest problems of ethnography reading,
the problem of 'How do we know that what he says is so?', and I shall return to this one in my discussion of reading below.) In the first case, there is proposed, _inter alia_, subscription to one side of a long and involved philosophical debate concerning the nature of knowledge. While I shall not address these issues in any detail, let me, at any rate, affirm that I know which side of the knowledge fence I am on. Since this lies at the root of any practice of ethnography, it is crucial to address it at the beginning of any ethnographic writing. By leaving myself open to criticism from quarters unknown (i.e. by advising that I know what I mean throughout), I am claiming to know what I know. Simply that. And I have advised the reader that I will eschew those implications, inferences, ramifications, functionalia etcetera where I only 'think that I know'. (For some of the basic philosophy around this problem see Alan R. White, "Thinking That and Knowing That", or Ryle 1945-46, Ayer 1956, Geach 1957). All of this depends, of course on two things.

The first of these two things is unsolveable and therefore easily dismissed, for it has to do with the nature of the discourse carried on by me writing, then getting the writing 'passed' by some kind of editorial or other disciplinary entity, then published, and then you reading it. The first of these things is that you must believe me. Since there is no recourse save your writing a response—or, in the case of a reader who is a thesis examiner, failing the thesis; in the case of a publisher, rejecting it—there is a kind of trade-off whereby the reader gets to read without the busy distractions of having to attend to the kinesics and proxemics and what-have-you of conversation and the writer has to write without knowing if the reader believes him. So all we (I) can do is to announce our culpability on grounds of dishonesty.

The second of these is the more serious, and because it has some bearing on modern philosophy as well as ethnography I shall spend a paragraph or two on it: I know when I know something versus when I only think I know. This is the epistemological ground of this thesis. More than that, any piece of experiential writing so
grounded must have at its "experiential core" (to borrow Liam Hudson's term) such an awareness. So a commitment to only write what I know is not, in this case, a commitment to some philosophical stance on verifiability. It is not only incidentally not such a commitment, it is emphatically not. I am claiming as knower to be ipso facto verifier, thereby obviating verification. I am also, by that claim, abandoning any counter-claim to reproducability, in the sense in which social science 'experiments' have been said from time to time in the modern era to be reproducible (usually, as I take it, in order that there can be some test or verification).

So I am, in the very least, promising to both pay attention to what I write and to write nothing that I don't know. For instance, when I wrote above that "Cultures are functions of windows" I knew what I was writing, and I did not write therein anything I didn't know. Of course it is a most difficult thing to attempt to show that cultures, commonly thought to be a kind of thing, are really bits of interference which stand between us as observers and them, the members of other societies whom we observe. That attempt shall, on one account, occupy the whole of the present work. Since that is the case, it is well that I alert the reader at the outset to how it is that I have figured out to best put into words what I have discovered about cultures. But I only do it to provide some sort of signpost of cerebration, a way for the reader to refer to what it is that I am trying to show, and just one of a number of verbal signals which, taken together, may serve to confirm a sense of having arrived at what it is that I am getting at.

Let me also add here that it is my intention that the reader shall know what I am getting at (this is the normal intention of course) and in order to serve this intention I shall not be restricted by what I take to be normal restrictions operating on the language of ethnography. Let me give an example which may round off this discussion of how language—the language of writing ethnographies, as well as any other language—bears on what we know and what we imagine.
Imagining the Teller; Knowing the Tale

I shall give this example in the form of a tale, or story. I do so not just to keep on the track of the solution promised by the title of the present work, but also as a way of inveigling the reader into an introduction of the story as mental mechanism, as one of the means whereby the most basic and seemingly untraceable origins of our very experience come to occupy that experience. Quite simply, and not at all simplistically, I mean to suggest that there are things which enable 'cultural comparison' despite my earlier suggestion that cultures are not comparable. One of these things, or rather some of these things (which is to say one of these things is the form of story, or some of them are stories in particular detail), are stories, such as the one which will serve to exemplify my distinction between knowledge and imagination.

This is a story, a true account, of how one ethnographer cottoned on to one of those hard-to-grasp expressions which plague all ethnographers who worry at how to find what their informants, as Professor Geertz has put it, "perceive 'with'—or 'by means of', or 'through' . . . or whatever the word should be" (1976:224). The account comes as a story because that is how it comes to me every time I think of it, or am caused to think of it. And it is unlikely that I would censor this particular appearance of a story in view of my theoretical assertion that stories are themselves the things we and our informants 'perceive with, or by means of, or through'. Certainly it is a fair account of how one ethnographer came to understand an expression of assessment which was also an ideal-typical concept, one which organized much daily experience. The expression was pakarar, a word in Mériam mir, the native language of the Eastern Islands of the Torres Strait. I had heard it often on the streets of Townsville, where the greater numbers of Eastern Torres Strait Islanders over Central and Western Islanders is reflected in the greater incidence of Mériam mir words cropping up in
the Torres Strait Pidgin (the lingua franca of all the islands of the Strait) which is the language of what I came to think of as the Torres Strait Mainland...a 'place' on the Australian mainland but never of it.

Part of this Torres Strait Mainland, its headquarters in some respects, was the 'Islander public' sphere of downtown Townsville (I shall use 'Islander public' from time to time—though I shall drop the quotation marks pretty soon—to refer to that part of what most citizens would think of as public domain but which is from an Islander point of view, bound off from the white public and Aboriginal public who may well physically occupy it even while it is demarcated by Islanders as 'Islander public', much in the way Seattle urban nomads were 'invisible' to all but the police and social workers who passed them by, drunk and cold, in their doorways and under their old newspapers [Spradley 1970].) And it was in this everyday world of messages arriving from Saibai and Stephen—the outermost islands of the Strait—sooner by mouth than by telegram; of people arriving from the islands and departing for work or relations in the Queensland hinterland, of workers returning from 'The West' to settle in the headquarter cities of Mackay and Cairns and Townsville...it was here that I began to learn my way around the Islander idiom. This story is suggestive of the rudiments of how we begin to know anything of the peoples we ethnographers study. But it also is intended to illustrate a distinction (one which I shall later discuss as a 'motion of self'), a movement from acting like an Islander—which I could see—toward becoming one—which I could feel.

The Story:

That's it! Pakarar...that's it!

(In a sense this is a story about an abduction. Abductions were C.S. Peirce's retroductive logical devices, ways of reasoning which were inductions, but the sorts of inductions which couldn't get anywhere without the active supervention of the thinker armed with a hypothesis in light of which, and only in light of which, the
reasoning could proceed. In a way it is even about two abductions, the Islanders' hypothesis about my misunderstanding which enabled them to seize the moment to enlighten me, and my hypothesis about what was going on which finally reduced itself to such absurdity that even I had to look around for a new hypothesis. It is also, of course, a story about town-dwelling Torres Strait and their anthropologist, in the vein of all ethnographic stories.

We walked along the main street of Townville's small city center. There were four of us, and a curious mixture for this July. One of us was a leader of the Eastern Islanders' two were Western island leaders. I was the anthropologist, though an anthropologist by this time more than half Eastern Islander. So however you looked at it—two Easterners and two Westerners walking along talking, or Easterners and Westerners and this white bloke—it was a strange sight.

We had finished a light lunch not long before, at a coffee shop in one of the arcades off the main street which was promising to become a venue for this new East-West détente. The first such meeting of East and West, without insult or slander, had been hardly a month before, and this was already the third.

We walked along the sunny side of the street, watching the shoppers strolling in and out of the late winter shadows on the other side. One of the big Western Islandmen spied a particularly noticeable young lady coming out of Woolworth's.

"W-w-w-o-o-o," he said, more breathing than speaking.

I tried to see just who he was looking at. This problem—my not getting in on this sort of off-hand casual men's comraderie because I couldn't quite get what they were doing—was pressing me acutely. Day after day somebody and I would walk the streets somewhere in Townsville or Mackay or Bowen and all this W-w-w-o-o-o business would happen. So today I was bound to not let it go by.

"Wanem," I said, using the all-purpose pidgin for 'Huh?', 'Beg your pardon?', 'What?', 'Whatisname', and 'Whatchamacallit'.

"W-w-w-o," he repeated, briefly. "Oman dea." [That woman.] I figured it was the two who had come out of Woolies. But they were walking back into the shadows and we were still ambling along.
"Wanem oman?" I asked.

"Diskain oman," he said (This kind), and moved his hand, right hand, from his stomach out and down toward his thighs, describing a kind of out-arching curve roughly the shape of his ample belly. Then I got it. Of course: the pair who had come strolling out of the store. One was a nice looking fairly tall, say, eighteen-year-old. And the one she was apparently shopping with was shorter and very very pregnant.

The hand-arc description had aroused some interest from our fellow walkers.

"Gel," one of the others said (the Easterner, my nominal countryman. This was said in correction of the Westerner having called that too-young-a-woman 'Oman'.

"Wa," he agreed, "gel diswan." He paused, "Bat emi mata nice!" Everyone had a good hearty, and more than a little hungry, chuckle at that.

"Hee, hee. Mata nice," said the other Westerner, a man from Badu.

"Pakarar," my Eastern cohort said, obviously in confirmation.

"Wait a minute," I said, "wanem diskain 'pakarar'?" I had thought I was doing OK just trying to hang onto what was going on without interrupting until this pakarar came out. I knew 'mata nice' was one of those mixtures you find, especially in any community of more than one language: mata is the Western word for "very"; nice is the same as English "nice", adopted straight into Torres Strait Pidgin. And it had become a Pidgin phrase in the Island idiom. (Of course I didn't figure out exactly what it meant until after the day of the stroll in my story: I was still trying to figure out why these guys were checking out pregnant girls, saying 'mata nice', and making a hand sign as if they are rubbing down a pregnant belly some distance out from their own.)

"Meriam mir," said my Eastern friend. "Yu sabe pakarar," he added, recalling that he had explained its meaning to me before.

I think he has, yes. But now he has used it in apparent agreement with these other two using this "Mata nice"—which I understand to be a term of appreciation, but exactly what kind of appreciation I don't know—and I'm feeling a little lost.
He had explained before that Meriam mir pakarar was the word which described especially luscious and desirable Island women. And more than just luscious. To be truly pakarar there had to be a kind of virginal or pure or untouched or wholesome quality. (I hadn't known, quite, and just fished around for some English men's adjectives to see if any rung a bell with him. They hadn't.) I had tried to gloss it according to categories—menstruating (of course), menstruating long (not necessarily), seventeen (nice!), sixteen (pakarar!), fifteen (sure!), is it a matter of age? (not necessarily), is it hair (?). I mean, beautiful hair (could be). I had really been round the course. It had to do with attractiveness, and something to do with sexual matters.

Maybe it has to do with the fact that there has to have been sex in order to get that rounded belly of pregnancy? Maybe; so I ask.

"Diskain 'mata nice'," I ask, making the out and down-over-the-belly motion, "emi belly bl'em?" [Is it the belly?], indicating my hand motion with a chin-nod.

"Wa," they nod, all of them. "Belly-pat," says the Easterner.

This is reason for great lewd mirth. 'Prapa belly-pat' they cheer. I figure enough not to get fooled by the 'p' for "fat", but I still don't understand. 'Fat belly?' But why is that funny? More important, why is it lewd? Fortunately there are a number of 'mata nice' young Island girls walking the streets today. One very lovely willowy Meriam girl walks by on the same side of the street as us. As she passes us the group erupts into a gaggle of "Nice", "Mata nice", and (I think I hear) "Pakarar". Not wanting to be left out I offer, "Belly-pat". This causes muted howls of lewd mirth I laugh along, without much conviction.

The Westerners turn down a side street toward their cars, and us 'Easterners' keep walking. Now I can ask.

"Belly-pat," he says, in answer to my question, "kole ra mir: 'tummy'."

"Tummy!" I say. "Tummy doesn't have anything to do with pregnant!"

"Pregnant?!?" says he. "Who's talking about pregnant?" I am, now, really confused. We walk along silently, me trying to think.
"So pakarar doesn't have anything to do with pregnant?" I ask.

"Hahaha. Pakarar pregnant! Nolé kar." [Really not a thing!]

"So what are these great big fat bellies?" I ask, imitating the hand motion.

"Nolé, nolé," he said. "just a little fat, a nice little round (he's almost slobbering as he gets into this description) tummy—real nice prapa little belly-pat W-w-w-o-o-o-o.

"Aha." I begin to get the picture. The two girls who came out of Woolies were one pregnant one plus one 'mata nice' one! We walk some more, turning down toward the wharf area and the small boat harbour. A young lady is sunbaking across the bow of one of the yachts. The scene triggers some California memories. I had forgotten about pakarar and was trying to concentrate on the more general lingua franca of "Mata nice", partly to get it glossed and mostly so I could stop feeling like a dummy. I'm sort of rolling 'mata nice' around when, I guess, the sunbather and boat and memories all pop at once into my awareness.

"Wait a minute—"I call out. He looks at me as if he has just about given up. He has tried three times now just to get across this little concept without which how could anyone know what they were supposed to get all excited about and what they weren't.

"Just a minute," I persist, catching up to him. "We have this word in American that doesn't mean any particular kind of girl except that she has to be the kind that absolutely turns you on." I can see I have him spellbound. He looks like he is about to get another lesson in comparative ethnography of speaking when all he wants to do is hang around this sun-bather's belly-fat.

"Wanem?" he asks, pro forma.

"Fuckable."

He stops looking at the blond, and looks off for a minute, trying out the word. He's never heard it before. His face lights up with that inner excitement he and I share, the thrill of getting things across cultures, of getting them right—

"That's it! Pakarar...that's it!"
When the roof leaks and the piano needs tuning, when the geyser explodes and the brother (home on leave) slips quietly into the jigs, what do I do? I send for the expert, the trained man, and leave the solution of my problem to him. When I want to read anything, however, I usually write it myself.

Myles na gCopaleen,  
'Cruiskeen Lawn'

CHAPTER 2

From Here to Alternity

In the fourth of the four Paul Carus Lectures read at the Meeting of the American Philosophical Association at Berkeley in December 1930, the one entitled "The Implications of the Self", George Herbert Mead set the problem for which this collection searches for solution. I could have said, for which I have searched for solution in the essays which comprise this collection. But that would have been, while more in accord with the grammar, less in accord with the experience: less true to both my experience among the Torres Strait Islanders with whom my wife and I lived, and my experience working through the writing which constitutes the thesis. At the risk of offending the impatient reader unlikely to be any more sympathetic to this notion of truth than he is acquainted with it, let me explain why even here I have already departed the promised direction of the text in a necessary digression.

Every act of speaking, every piece of writing, any use of language at all might be or might have been...something else! Myles na gCopaleen, the Irish writer whose words I borrowed for my epigraph, might have left out that part about the brother. It would have made the epigraph more neatly suitable, and would have saved me the laboured decision over whether or not to leave it out, sans elipses
in the manner of Jorge Luis Borges. The anthropologist has a kind of pact with empiric reality, a pact which speaks against this kind of peremptory alteration of the words which are the given, the facts of the epigraph; but the poet wants to make them a better fit, to take licence to alter the words as easily as he alters the context, ripping these few words twenty-odd years and a hemisphere south and east to serve with this text (con-text, literally 'with this text').

So what I did was write out seven variations of Myles's three sentences. Alas, to no avail. When I took out the part about the brother, the geyser was left all on its own, a single item offset by a comma from the two—the roof and the piano—in the opening. Such a thing would never do, for though they did say from time to time that Myles was unbalanced, they were not referring to his writing. So I took both the geyser and the brother out. But that left only a piano and a roof holding the fort, and a piano and a roof hardly last long enough to build the suspense necessary for the 'I write it meself' payoff. And anyway, in the end, I recalled something Myles had written about James Joyce. Well, not exactly about Mr Joyce, but about a reviewer who had, "throughout his piece consistently referred to the master's last work as 'Finnegan's Wake'. That apostrophe (I happen to know) hastened Mr Joyce's end. To be insensitive to what is integral is, I fear, not among the first qualifications for writing an article on Mr Joyce."

So we might have entitled this Introduction "To Be Sensitive to What Is Integral", after Myles na gCopaleen. Or we might have emphasized the literary connections of some of the writing with, "On Being Sensitive to What Is Integral". "Integral Sensitivity Training" might have emphasized the modern psychological reality of doing any kind of close reading of another culture, whereas "The Sensitive Integral: An Essay in the Strict Sense of the Term" might have evoked a more anthropological flavour. At any rate, I, reminded by Myles of his own sensitivity to what is integral, decided not to change his words at all. The reason is precisely that I do not know all that is integral in this passage from Myles's writing. I like its
feel. And its faint foreignness is appropriate for a selection of writings about a foreign people. But, although I know that a geyser is some kind of water heater (and probably pronounced geezer), I don't know what these 'jigs' are that 'the brother' slips quietly into; so with the caution that they might be found integral by a reader more sensitive than I, I left 'em in.

The reason for all this wordplay on the sensitive integral is to show, by taking the reader from one feeling to the next, something of the genesis of my concern for paying attention to what it is that we do when we write ethnography. That is, in some very simple sense we select from among all the experiences we had while we were out amongst the Kaingaing, or the Goodenough Islanders, or the Wallaby Cross Aborigines, or the Torres Strait Islanders. This necessary selection has exercised ethnographers since the earliest days of ethnography, and there is a wealth of literature covering what sort of data to select, and the logics for the many selectings, and the methodologies which will promote one kind of selection or another. Except that this is not, strictly speaking, a wealth of literature. Very little of it counts as literature, commanding neither the range nor the readership to warrant that designation.

Of course, it may not be a fair worry that anthropological writing counts rarely as literature. It may simply be the case that anything that truly feels like literature has to feel older than current. In the section of his *Frontiers of Anthropology* reserved for an appreciation of Sir James Frazer, Ashley Montagu writes of Frazer as "a gifted writer, whose style raised the anthropology he wrote to the level of literature" ("Anthropology into Literature", p.228). And while there is no doubt that Frazer and his writings are 'older than current' (Ashley Montagu says himself that "Frazer's reputation has today suffered something of an eclipse" [ibid.]), it is, I think, less certain that his writing feels older than current. Here is the opening to *The Golden Bough*.
Who does not know Turner's picture of the Golden Bough? The scene, suffused with the gold glow of imagination in which the divine mind of Turner steeped and transfigured even the fairest natural landscape, is a dreamlike vision of the little woodland lake of Nemi—"Diana's Mirror," as it was called by the ancients.

We can feel the 'literature' in that couple of sentences. And the inconclusiveness of simple rhetoric as a characterization of the opening question leads us even further out of the sort of thing which counts today as social science writing and into literature: Frazer ensures that there shall be no responses in the negative by 'writing' Turner's painting for us. Now even those of us who have not seen (who do not "know") Turner's painting can hang onto Frazer's prose long enough to see if we can get the point of whatever it is he fashions from these observations on Turner. Which is to say that we can hang on long enough to see what he means. But I think this is not a widely held view of 'meaning' at all. Yet it is the view that I hold, and around which much of what follows is twined. It is, simply put, this:

Meaning is the next-thing.

While I am fully prepared to risk some audacity here and there, I do not intend facetiousness, nor pretend facility. This is as simply as I can put what it is that glosses the notion of meaning for me. The "-thing" which is attached to "next" is neither the 'thing' (Ding an Sich) of Kant nor some phenomenon à la Husserl. It is simply any old 'thing'—a perfectly good word taken from my own idiom—which comes next. What this thing comes next in is a matter of focus, attention, delimitation, custom, and so forth. I hook it to "next" with the hyphen so that it is impossible to read it without the (silent) reminder that this is an idiomatic usage flagged by an idiosyncratic diacritical dash. The reminder is this: any apparent 'thing' proposed as the meaning of something must be, or must turn out to have been, connected to that something, and moreover to be separated by no interventional connection. So it is a "next-thing" not only because it must be next and not just anytime after, but also because it must be a thing connected and not just any thing which happens to come along later.
By this account, the phrases and equivalents written after entries in dictionaries are not meanings. This is both true and not true. As they sit there, in the closed Oxford on the shelf, we can imagine the typical word followed by its 'definition', typically after. In this case, what is there is not meaning. We can render it as meaning by a shorthand referencing practice which works (we can expect 'meanings' of new words to come 'after' the dictionary entry, even though we've never looked them up, or never in this particular dictionary, before); but a practice which, when stated as knowledge, fails for its faulty epistemology. In our imagination where we construct anticipated actions of looking up words in dictionaries, once we abstract the dictionary entry on its page, seize it in a still frame, the very word after loses its meaning. Once the action is gone, once the page with its entry is stopped and still, the definition is rightward of the entry. If the book opens front cover swinging eastward, then the definition is west of the entry. But there is no 'after'.

We can turn the dictionary around and, reading upside down, read the definition before we read the entry. We can read the definition first and read the entry after in any case. We can read fourteen entries and none of their definitions without ever thinking that each word read after its precursor is the definition of that precursor. Then, exhausted, we can go back to the top of the list and, finally, begin to read the definition which comes 'after' the first word...only to have the knocker sound Uncle Chuck's arrival, and, because it came after our first word, doom us to know \textit{tintinnabulation}, n. [L]. . . the sound of a heavy doorknocker thrice struck.

We who know how dictionaries work, who know that they are pretty much relegated to private reading, have no problem. We know that the "after" which makes the definition the next-thing for a dictionary entry is the real temporal after of action, the action of reading. We know if the knocker sounds that our cessation of reading attends our desisting from any discursive meaning in the domain of reading which
we have quit. The requirement is, then, that Uncle Chuck's arrival is, if it means anything at all, connected to some past thing not in the dictionary reading domain. (Let me remind the reader again that this 'thing' that I use is in lieu of other conventions which propose particularity and in doing so often open Pandora's boxes of what George Steiner has called alternity: I might have said that Uncle Chuck's arrival is connected to some past event, or occurrence, or happening. Had I done so I could but have been proposing a distinction which promised to become a disconcertion, for I, not yet knowing Uncle Chuck arrives willy-nilly for a chat, might promise the reader an arrival connected to a past event only to have him find out that such a putative 'event' would lie somewhere along a causal chain between the 'event' of Chuck's being born to the same parents as was my father and my eventual birth to that brother.)

This is what I call the risk of the epigraph: that meaning is the next-thing, in any wise, and that ethnographers promise to make the acts and actions of alien peoples meaningful, where the actions are no more connected to the ethnography than the ethnographer's epigraphs.

The Risk of the Epigraph

A year or so ago Rodney Needham made a flying tour of Australian universities, giving, as is his wont, a number of articulate and polished seminars. And he spoke, more than once, of the importance of epigraphs; said he never let students get away from his ambit without impressing upon them the need for epigraphs in anthropological writing. On one occasion his mention of his habitual stressing of the epigraphic import came apropos of that paper's epigraph, drawn from "Doctor Brodie's Report" by Jorge Luis Borges. Doctor Brodie is Borges' fantastic old explorer, reporting on the fantastic tribe among whom he lived and whose ethnographic titillations he brought back, dangling from his travelogue like charms. Needham, having just dangled a felicitous sentence or two
from Borges in order to better charm his seminar audience, stops aside for a moment to exhort all of us to always write with epigraphs, for it is with epigraphs that we remind ourselves and our readers that we write in a literary tradition.

Borges, in the Preface to *Dr. Brodie's Report*, wrote, "Apart from the text that gives this book its title and that obviously derives from Lemuel Gulliver's last voyage, my stories are—to use the term in vogue today—realistic." Thus does Needham, the anthropologist, wend a link back to Jonathan Swift, a link which is but one in a whole chain of Borges-Swift connections. In 1933 Borges became editor of the new *Revista Multicolor de los Sebados* (Saturday Multicolored Review) which, Borges' biographer Monegal tells us (Monegal 1978:251-2), was the culmination of the desire of the editor of *Crítica*, Natalio Botana, who "had always wanted to have a cultural magazine attached to *Crítica*." (Monegal says that it was Botano who "had introduced the style and method of United States' tabloids into Argentina", in the form of *Crítica*, "a good example of how to produce a sensational and, at the same time, literate paper.") As well as contributing original pieces to the new magazine, "Borges also selected and translated pieces from his favorite authors for *Crítica*. Chesterton, Kipling, Wells, and the German-Czech author Gustav Meyrink shared with Swift, Novalis, and James Frazer the gaudy pages of the supplement."

So not only was Swift a favourite of Borges, but also James Frazer was (and thus do we wend a way from Needham—alive and literarily aware anthropologist—back to Frazer—Needham's own forbear—and the Golden Bough of Turner). Fleshing out the literary link between Borges and Swift, Monegal introduces C.S. Lewis' novel *Out of the Silent Planet* which, like the travels of Gulliver and the report of 'Dr. Brodie', is a mock-ethnography. "Lewis is placing a mirror up to earth," writes Monegal. "In the best tradition of Thomas More and Swift, he describes an imaginary visit to that planet and the society he finds there, to best describe our world, the silent planet of the title. Borges, in a more oblique way, does the same." (Here Monegal
is talking of Borges' "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" in which Tlön is described "as an inverted version of earth" which, "being a rational version of earth, is a totalitarian world: the excess of reason leads to totalitarianism" [Monegal 1978:332-3]). Monegal thus places Borges in the tradition of More and his successors in the chapter of his literary biography entitled "A Distorted Mirror to Reality", which opens:

In May 1940, one year exactly after the publication of "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote" in Sur, the same journal published "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius". This time the story did not pretend to be an essay, although it had all the external characteristics of one.

The reference to the essay "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote" is a reference to this now well-known 'essay' in which Borges essayed the attempt by 'a certain Menard', said to be a contemporary of William James, to rewrite Don Quixote. As Monegal puts it, "As is well known, Menard succeeds in writing a few chapters. In comparing them, the narrator finds that they are literally the same but have a completely different meaning". Monegal then quotes Borges' own words, as the narrator: "Cervantes' text and Menard's are verbally identical, but the second is almost infinitely richer.)" (Monegal 1978:329, and quoting Borges from Labyrinths 1964:42.) Borges goes on to actually 'compare' the two versions, quoting pairs of literally identical lines and 'showing' them to have such very different interpretations since the one was written in seventeenth century Spanish by a native speaker of that language and the other so much later, and by a foreigner.

Let me return to Monegal on the distorted mirror of Borges's story of "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius", a mirror which distorts not by radical reinterpretation of words which both are and are not the same, but by discovery and description of worlds:

It began by reporting a conversation between Bioy Casares and the author about a puzzling quotation the first had found in an odd volume of a pirate encyclopedia.

The quotation, and conversation, surrounded the question of the
unknown land of Uqbar, and the story went on to recount the recovery of that volume, and more discoveries about this 'Uqbar'.

It revealed the existence of a whole encyclopedia devoted to describing Tlön, the planet to which Uqbar belonged; finally, it explained, calmly, that the whole affair was a hoax perpetrated by a group of eighteenth-century philosophers and carried to its completion in this century through the patronage of an American millionaire.

With a characteristic Borgesian twist, the story ends with a postscript informing the reader that objects manufactured in Uqbar have been discovered on earth.

The encyclopedia describes the planet of Uqbar, Tlön, as a planet of peculiar reality in which the imaginary and the real are topsy-turvy. It is a world "made according to the theories about reality of the eighteenth-century British philosopher George Berkeley" (Monegal 1978:333; Monegal also notes the similarity between the name of the philosopher and Buckley, the name of the American millionaire of the story, and he refers us to James Irby's similar conclusion [Irby 1971]). Tlön, then, is an 'inverted' earth, and doubly so, for it is both rational and immaterial. As Monegal describes it (1978:333), "It is a world in which matter is denied and imaginary objects become real."

Again we have woven a line—the word "woven" is meant here to be more real than imaginary, a true predication even though it is not always clear what the warp and weft of the weaving might be—through reality and imagination back to another of Needham's forbears...this one an 18th century philosopher rather than a 19th century anthropologist. And all of this is what I mean to imply by "the risk of the epigraph", and has to do with my proposition of meaning as next-thing: Borges has said that each word in any language implies all other words; Lévi-Strauss has said, and demonstrated, that we can begin anywhere in a culture and make our way to anywhere else. Needham, by taking a few words from Borges to use for an epigraph, implies (according to his epigrapher) all of these words from Borges and readers of Borges which I have woven back to Frazer and Berkeley in what might be called a Lévi-Straussian exercise. In a strange
sense, but one which looses its strangeness with closer inspection, Needham implies his own forbears with his epigraph.

But so do we all. And to speak of implication is not to speak of meaning. Yet this is the risk of the epigraph. Needham, by no means alone in the anthropological peerage but perhaps the most forthright in this matter, exhorts us to write with epigraphs, to know and acknowledge that we (ethnographers) write within a literate tradition. And then Needham takes an epigraph from a writer whose biographer says he writes of worlds "in which matter is denied and imaginary objects become real". But in the weaving of implications this is not so far from Needham's own. In his Belief, Language, and Experience, an "investigation into the supposed capacity for belief, as a premise to social intercourse and as an essential human power" (p.245), Needham considers the nature of ethnographic reports of things believed in and things imagined. His conclusion (one which he acknowledges to be a conclusion rendered in process rather than en fin, see p.207) has to do with the non-presence of some real thing as the object of any belief (the sort of real thing which does really exist in the case of an imagination). Needham says, "To put the outcome very bluntly: Imagination is real, belief is not" (p.136).

'Imagination is real'—sounds like those objects from Uqbar are showing up on earth again! This, too, is something of what my catchphrase the risk of the epigraph is meant to imply: that the meaning of written words must be put in by the reader. According to Needham we must use epigraphs (and by 'according to' here I mean both the consent of accord and the harmony of accordance). In order for even that straightforward statement to have meaning I must put in the meaning. If we are talking to one another, he and I (we did, but briefly and on another matter), we can 'hear together'...he, meaning one thing, can check my responses to see if I seem to be catching his drift, and can, literally, check me if I seem to be hearing him differently than he, speaking, meant to be heard:
RODNEY: [Raises head, and eyes, from seminar paper.] This is why I always tell my students to write with epigraphs. It is only by epigraphs that—

LARRY: [Half-rising from his chair; brash, presumptuous.] —that we can alert the reader—

RODNEY: [Only slightly wary of the interruption, figures the interruptor for an American. Nods.] —Mmmhh— (slight lilt).

LARRY: —beforehand to our point. A kind of y'know sort of a precis yeah a precis of our pa—

RODNEY: —No. Precisely not. An epigraph is rather something which comes before our paper, which poses it a problem, as it were. The epigraph comes both literally and literally

LARRY: [Sitting back.] —.

RODNEY: prior to our paper. [Returns to paper.]

So, if I may paraphrase the words spoken by the Rodney of this page (to wit: the epigraph comes both literally and literally prior), the paper is the meaning of the epigraph...for it is the next-thing. The risk of the epigraph, then, is that it will prove meaningless. The writer who presumes to take the words of another to plant at the fore of his own writing runs the risk of making the next-thing after the epigraph—the writer's paper—incomprehensible, illegible, unreadable, and thereby relieving the epigraph of meaning. This is not some idle risk, nor is language a stranger to it. If the reader cannot return to the epigraph and, in reading it, replace some meaning, then the writer will have destroyed any meaning 'destroyed' by a kind of pre-emption with nothing tendered). (This has its counterpart in conversation—the person who, addressed, fails to respond and in doing so pointedly renders the addressee meaningless, a no-account.) The risk of the epigraph is the risk of failing to come to terms with
the eipgraph. Needham's risk in writing "Imagination is real, belief is not" is enormous: Not only may I, who have used it as a kind of eipgraph, fail to come to terms with his 'imagination', 'real', and 'belief' and by my failure render Needham meaningless, but also I may, in doing so, relieve that very proposition of any predicative meaning.

This is, in either case, unlikely. I am not the only one writing about Rodney Needham's Belief, Language, and Experience, and other writers would be able to braze any chinks in the Needham-armour that Rodney himself was not able to. But more importantly I am unlikely to be read, in the present work, by very many readers. And therein lies the saving of the language. For it is true that all modern writing is a coming to terms with existing meanings in a pre-existing language. The peculiar risk of ethnographic writing lies in the absence of a community of readers who may, en mass, 'come to terms' with any particular people ethnographed. In the case of the citydwelling Torres Strait Islanders who figure here there are fewer than a half-dozen readers, too few to constitute a community, capable of 'coming to terms' with either the terms of my ethnology or the terms of Islander life sociologized—and among those half-dozen only Jeremy Beckett, anthropologist and expert Torres Strait ethnographer, capable of coming to terms with both. Yet in some sense do we (do I) continue to 'do' ethnography, to try to come to terms with strange and various versions of the human experience.

Coming to Terms

This idea of speaking of coming to terms as an instance of real motion, of really going or coming somewhere, is my own. It is one born of the frustration of trying to tell students and colleagues what it feels like to loose the bounds of self, inhabit the everyday world of some strange and differently thinking people, and come back to tell about it. It is the last part, the 'motion' of return, which is constituted by this sense of coming to terms. It is a two-part
motion, partly akin to the 'hermeneutic motion' of Wilhelm Dilthey—that of Paul Ricoeur and his cohorts in modern European hermeneutics, and something of Clifford Geertz's cultural interpretations, and that of George Steiner's fourfold hermeneutic motion of translation—and partly it is returning to find a different world from the one departed from. This, too, is part of the coming to terms, for often the very words needed to describe the other society are dancing and shifting in motions of their own, and are only caught by writing them down. One of the problems generated by the petty fiction of 'meaning' as it is loosely used to refer to what words do is the problem of artificial concreteness.

The first part of this two-folding motion is the sort of spiraling back in Dilthey's hermeneutic spiral, where the interpreter 'brings back' what he has gleaned (so far) from the text (whereupon he heads back 'into' the text again...thus the 'spiral'). This is the sort of general problem of interpretation which has been beginning to occupy ethnologists of late, the problem of emics v. etics, and of ethnoscience generally, and of Geertz's (from Ryle) "thick description" and Pierre Bourdieu's 'practice'. It is the whole of the problem of anthropology as it appears illuminated by an interpretive consciousness. And while I shall pay no less strict attention to this part of the anthropological motion of coming to terms, I intend to be much more explicit in the attention I shall pay to the second part of my 'motion', for it is this sense of difference upon returning which has received the lesser anthropological attention.

Later on I shall speak of my notion of the 'motion of self', and of how our sense of who we are may be (in my case, is) inseparable from our sense of where we are. As this notion applies here, to this idea of a two-fold coming to terms, it is the feeling that we have left our known world in order to inhabit the world of another people, only to return and find our world gone. (It is the feeling of dis-position which has accumulated labels such as Alvin Toffler's "future shock", the anthropologically inspired "culture shock", and everybody's 'jet
lag'— in the first we don't go anywhere but our 'where' changes around us; in the last we can either be gone to some new place or be returning home and experience the disorienting 'lag' anyway, anywhere; it is the second one which I shall be concerned with here.)

Some of us, so I am told ('us' being us ethnographers), return to our homebase society feeling disorientated but ignore the disorientation where it can be ignored, explain away (as 'culture shock') whatever of it cannot be ignored, and get on with writing up the research. My own contrary efforts have been guided by my own sense of motion—this 'motion of self' which I mentioned above—and by a kind of aphoristic naïveté: social facts are where you find them.

I take this disorientation, literally dis-position, to be part and parcel of the problem of ethnography because that's where I found it...waiting for me when I returned from my sojourn among the Islanders. And herein lies the reality of the problem of 'coming to terms', the problem which is a recurring touchpoint for much of this thesis. The reality is this—I shall use terms from time to time which are likely to be unfamiliar to the reader (Islander terms, a French or German term or two), and I shall use terms which are from time to time unlikely to be familiar to the reader (such as in my phrase "coming to terms" where the term 'coming' retains a full, if unfamiliar, sense of motion).

In the first of these two cases, wherein the terms are unfamiliar to the reader by virtue of not having come to him before, the motion of the terms as they 'come' is, from the reader's point of view, localized in the terms...the terms are coming. This is the sense in which Islander terms such as maik le, and pakarar, and tag lu, and even the pidgin islandtaim 'come' to the reader, appear, are presented through the auspices of author and printer and page never before seen. (It may also be the sense in which the term différences strikes the reader who is acquainted with French but not with the writings of Jacques Derrida and who suspects me of a misspelling or the printer of a typographical error...or, too, the reader who is competent enough in French to suspect the pun on différence but,
having not read Derrida, does not recognize the neologism which, according to one of Derrida's translators, "does not function simply either as difference (difference) or as differance in the usual sense (deferral), and plays on both meanings at once". In this case of coming to terms the terms are actually brought to the reader: some ethnographer goes out among the Islanders, gets some terms (hangs around trying to pay attention while the terms 'come' to him, then tries to remember them long enough to get them back and written down in an ethnography), types them out in some orthography, sends the typescript to be photo- or otherwise copied or typeset, bound, distributed (if even the few copies of theses which are sent to examiners and a library or two), and somewhere somebody actually hands ('brings') a copy of the ethnographic text to the reader. My point is that there is real motion. Readers come to terms with alien peoples because the terms come to the reader.

But what of the second case of coming to terms, wherein the reader is not familiar with the terms because he has not come to them before (has not had them 'come to him' before: 'That just came to me...I hadn't thought of it like that before'). This is the most difficult of the 'motions' of coming to terms to write about for the writing must of necessity be about things which seem so natural that they go without saying. Of course, in one simple sense it is easy to come to these terms:

here's MIND

and IMPLY

and there's SELF

and maïk lô and difféance are on that page back there

and here is TO KNOW, an easy one

The strange thing about writing is that the writer actually brings the reader to the terms as much as he brings terms to the reader. In order to do this he has to use—to write with—words which seem so natural that they go without saying. These are the words he uses to
carry the reader along. Then everyonceinawhile he can throw in something which doesn't go without saying. (My play here on 'saying' was irresistible, but once written down it can be instructive: everyonceinawhile may not have gone [been read without pause] 'without saying' because you had to stop and read it aloud in order to 'see' [hear] where the breaks were: every/on/ce/in/a/while...even that complicated sentence about seeing and hearing the words may have to be reread. Fortunately one of writing's good points is that it can be reread. This is one of those difference-type differences that Jacques Derrida writes about\textsuperscript{16} [even his change of the e in difference to the a of his neologism differance is a silent one, pointedly a difference of reading and not of speaking]: "difference in neither time nor space and makes both possible"\textsuperscript{17}.) The problem is that these things that go without saying are the very things of which culture is woven. And in a very real sense we pay attention to them only at the risk of culture.

I can get away with writing everyonceinawhile because it is readable, perhaps even on first reading, and because it appeals to a spoken language—an idiom—in which that is the way to say every-once-in-a-while. (This leaves aside the question of fidelity to my reader, I know; the question of how far the reader can trust me not to lead him too far astray in my attempt to be faithful to an idiom...mine, where we say "everyonceinawhile", or the Islanders, where we say maik le and islandtaim; or Derrida's, where we read differance but cannot say it.) But the risk here is that a reader may feel when I think I am bringing him along that I am stringing him along. This is always a problem. But it is an especial risk for anyone who writes without a genre.

In writing, a genre is a discursive aggregate. It is the written equivalent of an idiom...pieces of writing and reading which are intended as written and to be read and read by members of a community of discourse. "Genre", like "idiom", is not reducible. Because it is not reducible (and here is one of those places where writers who have no genre have an extra burdensome caution: I would be incautious were
I to use the word 'irreducible' here since that word has enjoyed a recent popularity in discussions of philosophical reductionism, which popularity may have come about only because of the accident of Latinate 'in-' negation prefixed transmogrifying to 'ir-' before connecting to 'r' words like reducible and producing, at least in its American and Australian pronunciations, the sonorous and familiar "Erie" or "eery" with the consonantal -ducible rolling along behind)...because it is not reducible it is not in any conventional sense definable. It may be that 'genre' and 'idiom' are what Wittgenstein called 'forms of life'—those things which must be accepted or taken as given. In any case, events in these 'forms of life' (and writing and reading are events no less than are speaking and hearing, though they have a different 'form', and though this difference may be closer to one of Derrida's differances than to some simpler anterior sense of 'different-ness' [Derrida calls these originary differances]) are events which are, as Ernest Gellner once wrote, "being lived through consciousness from the inside, as it were" (Gellner 1973:56). (And it may be just such events of saying the word irreducible which generate idiom in this way: 'living through' the sounding and feeling of making the sound/word 'eery-ducible'.)

Idiom and Genre

Let it not be taken that I mean to equate idiom and genre. While the two have some formal similarities, and prove similarly problematic in attempts to treat them in writing, they are not equals (nor is there some formal 'equation' for getting them together, nor from one to the other). It is in this sense that ethnography is not a genre despite the sensibility of talking of an 'anthropological idiom'. "Mother's brother" is a term from an anthropological idiom, and while there are a number of pieces in what we might call, idiomatically, amongst ourselves, the 'mother's brother literature', there is no genre of mother's brother writing. There is no genre of ethnography at all.
If there were such a genre, such a form of writing which were generic by virtue of its discursive community of writers and readers 'consciously living through the genre from the inside', the following episode would be inconceivable. In the Harvey Lecture for 1979 Dennis Tedlock counsels and pleads for a "dialogic anthropology", an anthropology in which real people (ethnographers) talk real talk (indigenous idioms—idioms is my word for my reading of his sense) to real people (informants) and where they do this talking, this dialogue which "creates a world, or an understanding of the differences between two worlds, that exists between persons who were indeterminately far apart, in all sorts of different ways, when they started out on their conversation", an anthropology in which this "betweenness of the world of the dialogue" happens in publication rather than prior to it (Tedlock 1979:388-9; all emphases are Tedlock's).

He considers the rareness of such dialogues in the ethnographic 'literature' ('literature' lies between quotation marks in order to avoid the lie of the word unadorned...'literature' as anthropologists use it to speak of such as their "ethnographic literature" is a word from that anthropological idiom I alluded to above, and its idiomatic currency is marked by near-severance from its origin in language). He also points out a felicitous inclusion or two of real dialogues between ethnographers and informants (and points out, too, the also too popular denigration of 'armchair anthropology', some of which has produced the only recorded dialogues of real informants talking with real ethnographers in the literature). One of these real dialogues is in Billie Jean Isbell's To Defend Ourselves (1978:170), an exchange between Isbell and an Andean villager, presented in Quechua and English translation. Tedlock says "this may be the first published text to show an anthropologist speaking the native language in complete sentences and getting complete sentences in return". His concern is that such dialogues not continue to be replaced, as they have been and are now, by the analogical discourse of published anthropology (literally, as
Tedlock mentioned in his lecture, the ana-logos or 'talking above' of the Greeks). Such is his argument for a dialogical anthropology. But here is the incident which struck me as inconceivable in any world in which there really was a genre of writing called ethnography. Following the sentence which I quoted above, the one in which Tedlock reckons that Billie Jean Isbell and her informant talking real Quechua may be the first such dialogue to hit the ethnographic newsstands, he elaborated:

Isbell informs me that the published version is only part of a much longer dialogue, shortened in a necessary compromise with an editor who had argued, with all the authority of that genre called "the ethnography" behind him, that a dialogue would be an imposition on the reader.

I shall not do justice to Tedlock and Isbell and Marcel Griaule and the other dialogical anthropologists whom Tedlock lauds. Some dialogues appear in the ensuing pages, and sometimes they are in Island idiom; but I think the only fair treatment is to save the richest dialogues for a book like Griaule's Conversations (Conversations avec Ogotemlli), one unencumbered by the philosophical 'talking above' with which this one is riddled. In any case, my intention in using some of Tedlock's Harvey Lecture in this introduction is to present his comments regarding 'that genre called "the ethnography"' in full enough context so we could feel the wrongness of the editor's words (and, I suppose, the then inevitable wrongness of his position). My point is that there is no genre called "the ethnography". Whatever collage of papers and reports and a book or two which his "the ethnography" refers to, it is not a genre. At most, it is probably a bunch of known-by-everyone writings about Quechua or Latin American Indians or something like that and everybody who is anybody in Latin American studies talks about "the ethnography". And the "the" is necessary for exactly that reason: this small bit of stuff is not ethnography (meaning ALL ethnography), only the ethnography (meaning 'the ethnography which we all know and use and write'..."the" is always a way of saying "we"). I shall return to this shortly, for it is in this kind of distinction that easier access to idiom shall be found.
For now let me simply try to make this point about genre. When we say "science fiction" we are saying one kind of genre. Once we know we are talking about science fiction, once we know we are speaking in the arena of science fiction writing and reading and plots and storylines and techniques and the rest, then we can say "in the genre". So when Philip Jose Farmer (who writes books by the score and novellas and stories at twice that, with science fiction titles like *The Wind Whales of Ishmael* and, more typical of what we expect of the genre, *Timestop!*) writes *The Image of the Beast*, which opens with the hero watching a film of a sadistic and sexual murder of his private detective partner, an acquaintance of Farmer's said, "'So you're writing pornography now?'". We can take it that this acquaintance figured that Farmer was not only no longer "in the genre", but also that he was now in another genre, the one called "pornography".18 Theodore Sturgeon, a writer whom no one doubted was still "in the genre" (the science fiction one, that is) and a friend of Phil Farmer, responded thus:

There is a vast number of honestly simple-minded people who can, without hesitation, define

- pornography  science fiction
- God                  communism
- right                freedom
- evil                 honorable peace
- liberty              obscenity
- law and order        love

and think, and act, and legislate, and sometimes burn, jail, and kill on the basis of their definitions.

Whatever our feeling of Farmer's book, there is no doubt that some of his prose reads like some of the pornographers' prose reads. And whatever our feeling of his friend's defense (Sturgeon: "Simple truth is hard to come by. Virtually everything which looks like the truth is subject to question and modification."[pp.119-200]), there is no doubt that Farmer may be fairly questioned regarding his 'pornography'. But most of all, and for my point here, there is no doubt that this comparison, and the comparison in Sturgeon's list ("pornography" at the head of one column, "science fiction" the other), and the contradiction between Sturgeon and the
"acquaintance", all make sense. They all make sense. And they make sense because these are two real genres; different, comparable.

But consider the following version of Sturgeon's postscript:

There is a vast number of honestly simple-minded people who can, without hesitation, define pornography, ethnography, science fiction, God, sacrament, communism, etcetera. We have now made his statement untrue. The truth of the genres themselves carried the burden of Sturgeon's argument when he was posing (juxtaposing) pornography versus science fiction. That is, since those two proposed genres are in fact genres of writing extant, Sturgeon could make the point that they are not defineable. (This has a double bearing on my use of it, per example, here: singly it is a nice instance of the world of real writers holding the truth of genres; it is doubly nice because one of these writers holds out the fact that genres cannot be defined, as I have said earlier about both genres and their bedfellows of the speaking world, idioms.) I could not use my version of his comparison to show, for instance, that Lévi-Strauss's *Savage Pansies* (Les Pensées Sauvages) was not pornography, or that *Finding the Center* was about real Zuni 'inner' space (Tedlock 1978) and not Asimovian outer space. At least I could not do so by appealing to the notion of a genre in which Zuni poetry and 'wild thought' coexist.

So. Why do I bother with laying to rest the notion of some genre called ethnography? Do I bother simply because I am presenting, in the chapters which follow, a kind of writing which might not fit some readers' ideas of what constitutes ethnography or ethnology and I want to present a little defense on my own behalf beforehand? Perhaps. But in so far as that may be so, it is only from Sturgeon's "honestly simple-minded people" that I wish to pre-defend myself, and even then only by dint of having nothing like the weight of publication in my own 'genre' that Sturgeon does in his. For the rest, the readers, they who attend to the writings herein as written,
I have no wish of defense; only of succour, or, at the least, of forbearance while I try to make myself clearer.

Why then do I bother so? Simply because there can be no discourse without a community of discourse. I do not mean by this that first we get a discourse going and then those who participate, either as writers or as readers will turn out to be the community. No. The discourse and the community come along at the same time. (And here I am being deliberately vernacular in using time to mean something which is sufficiently fluid that it permits the fluency of "come along"). There is no way that the first piece of writing in any discourse is in that discourse; yet, on the occasion of the first reading of that piece in the general vein in which it was written, voilà! le discours—the discourse exists. This has something of the flavour of my earlier parenthetic mention that 'the' is always a way of saying 'we': there is no discourse until there is the discourse, and "the discourse" doesn't make sense until there is some we who know what we are talking about when we refer without elaboration to "the discourse". (And it might be worth cautioning here with the mention that simply refering to some bunch of writings as 'a discourse' does not make that putative discourse so, simply because, if for no other reason, one Labeler does not a community make.)

Paul Goodman, a student of society who made his living as a writer, summarized his Speaking and Language thus:¹⁹

I have suggested that the wisest method of exploring language is to analyze how it operates in actual concrete situations, rather than deciding beforehand what "language" is.

"This is similar," he continues, "to the literary analysis of particular works." Earlier in the book he says, "In literary criticism it is possible to define literary genres and predict from them. But in analysis it will be found that only hack works conform to the genres." I mention this, in Goodman's words, to make it clear that I am not of the position that some genre that we could call "ethnography" ought to be established in order that we all have something in the future to conform to. What I am trying to convey is
a sort of middle road between the hack works which conform to defined
genres (much of ethnography reads like hack work, the difference
being that the 'genre' existed only in the ethnographers' heads) and
the onus of each writer in anthropology having to establish his own
genre (which has been the case with, say, Levi-Strauss, or Clifford
Geertz, and James Frazer). Goodman suggests that "it is best to do
linguistics"—and here I might add ethnography, especially the
ethnography of speaking and communication which is my bent—"like
natural history or art criticism, reasoned by a posteriori, rather
than like mathematics, as is the current style."20

Goodman's notion of the similarity between the exploration of
language as it ought to be done and literary criticism echoed that of
Glifford Geertz, writing from within the ranks of anthropologists at
about the same time.

Doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of
"construct a reading of") a manuscript—foreign, faded,
full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations,
and tendentious commentaries, but written not in
conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples
of shaped behavior. (Geertz 1973:10)

This idea "remains theoretically underdeveloped", he writes later in
the same collection (1973:448-9), "that cultural forms can be
treated as texts, as imaginative works built out of social
materials". He notes that such a notion of text carried beyond
writing or speaking is not novel, but:

To put the matter this way is to engage in a bit of
metaphorical refocusing of one's own, for it shifts the
analysis of cultural forms from an endeavor in general
parallel to dissecting an organism, diagnosing a symptom,
deciphering a code, or ordering a system—the dominant
analogies in contemporary anthropology—to one in general
parallel with penetrating a literary text.

Let me return to Goodman. Having mentioned the similarity to
literary analysis, he continued:

...and, as in literary criticism, conversations and
discourses fall roughly into genres, such as small talk,
intimate talk, gang talk, public exchange of information,
talk of different social classes, poems, journalism,
dialogue, neurotic verbalizing, scientific exposition,
etc.
(My temptation was to overstate my own case here by noting aside the absence of "ethnography" ...but Sturgeon's pornography and science fiction didn't make Goodman's list, either.)

Each of these might have, roughly, certain distinctive characteristics of pronunciation, grammar, lexicon, concreteness of denotation, assertion of propositions, personal engagement of the speakers, modifying of the standard code, tone of voice, interplay of speaker and hearer, intermixture of the non-verbal, order of exposition, etc.

"I may be mistaken," Goodman concludes, "but I think that a reasoned description of such genres would tell us something about language that we have not been getting from linguists, anthropologists, and philosophers."21

Goodman considers the argument from philosophy that we may establish rules governing the appropriate use of formal or vernacular language.22 Such has been effectively if not explicitly the case during the several heydays of evolutionist, functionalist, structuralist, and culturist reign over anthropology. And there may be those who feel the impending reign of an interpretationist formal language. This will not, I think, be the case. Geertz, our reigning anglophone interpretationist, tells us that "anthropological interpretation is constructing a reading of what happens...tracing the curve of a social discourse; fixing it into an inspectable form... The ethnographer 'inscribes' social discourse; he writes it down. In doing, he turns it from a passing event, which exists only in its own moment of occurrence, into an account, which exists in its inscriptions and can be reconsulted" (1973:18-19).

My guess is that we could aid the inscribing of ethnographers if we could make Goodman's "reasoned description" of the genre (though, as Geertz has pointed out [1973:19n3], "Self-consciousness about modes of representation (not to speak of experiments with them) has been very lacking in anthropology.") "What does the ethnographer do?", Geertz asks. Well, though it "may seem a less than startling discovery, and to someone familiar with the current 'literature', an
implausible one...—he writes." And therein lies the authority for so much of the informal attempts of this present writing: he writes.

Writing and Discourse

Our double task is to uncover the conceptual structures that inform our subjects' acts, the "said" of social discourse, and to construct a system of analysis in whose terms what is generic to those structures, what belongs to them because they are what they are, will stand out against the other determinants of human behaviour.

This is, again, from Clifford Geertz (1973:27). My last long sections on Coming to Terms and Idiom and Genre were to illustrate the, albeit sorry, absence of any body of 'literature' which is generic to ethnography (and the absurdity of that editor who, with all the heft of a balloon, used the weight of "the authority of that genre called 'the ethnography'" to keep Isbell's dialogue out of print). Geertz continues, "In ethnography, the office of theory is to provide a vocabulary in which what symbolic action has to say about itself—that is, about the role of culture in human life—can be expressed." I have quoted Geertz on this matter because he neither eschews those "made-in-the-academy concepts and systems of concepts" which appear in his writings, nor does he hesitate to "plunge into the midst of the political, economic, stratificatory realities within which men are everywhere contained". Simply, with my reading of Geertz we have a genre.

I know this is audacious (sounds audacious). But this is exactly how genres happen. Somebody writes something, somebody else reads it, and the reading makes the genre. Do I mean that everything now written in interpretive anthropology ought to be written like Geertz's stuff? No. But that is already starting to be attempted, and attempt after attempt is looking like Goodman said: only hack works conform to the genres. What I mean, then, is that a bunch of writing now coming into begin might read like it and Geertz's are in the same genre. This is how genres themselves are determined like natural history or literary criticism, "reasoned but a posteriori". This is also a presentation of a theory of ethnography which is a
theory of reading, much in the same way that Geertzian "thick
description" (or, I suppose, Geertz's thick description a la Gilbert
Ryle) is a theory of the close reading of cultures, or Borges' writing is out of his theory of writing-as-reading, or Richard
Poirier's notion of reading as cultural performance. 24

But the only way for such a theory of ethnography as a theory of
reading to take hold is to make sure that one of the ties holding such
an audacious theory to what Frazer called, at the end of The Golden
Bough, "the melancholy record of human error and folly" is a theory
of reading itself. And it is in the light of this necessity that I
have brought philosophers and writers to bear in this introduction.
I have suggested that meaning is the next-thing in any meaningful
occurrence. When religious people ask what is the meaning of life
they are talking about the next-thing after life (death or afterlife
or the next incarnate life). When someone says "Close the door!" to
another, the meaning is something like doorclosednow. 25

This brings us to the question of how do we know what the meaning
is. This is a real can of worms: the can being philosophy or
epistemology and the worms being 'knowledge of other minds',
philosophy of mind, 'conjectures and refutations', innatisms. 26 My
view is this: We go to another society, hang around, make ourselves
known, establish some kind of presence, get admitted (graduate from
dopey observation to dumb participation), and see if we can figure
out what they mean. That's how we get to know what the meaning is,
what the meanings are—and the reason we'd better start
participating pretty quickly is because until we establish ourselves
in some of Tedlock's dialogues we will only be observers to other
people 'making sense to one another', and that will be at the risk of
being left out. In the vernacular of the American Rocky Mountains we
have to "move in on 'em". And this movement is not physical; it is
mental. And it is mental according to a theory of mind which holds
that minds are not individual (in the sense of one-to-one correlated
with the brains of individual humans), a sense of mind as 'an
aggregate of interacting parts or components in which the
interaction between parts is triggered by difference, where difference is a nonsubstantial phenomenon not located in space or time' (paraphrasing Gregory Bateson, though it sounds like one of Derrida’s differances again\textsuperscript{27}.

What we move into is their minds. Extraordinary as this sounds, I am not back in the genre of science fiction. Rather, I am trying to sound out my community of discourse on the idea that we ethnographers really do, in some unusual (but I think not 'non-ordinary' in Castañeda’s sense\textsuperscript{28}) sense, move the locus of all the minds that our mind is part of (all the friends and family and enemies and anthropologists to date) to a locus which includes alien—in my case Torres Strait Islanders—minds. I do not mean that there is a 'mind of man' in its varieties. There is not.

The 'mind of man' is a fiction. Were there such a single and unitary mind, we would have no business seeking elsewhere for the answers to our deepest questions, "answers," as Geertz put is, "that others, guarding other sheep in other valleys, have given"; there would be no need to garner them, "and thus to include them in the consultable record of what man had said" (Geertz 1973:30). Having quoted Geertz earlier on the original meaning of 'fiction', I should not like to be mistakenly held to be denigrating fictional interpretations such as the 'mind of man'. Rather I want to take a position that all is fiction—fictiō, makings—and that some fictions are better than others.

As the epigraph for his "Sketch for a Critical History of Anthropology", Ernest Becker chose these words of Rousseau.

I maintain that it is beyond dispute that anyone who has seen only one nation does not know man' he only knows those men among whom he has lived.

As a polemic for anti-ethnocentrism, for a non-exclusory science of man, this is apt. But it is not programmatic, and may not be read as if it had a positive converse, to wit, if we know other nations and live among other men then we will know man. This is the kind of misreading which used to bother Korzybski, in this case, reading a
problem in trying to think out what some words beg us to do (not claim to know man from knowing but a few men) as if it were a problem in logic (if we know other men then we will know man). It is a mistake easily made, as are other Korzybskian mis-takings of map for territory, when the difference between writing and discourse is not kept firmly in mind...in this case in the epistemological monitor in the mind. Writing, when it is part of a discourse, fools us into thinking we are talking when we are only reading (we mis-take words written as speech). Stephen Tyler discusses collocations such as "the idiom 'If the shoe fits, wear it'", and other "formulaic collocations" including "If ____ then ____", and "If (not) ____ then (not) ____", which are forms of commonplace knowledge (Tyler 1978:229-34). Tyler calls many of these forms "idioms" ('So long!', 'This and that', 'Old as the hills'), and as long as we keep in mind that he is using writing to represent speaking within a discourse we will have no problems. But even this word collocation introduces trouble, for such phrases which Tyler calls "idioms" (which I would prefer to leave as 'idiomatic', in order to always keep in sight the fact that these are words and phrases from some real existing idiom; they do not constitute whole idioms on their own) are only collocations of words by virtue of writing: In speaking there is no page; collocations happen only in writing and only because the ones which we analyze are short enough to fit onto one page.

The distinction which I propose is an epistemological one, one which suggests that the governance of discourse is of a different order from the governance of thought (though Wittgenstein may have shed eventual light on the processes which govern thought when he wrote about thinking as the "activity performed by the hand, when we think by writing"; but cf. Chomsky 1969, esp. n.15). As Bateson often pointed out, in respect of one of his favourite stories—the ancient paradox of Epimenides (the Cretan who said he was a Cretan and Cretans always lie)—"logic cannot model causal systems, and paradox is generated when time is ignored". The point is that speech always includes time, and time precludes collocation (in two
ways: simply, there can’t be two phonemes in the same place at the same time and, more complicatedly epistemological, the idea of 'place' applied to speech is used cautiously and advisedly at best). In fact, the meaning of Epimenides' paradox was probably not in speech at all. The meaning was whatever next-thing he intended, or whatever next-thing happened despite his intention (he may have been hit by some hearer who didn't want to be toyed with that way). The best meaning may be this: Epimenides announces that he is a Cretan and then tells you that all Cretans are liars. You delay for two seconds of thought (which oscillates from premise to proposition and back again) and then burst into laughter shouting, if you’re an Australian and sticking to your own idiom, "You bugger!"

Again let me make my point as carefully as I can: Meaning need not be in the same mode of communication, nor need it follow immediately (Epimenides may hop on the Collins Street tram, consigning your response to the lonely and unretaliative muttering of "Epimenides, you bugger!" as you walk through downtown Melbourne). When a Texan says to a Montanan, "Them's fightin' words" he is being a kind of dictionary, saying 'Here is the meaning of what you just said...did you really want to mean that?' When a Torres strait Islander's jaw starts to drop as an Australian Aborigine enters the pub which counts as Islander turf, his dropping jaw says that person simply can't mean that collocation—he’d have to be a fool to cause the inevitable next-thing from any collocation of Islanders and Abs. (Similarly when an adult Meriam le chooses to not respond when he has not been enfranchised to be silent, the speaker's response is almost always disbelief—the disbelief of a disciplining father faced with the 'silent treatment' from a teenage son—he simply can’t mean to be doing this!?!)

Most of the chapters which follow are about things which the Islanders and I and others who feature do and don’t mean to happen. While I shall apologize for taking, in this long introduction, too much of those reader's time who do not wish to dally so long so far from the 'data', I should not at all like to be read as apologizing
for writing fully as I can. My sentiments are squarely with Paul Goodman's:

I do not think there can be a rule for the appropriate use of formal or vernacular language. Formal language can be prophylactic, but it can then become either pedantic and irrelevant, or it may prejudge experience and impose on it. The best is to try for a vernacular that molds itself to what is going on and to use it critically.

From Here to Alternity

The problem of writing in a discourse is the problem of keeping in mind that there is a writer and a reader, and that they together determine the operation on the matter which the writing is about. In order for the writer of an ethnography to give the reader a feel for the others whom his ethnography is about (and I realize that those of us concerned with feel constitute an anthropological minority), he must write the reader into the text of the ethnography. Since it is only by dint of the strongest and most prolific efforts that the reader gets the feel of being a native other, he (the reader) is most often (though not always, nor by any means necessarily) invited in as if he were the writer...or, at least, as if he were 'in the writer's shoes'. (Explicitly he is armed with enough context so that he can stop aside, in the course of his reading, and say to himself—as if to the writer—Jeez, mate, if I were in your shoes I sure wouldn't do that!) The issue is the issue of, as I have come to put it, sensibility versus sensitivity. The job of the ethnographer is to write about the natives so that the reader may be sensitive to the natives all around him, as if they are all around him, as he reads. When such intellectual fashions as interpretation—our current fad—are moved to opt for making some kind of scientistic sensibility of native other-ness, then I am with Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation". (But if by interpretation we mean, with Clifford Geertz, "not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning" (1973:5), I am for it.) The problem is partly, as always, what the words mean...which is to say,
using a more rigorous discursive epistemology, the problem is what each writer means when he writes the words he writes.

This so-called 'problem' is even worse than this: only the reader can put in the meaning. This is the little fictio—each reader's private making of each text read—which permits such things as dictionaries at all...the idea that words can have meanings without speakers. Speakers and hearers make sense because they make a deal to try to make sense and then they try to be sensitive to each other to make sure that sense is being made. They use feedback and feedforward, sensitivity monitors, to keep the sensibility system going. Readers and writers have no such on-the-spot sensitivity monitors. A speaker can get away with breaches in sociolinguistic etiquette, exceptions to the vocabulary-of-rule, and all kinds of other things as long as he has the paralinguistic, kinesic, proxemic, etc. repertoire to encourage a sensitive hearing. This is one of the best reasons for writing with a good vernacular...or seeking to establish one, in a genre, if there isn't one. It gives the writer means of encouraging a sensitive hearing, a reading which is sensitive to an idiom instead of read in a language. (In language words can have meanings that no one ever meant; in an idiom there are only words and phrases which once meant something. We, each of us, first learn an idiom, then we learn a language. Languages are parsed idioms. We learn 'I dn' wanna!' before we learn don't=do not. And if 'I dn' wanna!' doesn't get our listeners to put in the meanings we mean for them to put in when they hear us, then in order to make sense we say something else.) The reason, then, that I have used the words of more writers than anthropologists in this introduction (and anthropologists who are writers, like Geertz and Needham) is that they understand that the writer has to inhabit a language (habit used to mean creative, fully present inhabitation)

Needham wrote, "The mind is not a condition of language but a construct from language" (1972:136). Language is, of course (as a matter of course), in its turn a construct from mind. In this sense neither is a condition of the other so much as a precondition of the
other...but a condition/precondition distinction which, like Georg Simmel's *form and content*, "is composed of two elements which in reality are inseparable" (Simmel [1908] 1959:315). So when I suggest, as I did earlier, that we ethnographers move into the natives' mind, my suggestion parallels those that translators move their readers into other languages and writers move their readers into other...other what? Other-ness. Other possible existences? Other places, other times; other events?

Whatever it is, I have perpetrated a momentary fiction in separating the ethnographer from the translator and the writer: ethnographers are only writers—*ethno-graphers*—too, as are translators. In all three cases the writer has to bring the reader into [something] and do something to him or with him. The something that the writer has to bring the reader into, in each of these instances, is the *text*. That is, he has to bring the reader into his own text, the text at hand (in our case, you and I, the text you are now reading). Once there, he can take the reader along into a penetration of an ancient foreign text (trans-late with the reader present), or he can take the reader into a novel *fiction* of his own contrivance, or he can take the reader into the midst of a bunch of natives via ethnography. What has to be recognized is that this first 'taking' of the reader is common to all of these activities, a commonality which bespeaks an affinity between ethnology and literary criticism even more pronounced than our reigning spokesmen would have. (Than our reigning ethnologists, that is; some literary critics, critics on the order of Richard Poirier, are leaning so far toward anthropology they are in danger of overbalancing right out of their disciplines—to the benefit of anthropology, I suspect.35) The common concern must begin with the wonder of language to make for us anything different, strange, un-accustomed at all.

"Linguists and psychologists (Nietzsche excepted) have done little to explore the ubiquitous, many-branched genius of lies," writes George Steiner in *After Babel*. "Constrained as they are by moral disapproval or psychological malaise, these inquires have
remained this. We will see deeper only when we break free of a purely negative classification of 'un-truth' (—as he says earlier, "The very concept of integral truth—'the whole truth and nothing but the truth'—is a fictive ideal of the court-room or the seminar in logic)— only when we recognize the compulsion to say 'the thing which is not' as being central to language and mind." Sometimes the thing which is not is simply not here, as in geography of other places; sometimes simply not now, as in histories of the past; sometimes the not yet of futurology or the not-real of fiction.

We need a word which will designate the power, the compulsion of language to posit 'otherness'. That power, as Oscar Wilde was one of the few to recognize, is inherent in every act of form, in art, in music, in the contrarieties which our body sets against gravity and repose. But it is preeminent in language. French allows alterité, a term derived from the Scholastic discrimination between essence and alien, between the tautological integrity of God and the shivered fragments of perceived reality. Perhaps 'alternity' will do: to define the 'other than the case', the counter-factual propositions, images, shapes of will and evasion with which we charge our mental being and by means of which we build the changing, largely fictive milieu of our somatic and our social existence.

So does George Steiner introduce alternity, and bring to bear on the notion of language and mind—idiom—which I work in terms of the weight of translation theory to add to the weight of anthropological theory which accompanies Geertz's fictio.36

The remaining chapters are samples of moving from here to alternity. In some cases the alternity is my own case, the making which I have made of my own life and the accretions of idiom and language and mind which make it important for me to say my own say in this way; in other cases, most of them, the alternity is Torres Strait Islanders. Why have I taken so long, so many pages of introduction to make what is really only this simple short point? Because there are a number of things which a reader must keep in mind when reading any piece of writing which begs of the reader an initial empathy. In Ronald Nelson's film "Flight of the Doves" the children Finn and Dervil are awarded into the custody of their typically venal
(from Irish eyes) step-father, Tobias Cromwell. Uncle Toby, after only the legacy which accompanies the children, can't wait to get it and them away from their good and lovely (from Irish eyes, of course) grandmother, one Mary Magdalene St. Brigit O'Flaherty. Hamming up an already transparent 'aggrieved father' act for Irish television reporters, the hapless Toby sobs and rambles until an Irishman spectator says, "The first Cromwell slaughtered the Irish, this one will talk 'em to death."

This is by way of apologia for those whose reading thus far has been laboured. But it is, too, to remind that alternity is real, at least as real as people are. I have had Irishmen refuse to talk with me, and one found himself unable to remain seated next to me in an airport. I am no more my Uncle Oliver than I am "Uncle Toby", yet there are those who have 'read' me as both, as there may be those who will find in their present reading meanings which I never meant, reading writing by a writer whom I've never been. In writing, in discourse, the alternity is in the reader. Because I think that this is, at least in its application to anthropology, a notion unsupported by a genre of text after ethnographic text, I have taken a long time getting to the point of the introduction. I am reminded of Thomas Kuhn's long essay, "Reflections on my Critics", most of which is comprised of prefatory and introductory remarks. Only finally in the last few pages does he say, "At last we arrive at the central constellation of issues which separate me from most of my critics. I regret the length of the journey to this point but accept only partial responsibility for the brush that has had to be cleared from the path". In the present case, I have neither the 'brush' of critics nor the advantage of their help in a dialogue. The dialogues herein are alternities in the vein of Dennis Tedlock's dialogical anthropology—they are dialogues with my Islander fellows and not with my readers. But this introduction is a kind of dialogue with my reader (it has to be if I expect any reader to cope with a theory of ethnography which is based in a theory of reading); it's just that this kind of dialogue must be governed (since, as Goodman pointed
out, "there is no active respondent, so a literary work has to incorporate both sides of the dialogue" [1973:227]) like literature, or philosophy, and "literature, history, and philosophy are discursive and not linguistic" (Wilden 1968:303).

In a sense the 'motion' in this introduction has been into rather than from-to, through layers or into successive enclosures. Here at the center there is only the text. The text is, as I write it, with no positivist pretensions and no dogmatic intentions, my self, part of my very being. To pretend otherwise, or to avoid mention of that reality would seem to beg the question of what little truth Steiner's alterity permits. Borges writes of night DCII of the Thousand and One Nights when "the Sultan hears his own story from the Sultana's mouth. He hears the beginning of the story which embraces all other stories as well as — monstrously— itself." He asks whether the reader perceived "the curious danger—that the Sultana may persist and the Sultan, transfixed, will hear forever the truncated story of A Thousand and One Nights, now infinite and circular?" Nor do we, he says, have to go into fiction to find such inventions. Consider the philosopher Josiah Royce and his proposed map of England, so complete it had to have a map of the map of England, which in turn had to have its little map (Royce 1899).

"Why does it make us uneasy," Borges asks, "to know that the map is within the map and the thousand and one nights are within the book of A Thousand and One Nights? Why does it disquiet us to know that Don Quixote is a reader of the Quixote, and Hamlet is a spectator of Hamlet? I believe I have found the answer: those inversions suggest that if the characters in a story can be readers or spectators, then we, their readers or spectators, can be fictitious" (Borges, "Partial Enchantments of the Quixote"). Why may it disquiet us to know of the strange and senseless practices of the others, the natives, whom anthropologists go to study (let alone live among). I believe I have found the answer: these practices suggest that if the characters in our ethnographies can be made to make sense, then we,
their observers, can no longer escape our own strange senselessness.

When Frazer asks who does not know Turner's "Golden Bough", he makes sure to describe it, so that everyone will know it, at least for Frazer's purposes. (And he describes the sanctuary of Diana Nemorensis, the real one, so the reader can be familiar with that, too.) He makes the stuff that his analysis is 'about' right on the page. All anthropology is like this. The text is the ethnography. For the ethnographer, of course, there was once a kind of 'text' comprised of the native practices he went to study. But many of those disappeared into his own memory once they made sense; and many of the rest lost the consciousness of even an analytical problem once he was sensitive to them. So for the discourse constituted by the writers and readers, only the ethnographies, and their reinterpretations, and the reinterpretations of them are the texts. The text of Frazer's The Golden Bough is not Turner's painting (though we can, as readers, bring more critical comprehension if we have seen the painting...and can recall it), nor is it the scene in Diana's wood: it is simply the words and punctuation that Frazer wrote, and even then only if it got past the printer and publisher.

Franz Boas wrote, toward the end of his life, of a kind of worry that anthropologists might, in the scientific metastasis their discipline was experiencing, lose sight of the problem of mankind:

Reviewing the development of anthropology as a whole I think we may rejoice in the many new lines of research that have been taken up . . . . There is perhaps some danger that, engrossed in the difficult psychological problems involved in the analysis of culture, we may forget the importance of the general historical problem with which our science started, but I am certain that with the broadening of our view the varied approaches to an understanding of the history of mankind will be harmoniously elaborated and lead us to a better understanding of our own society.

Malinowski, too, so long ago wrote, "Anthropology is even now divided by many schools, tendencies and partisan approaches....This is perhaps the moment at which the squabbles, the skirmishes, and the fratricidal fights of anthropologists might be superseded gradually
by an armistice, and the reign of constructive peace. Ray Birdwhistell has, again and quite recently (Birdwhistell 1977), noted changing practices in the use of anthropological terminology ("theory", "methodology", and, in particular, "ethnography") which presage a new version of Malinowski's bellum omnium contra omnes. I do not want these essays to be read as entering that fray, say on the side of 'art' versus 'science', or literature versus social science. I think Birdwhistell is right when he says that "Ethnography, as a discipline, represents a tradition of research, a field of study with a substantive subject matter, and involves a range of training. It is not merely a term for reporting exotic behavior" (1977:106).

What I do want to add is not to ethnography, except in Geertz's sense of an addition being 'another country heard from', but to anthropology. What I want to add is about ethnography, it is alterity and the awareness of the very language ethnos is graphed in. Liam Hudson, bringing to bear a similar awareness on his science of mind, and enriching it thereby, puts what he calls his 'writing in defiance' thus:

In the entrenched sciences, it is possible to transmit the truth in prose that is as crabbed as it is evasive. But where foundations are shakier, style not merely limits what we find it natural to express; it is, in important respects, the very essence of that expression. For it is through our style, our mode of address, that we transmit all those messages that lie beyond the literal meaning of our utterance.

For Hudson's 'style' I would prefer 'idiom' (in the sense that jazz musicians and expressionist painters work in an idiom, which is the very same sense that I mean for idiom to have as it applies to speaking and writing). For if Needham (and others) are, as I read them, right, and language and mind are knotted together, then (from Hudson:) "although we accept that our minds' products must eventually be judged by the puritan rules of evidence and insight—the strait gate through which they must pass—we seem in practice to draw what inspiration we possess from a hidden stockpile of images, metaphors and echoes, ancient in origin, but fertile and still growing."
In order to avoid unwanted prophylaxis, I choose to do ethnography in a vernacular, to make my idioms and the Islanders' read to each other on the pages I have written. I do this because it is quite possible that in those bits and pieces of "a process in conduct" (the words are Mead's from the quotation below)—the kind of stuff that Tedlock has shown doesn't normally make it onto the published pages—might lie something that my reader can find that I never see. In order to talk about what this knowledge is, and about who knows it, I have accustomed myself to talking about self as a locus or subsystem of (Batesonian) mind. This has its roots in the philosophers known as the American pragmatists—Dewey, Mead, and especially Peirce. Since there is always, in the pages which follow, the self of the reader working to know something of the writer and of the stranger selves which the writer makes on the page, let me close with the quotation from the Carus Lectures of George Herbert Mead.

I have indicated the position which I assume over against the so-called epistemological problem, namely, that knowing is an undertaking that always takes place within a situation that is not itself involved in the ignorance or uncertainty that knowledge seeks to dissipate. Knowledge is not then to be identified with the presence of content in experience. There is no conscious attitude that is as such cognitive. Knowledge is a process in conduct that so organizes the field of action that delayed and inhabited responses may take place. The test of the success of the process of knowledge, that is, the test of truth, is found in the discovery or construction of such objects as will mediate our conflicting and checked activities and allow conduct to proceed.
Confucius said, 'Is it easy to work from preconceived ideas? Heaven frowns on those who think it is easy.'

Chuang Tsu
"Human Affairs"

CHAPTER 3

Of Wrist-Things and Islandtaim

The title of this chapter is composed of two names of things—one a class of objects, the other a processual style—which have to do with the presence of time. That peoples operate according to calculations of time which differ one from another has been known for a long time; and differences among time-frames have been explicitly studied by psychologists, psychoanalysts, historians, anthropologists, linguists. Perhaps the most telling appreciations of different time-frames have been those of Eliade (1959), Hallowell (e.g. 1955), E.T. Hall (1959), and the specifically located studies of Whorf (1950) and Geertz ([1966]1973). Taking a point from Kluckhohn (1950) that 'common human problems' are relatively few, Ernest Becker (1972: 118-124) proposed that there were, in fact, six, and that among these six was this question: In what kind of space-time dimension does human action take place?

In her explication of "Warm Springs 'Indian Time'", Susan Philips opens with the observation that most treatments of culturally different time-frames have compared "'our' western European-derived concepts of time with those of 'other' cultures". Her point is that the concept of 'Indian time' is a notion widespread among North American Indians which "usually seems to have a boundary-maintenance function in that it is always something viewed as peculiarly Indian and not non-Indian. However, actual use of the phrase conveys a range of nuances in meaning, depending on who is
using the phrase..." (1974:107). Her explication is primarily concerned with those events which are characteristically Indian and with the progression of events as regulated by who must and who may participate. The boundary-maintenance function which she mentions is one which holds for other named time-frames among minority groups: C.P. Time/Colored-People's Time (American Blacks); Blackfellas Time (Australian Aborigines); P.R. Time (Puerto Ricans). Among Torres Strait Islanders, throughout the islands of the Strait and on the Australian mainland, this boundary is marked by the notion of Islandtaim.

Certainly there is a general appreciation among these marked categories of a lesser import of clocks—of devices for measuring small periods of time. As for (Warm Springs) 'Indian time', Islandtaim is the marked category. Surrounded by alien time-frames, Islanders who do not normally speak of time say 'Islandtaim' frequently, marking off a domain of Island reckonings and enforcing a demarcation, a boundary of identity. It is clear that Islandtaim exists in a milieu of another kind of time reckoning. In the islands this is notably the clock-time of the schools, churches, and the D.N.A. (Queensland's Department of Native Affairs had become the Department of Aboriginal and Islander Advancement but is still known to Islanders by its long-standing acronym). On the mainland it is the much more pervasive clock-time of shops, schools, jobs, public transport systems, offices, radio and television, and meetings held outside the bounds of the Islander community. This clock-time way of reckoning is called, variously, kolé taim [whiteman time], waitaman taim [whiteman time], taim lo clock [time on (the) clock/clock-time]; it is, however, just as often called no Ilantaim [not Islandtaim]. The third time-frame extant on the mainland is the way of reckoning time ascribed to Aborigines. Except in distinguishing among possible ways of reckoning the time for events this time-frame is rarely named by Islanders, though they comprehend what is meant by an Aborigine who refers to 'Blackfella time' (or, rarely, and more commonly among Pacific Islanders, to 'C.P. time').
Islandtaim

The answer to Becker's question, "In what kind of space-time dimension does human action take place?", is Islander action takes place in Islandtaim. Except that this leaves us with a prepositional problem, the problem of whether Islander, or any other, actions take place in time. In common parlance, as Edward Hall points out (1959), problems are created when things don't 'happen in time'. But the sense of in is at variance here with the generic sense of 'in space-time' in Becker's question. That is, it may suffice to begin an examination of another time-frame with a general appreciation that all action takes place in a space-time dimension, and that what we are doing is figuring out how this other time-frame reckons space-time. But this gives rise to the problem of what some putative universal space-time dimension might be, in order that we might test (compare) the efficacy of this other time-frame. Without reconsidering the philosophical problems attendant, it is nonetheless fruitless to engage this problem, for the point about Islandtaim is not what it is, but what it is not.

Simply, it is not anybody else's way of reckoning when to do things. It may not even be an Islander way of reckoning when to do things. What it is is a way of marking Islander things to be done in Islander ways. Its only import is that there are, in the Islander social environment (that is, in the wider context of which mainland Islanders comprise a social subsystem), other ways of doing things. Most obviously, there is a whiteman way of doing things which has to do with clocks. Clocks tell whitepeople when to do things. With a schedule of when (clock-time) something is to happen and a clock, whitepeople can be there. The schedule and the clock are sufficient, in principle, for the organization of those events which require attendance (e.g. focused gatherings [Goffman 1963]) by whitepeople. And a clock and schedule are sufficient, in principle, for the
governance of the duration of those (white) events which entail a scheduled duration.

Neither schedule nor clock are sufficient for the organization of Islander focused gatherings. This is not to say that Islander children do not generally arrive at school in time for the start of the school day, not that Islanders do not arrive for appointments at doctors' and dentists' offices at the specified times, not that they do not use clocks or know how to tell time. They do know how to tell time, and they do use clocks. Principally they use clocks in order to function according to non-Islander time. What they do not do is use clocks to measure time. Which, again, is not to say that 'time' is not measured, calculated, or otherwise quantified, but that the measure of time is not clocks.

The measure of 'time' is happenstance. Happenstance has to do with what has happened and what is happening. Likely happenstance has to do with things which are likely to happen in the near and knowable future. Regular gatherings of Islanders for church services are likely to happen next week (some churches have regular meetings three, four, or even five days a week). They may or may not happen the week after next, and their likelihood beyond two weeks hence is virtually incalculable. Jobs are normally daily things, usually beginning at a specified time and lasting until a specified time. Jobs are likely to be there tomorrow, and the next day, and it is likely that jobholders will be on the job tomorrow and the next day. School is regularly five days a week and, barring illness contracted today, it is likely that Islander children will attend school tomorrow; they are likely, too, to be in school the day after tomorrow, and may well attend all week. On the other hand, something may happen.

This last sentence, 'something may happen', encodes something of the logic of Islandtaim. The crucial thing is that to understand Islandtaim is to understand that this is never said. That is, in the sense that 'something might happen' to undermine or contradict plans made, it is not talked about. The only things which 'might' happen
(in the future) which are subjects for discussion are those things which are likely to happen. For example, people are likely to die. The older people get, the more likely they are to die in the near future. It is, therefore, both possible and permissible to speak of someone's likely death...but death is not spoken of until it is likely. This is not quite the same thing as a requirement that death must be imminent before it is mentioned. Likelihood extends somewhat farther into the future than does the about-to-occur sense of imminence. The test of likelihood is whether or not something else looks like being more likely to happen. Very old people get increasingly less likely to continue living. And when they die it is likely that they will stay dead.

But it is by no means certain that they will stay dead. In fact, ghosts inhabit the mainland (though not in the profusion that they are thought to have inhabited the islands, especially in the days before the arrival of the missionaries). Ghosts are usually dead, and they usually remain dead, even when they remain around living people and bother them. But all ghosts are not dead. In the case of sarup [sea ghosts]—people who have disappeared over the ocean horizon and are, consequently, defined as dead—in the past, their reappearance has been in the form of children who, having died or disappeared and been presumed dead, have been returned to their families from the dead. Their reappearance, however, had to be on a different island from their home; that is, it had to be an 'appearance'. Only an omniscient viewpoint could, in fact, have established that these sarup were people washed overboard, or washed out to sea from one island and washed ashore on another. For if the same person was washed up on his own island he was sarup, and sarup were particularly troublesome ghosts because they still had complete human bodies. They were ghouls, ghosts who manipulated human bodies and would go among the living. The only thing to do was to dispatch them forthwith. And there are numerous tales of people washed out to sea only to be washed ashore again on their own island, to begin hiding out in the bush or in the swamps until they could steal a canoe
and escape to another island or to the Papuan coast. It is thought that few, if any, ever lived long enough to get away.

As far as anyone now knows, the last returned child from the land of the dead arrived before the turn of the century. And a number of white people lost at sea are said to have been adopted by the parents or families of lost children in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. (This theme is central to Ion Idriess' novel, Drums of Mer, whose protagonist is an English seaman washed overboard and adopted as the long lost son of an old woman on Mer.) These 'returnees' were called lamar, and were distinguished from sarup which also came from the sea but who, rather than having been returned, were perpetrating a terrible masquerade in their human bodies.

Less spectacular is the exception to the likelihood that living people will stay living 'until they die'. Sometimes they do not. That is, in keeping with the idiom of my interpretation, sometimes it happens that living people have been other than alive for a time. This is most common during extreme illness, especially during illness which will, in all likelihood, prove fatal. It is the experience of coming to death's door, a trip which is experienced as out of body flight and reported by the sick person who subsequently recovers. The reports have been sufficiently consistent to have become typified, though the trip experience has not (to my knowledge) acquired a name. The reports are of the sick person 'finding himself high in the sky above his body' in the company of some kind of spirit-guide who escorts him eastward through the stars in a great arching curved path toward the mythical island, far to the east, whose inhabitants are The Educated who have passed on (this is the place which has been transmuted into 'Heaven' since the arrival of the Christians, who also assigned a 'Hell', originally the destination of the uneducated whose derelict souls also made their way eastward but to some nondescript place beneath the sea). Thus far the trip of the sick person out of his body conforms to the postulated voyage of all of The Educated who die.
I suggested that this out-of-body experience was a trip to 'death's door'. Actually, as the remembered reports go (the most recent one was some years ago made by an old woman who had lived to become the oldest Torres Strait Islander), no one has quite made it to whatever entrance to the island of the afterlife might pass for a 'door of death'. Sometime along the way, often after passing the zenith of the great arc, the person is "returned". The return may have been relatively more abrupt than the outward trip, at times, though it has been reported to have been a retracing at a speed commensurate with that of the eastward flight. The most recent known voyage ended with awareness of a descent from the infinitely high skies, through the known sky, down over the body and its attendants, and back into the body to wake up almost immediately. This woman was full of wonderous description of her trip, of the flying and the great heights, as soon as she regained consciousness (which she reported as being immediately after her return to her body). She was, for a time, extremely likely to die. Her body looked like the comatose body of someone likely to die, and her report later confirmed that she had come awfully close. But something happened, and she returned.

It is sometimes said of these comatose travelers that 'they have died once', but this is generally refined by the followup, 'well, it was like she was dead'. And then the story of her wonderful trip is retold, and perhaps others who have made the trip and returned are recalled. The retelling might reiterate what was reported of the duration of the voyage. None of these trips are remembered to have been instantaneous, and none to have taken a 'short time' (though it seems as if some of the travelers have gone further than others before being returned, a suggestion in such cases of a trip of longer duration since the distance from Torres Strait to the isle of the afterlife is constant, if not known). The apparent (relativistic) paradox is that those who have remained on the ground with the body have not experienced, at times, anything more than a 'short time' of unconsciousness. In terms of modern astral projection and other psi
phenomena reported as out-of-body there is nothing strange about differential time-frames. What is noteworthy about the Islander 'trips' is the absence of paradox. That is, in Islandtaim there is no paradox generated by the concurrence of 'short' and 'long' times. What I suggest is that it is clocks which enable the postulation of paradox. It is only clocks which can sit there and measure time with no one watching or caring.

This discussion of death and non-death in Islandtaim is to posit a system of reckoning in which not only is the specific instant of death unknowable, but also the fact of death unknowable. In Islandtaim only the dead know they are dead; for everyone else there is always something that might happen. And even this imposed rule of thumb is belied by the sea ghosts, those apparently living bodies which the sea tosses back onshore and who are so terrifying because they do not know they are dead. In a time-frame which disallows the certainty of death (which, actually, precludes such certainty) other timely certainties, even putative ones, are rare. This does not mean that it is impossible to be certain of when something is happening, rather that there is a distinct division between those who know the when of things and those who do not. And this division is between those who may know of things not experienced and those who may know only of those things to which they have been party. Those persons who have attended an event, or been party to a happening, may be said to know when the event happened and when constituent incidents within the event occurred. The men of knowledge, the educated men, may know when events occur to which they have not been party. It is only these few who have the sagacity with which to place events in relation to one another in the framework of Islandtaim.

The Framework

Islandtaim is an aggregation of happenings which are associated with those Islanders to whom things have happened and to those who have attended happenings. Events are ordered within the lifetimes of
each person according to the importance of the events (some are negligible) and the efficacy of individual memory (some people forget events which were shared with others who still remember). Events, actions, and happenings which have import for wider Islander society comprise a framework of such events, actions, and happenings. Some of these events have been so earthshaking that they are known to have occurred, and their relationship to other extraordinary events generally placed within the framework of Islandtaim. Events such as the arrival of the first people in the islands of the Torres Strait, the first sighting of European sailing vessels, the first contact with a 'metal turtle' (oral history records this as the earliest reference to armour-clad Europeans), the first awareness that 'metal turtles' were light-skinned human beings, the first man o' war to shell the islands with cannon, the 'Coming of the Light' (the arrival of London Missionary Society missionaries on Darnley Island in July of 1871), the Second World War (and the Battle of Coral Sea, especially) are all placed in relation to one another in the overall historical framework of Islandtaim. Most of these events happened in the era known as 'our ancestors' time'. 'Ancestors' time' ends sometime around the 1860's, a time roughly in accordance with the advent of contemporary Islanders' great-great-grandfathers. It may be that five generations are the ongoing definition of the known immediate past. Though I have no evidence of this, five generations are said to be the traditional measurement of incest, and among those who still honour the tradition senior men from courting couples' families still gather to recite and compare possible relationships back to the time of each great-great-grandfather.

The examples of memorable events above are largely those which present a framework for reckoning Torres Strait history in its wider context. There are also those events which comprise a primarily inter-island history, and there are intra-island histories for each island. Events such as major battles, the decimation of one island by another, the death of a famous warrior, the arrival on an island
(or in the islands) of a manifestation of any of the gods of the Torres Strait cults—especially the octopus manifestation of the most recent and Torres Strait wide cult, which reigned until after the arrival of the missionaries—and the transformations of those manifestations after their arrival, the eradication of the last physical vestiges of Torres Strait religion by the Christians, the general strike of 1936, the first people to be sent to work in the mainland cane fields, are each related to one another in the frameworks of intra- and inter-island histories.

These histories are the oral records of what has happened. Their logic is not chronology; it is the reckoning of subsequence. Within the broad framework of Islandtaim, from the beginnings of the Islander people in the timeless depths through the 'prehistory' of Ancestors' time to the five- or so generations of modern notions of history the measure of 'time' is subsequence: what happened after what. History is relationships of historical things, and the principal relation is subsequence. Subsequence has to do with two things: being after, and some (one) thing to be after. Any aggregate of nonconcurrent happenings may be deemed to exhibit subsequence. That is, all happenings in the aggregate may be said to be subsequent to one happening which is not subsequent to any other. The happening, in Islandtaim, may be itself an entity which is an aggregate of happenings. In this sense, Ancestors' time is the thing that all events since are after. The arrival of the legendary forbears is an event which all Torres Strait Islander events are after. The arrival of the Augud [Supreme Being] in his initial manifestation is a happening which all Augud-events are after. The 'Coming of the Light' is an event which all Christian happenings are after.

What I want to make clear here is that the exclusion of sequence as a governing principle of Islandtaim is intentional. Sequence is a principle of ordering singularities. Historical sequence is enabled by an idea of temporal sequence, an 'as if' postulation of chronological points as in 'this point in time'. Points are by
definition, and by popular accord, single dimensional locators which exist in relation to other points. A line is a measure of two points (along which lies an infinitude of points). It is not possible to speak of an Islandtaim 'timeline'. Most importantly, it is not possible to speak of 'points in time'. It is not even possible to gloss 'this point in time' to mean now, either in a general or more delimited sense of now. In fact, it is not possible to say "now". The closest delimitation of "now" that can be said is 'today' (or, perhaps more precisely, 'this day'). What is important about this is the impossibility of anything, anyone, any event existing at some putative 'point in time' in Islandtaim. Entities which may be placed in the framework of Islandtaim are not said to 'exist', or to 'have existed'; they either have happened, are happening, or are more likely than not to happen pretty soon. All of this is not to preclude Islander recognition of natural temporality, nor to ignore those natural changes which might be seen as natural sequences. But it is to lay the groundwork for examining natural rhythms in Islandtaim as non-sequential events.

There are a number of natural rhythms or cycles or progressions which are temporal facts. The movements of stars and the repetitions of seasonal cycles define years. The changes of waning and waxing moon define months. And there are diurnal cycles. Pre-colonial Islandtaim (which was not a named thing then, having arisen only to demarcate normal time from extraneous Christian and other clock-time) had names for diurnal phases, including 'pre-dawn', 'imminent dawn', dawn, morning, later morning, afternoon, later afternoon, early evening, among others. There were also 'moons' (months). There were names for the two seasons, named for the East Wind and the West Wind. As far as we know, nothing was numbered. That is, cyclic changes were not taken to demarcate boundaries of things which could be then mapped onto numerical sequence. (Certainly if things were ever mapped onto numerical sequence, the sequences would have been short, since the numbers before English were one, two, two-and-one, two-and-two.) The arrival of the
missionaries entailed the arrival of weeks, named (and, hence, ordered) days, numbered years beginning with 1871, and named months; it also entailed the arrival of the word "time", both in its proper English form and in the taim of the missionaries' South Sea Islander aides and trainees who spoke the pidgin English of the South Pacific maritime industry. And the missionaries brought clocks, and the cardinal numbers which could account for twenty-four hours to the day. (It may also be that calendrical seasons arrived along with the calendars, but these have never been adopted into Islander speech.)

What I want to suggest is that the names of natural cycles were names which recognized temporality, but which did so by signifying tempo and not 'time'. Each season was historical insofar as it could be related to some other event(s); it was temporal insofar as it followed the season which it was after. Each day was daytime into nighttime into daytime, with daytime composed of phases which were primarily names of light-content (perhaps in the same way that fires are typified by their cast lights in terms of amount, colour, quality, intensity). Seasons and days were never historical entities. Each year was not marked by birthdays, for there was no way of reckoning one day from another. There were no significant ages, akin to, say, age twenty-one, for there was no way of differentiating one year from another (save plus or minus two-and-two years ago or hence). What there were were happenings, noteworthy differences from examples of the normal goings-on, or novel things. Each remarkable event happened during a day during a month during a season. But days and months and seasons are recognitions of tempos, and tempos are no more one thing after another than they are one thing before another. It was history which recognized happenings and constructed of them the subsequence of Islandtaim.
Wrong Time

The preceding discussion is largely an interpretation of a distillation of my own understanding of Islandtaim. It is marked by two salient points of exegesis. The first is that Islandtaim is a no-thing, a formal designation of a style, a way of doing things, which, though it is called "—time" by its adherents, is in fact a demarcation of those things which do not happen in a time-frame. Islanders do occasionally specify exactly which time-frame an event is not happening in. They say, 'Islandtaim. Islandtaim. This isn't Aboriginal time!', or, 'We're doing that on Islandtaim, no kole taim.' The second point is that Islandtaim marks off a style of composing history according to what I have called subsequence, by which happenings are related historically to a single happening which they are after. In doing so, I am not proposing a calculus for deciding which happenings are former and which are latter. Formerly and latterly may be, in a logical calculus, related to one another in reverse (e.g. A before B may be equal to B after A). But in human affairs the reckoning of things in time has as much to do with how time happens as it does how things happen. Or, to borrow the words of Gregory Bateson (1977:147), "All descriptions are based on theories of how to make descriptions...And every description is based upon, and contains implicitly, a theory of how to describe."

What I want to do in this section is to examine some of the descriptions of things-in-time which Islanders have made. Some of these are explicitly in that clump of listenings and rememberings from which the preceding section was distilled. Some of them are things not-heard, things which I cannot construe as being utterable by a mainland Islander. The title of this section is one of these utterances never-heard. Wrong time. When I say "wrong time" is a thing not-heard I mean that it is an expression not ever heard spoken by Islanders. In fact it is heard quite a lot spoken to Islanders by mainland whitepeople. It is commonly used as both assessment (after the fact)—'You went at the wrong time'— and prescription (before
the fact)—'Don't come at the wrong time'. Its corollaries are such as, 'You're late', 'Don't be late', and 'You people are always late'. Such things are usually not understood by the Islander addressees. Which is not to say that they fail to comprehend that they are about to do, are doing, have done, usually do something wrong.

Clearly, what they usually do wrong is arrive at a clock-time later than the clock-time indicated for the commencement of the affair. When Islanders do arrive later than the scheduled clock-time (which they almost always do), they almost always go on in. Whether or not their late entry is disruptive, it is obviously late. Islanders are characterized by white people on the mainland as always late, a characterization most often remarked to other whites and not in the presence of Islanders. Such remarks often carry imputations of reduced dependability, some of which are ad hominem deductions and some of which are simply hooks upon which to hang racism.

The problem of 'wrong' time raises a host of problems in the morality of time. Related to 'wrong time' but sometimes differentiated is 'bad time', and 'bad timing'. Bad time has to do with doing something when the same something could be better done at another time. Bad time has to do with both time that is not a good time for the co-participant and time which turns out to be not a good time. Bad time is most often immediately or soon assessed, and is a way of describing. Bad timing names an action taken at a bad time which might have been foreseen, and is an assessment. 'Bad time' and 'bad timing' are not characteristic of the aspersive time-sense depictions of Islanders by whites. The question which arises is, what is it about the (primarily) clock-time environment in which Islandtaim is situated which assesses actions governed by Islandtaim to be often at the wrong time, but rarely bad timing?

Quite simply, it is virtually impossible to be guilty of 'bad timing' in Islandtaim. Bad timing is an assessment of an action which may be effected at more than one time and which ought to be effected at a time other than the one when it is attempted or offered. It is an assessment which may be made as soon as the
intention of the actor is perceived by the recipient or as soon as
the mood of the recipient is perceived by the actor. Either may say
its a bad time, and the proffered action may be deferred. Bad timing
is essentially a way of remarking the mutual inadvisability of
commencing an event whose efficacy is predictably less than it will
be at a later opportunity. Islanders do not commit 'bad timing'
because they do not commence actions whose efficacy is reduced when
those actions may be undertaken at another time. Islanders may not
commence conjoint activity until invited to do so; and, Islanders may
not desist from conjoint activity once entertained; and, Islanders
are not required to invite conjoint activity.

As for always doing things at the 'wrong time', this, too, has to
do with how it is that events may be commenced in Islandtaim. In
Islandtaim, an event begins when the minimum number of required
participants arrives. It is impossible for an Islander to arrive at
the 'wrong time'. If he is a required participant, the event may not
commence without him (see, for example, the arrival of the Chairman
to the meeting described in chapter 6). If he is the last required
participant to arrive, or if he, by his arrival, constitutes a
quorum, the event will commence forthwith. And, not only may he be
(as is usually the case) unaware, prior to his arrival, that he will
round out a quorum, he may also be unaware that he is a required
participant. (This may be for a number of reasons, common among them
that others have not been able to contact him to let him know that his
participation is necessary in order to conduct certain activities,
but it may also be that those who have already arrived have
determined that he has become a required participant.) At times, a
meeting arranged for some time and place fails to attract its minimum
number of required participants. Those who might have gone but
didn't may or may not ask about what went on. Those who did go but who
were unable to hold the meeting say, 'There wasn't any meeting', or,
'No, we didn't have it'. (They may have waited two or three hours for
whoever might show up.) According to clocks and days, that meeting
will be held at a later time. But according to Islandtaim, where it
is impossible to hold one meeting at another time: the meeting which never came off was never a meeting; it never commenced.

Commencement and Duration

In clock-time it is possible for persons who show up at a meeting only to hang around waiting for a quorum which is never constituted to be severely put-out at their absent cohorts. And the absentees, except those who have bona fide excuses, are expected to be contrite. The irritation of those who attend abortive clock-time meetings and the contrition of their absent fellows are understandable. At base, they are understandable because actions and events 'take time'. Taking time for an activity which does not eventuate is wasting time. And waiting for a clock-time meeting just to get started—sitting around doing nothing—is a waste of time much more acute than the time 'wasted' at those meetings which do begin but in which little business gets conducted. Accompanying this sense of time 'taken' and 'wasted' is a constellation of conventions and expectations about meetings. Meetings have purposes, and are not called for 'no reason'. They have agendas, are governed by rules of order, and are devices for organizing the conduction of business. Clock-time meetings are exceptional if they go on 'too long' and fail to finish at a reasonable hour.

Islanders spend a great deal of their time in meetings. There are meetings of both cooperative housing societies, the Aboriginal and Islander Co-operative Medical Center, Aboriginal Legal Aid, state and federal Aboriginal and Islander development entities, the Torres Strait Self-Determination Group, the Island Women's Council. In addition to these there are usually a number of locally organized special interest groups, and there are Parents and Citizens groups for each school, and the Parents Council of the Black Community School. There are three Islander churches, each of which may hold as many as three formal worship services a week plus choir practices, Bible study groups, and general organizational meetings. And there
are frequent ad hoc meetings of people organizing fund-raising activities for schools and church groups, plus meetings for organizing Islander delegates to state and national bodies and for preparing presentations of Islander dancing and singing and cooking for various festivals and shows in North Queensland. It is possible for an Islander active in community affairs to attend a dozen meetings and church services a week.

Those of these meetings and gatherings whose constituent members are all Islanders happen on Islandtaim. Islandtaim meetings are scheduled events, set to happen at a specified time on a specified day (usually not longer than a week hence, though occasionally two weeks hence). Regular meetings of church and school groups usually occur weekly or biweekly at the same time on the same day. Whether or not a meeting happens at its scheduled time and place depends upon whether or not the participants happen to arrive. If sufficient participants happen to show up, a meeting commences. Until a meeting commences (that is, until the requisite participants arrive), those who have already arrived do not say they are 'having a meeting'; rather they say they are 'waiting for a meeting', or if the assemblage is lacking only one or two key participants, they may say they are 'waiting for So-and-so'. Once a meeting commences it is happening.

Meetings of secular organizations are normally scheduled for evenings during the week and are assigned a time, usually 7:30, 8:00, or 8:30. Occasionally someone will arrive at the appointed time, but like as not this punctuality has been the result of transport schedules or finding oneself in the area of the meeting place around the time of the meeting. A meeting scheduled for 7:30 will be unlikely to commence before 7:50 and unlikely to commence after 8:40 if it is to commence that evening; 8:00 meetings may commence before 8:30, or they may not commence until after 9:00. The happening of the meeting depends upon who comes and when they arrive. Some meetings fail to happen when early arrivals tire of waiting and depart before later arrivals show up. But most meetings which fail to commence do
so when requisite individuals or numbers of participants don't attend. And the more important a meeting is taken to be, the less likely it will fail to happen, for those who arrive earlier are loath to leave in case a quorum arrive.

Regular church services at non-Islander churches commence at or shortly after their appointed times. Islanders are usually late, though their lateness is normally less than for those who attend any of the three Islander churches. Islander church services are likely to commence within twenty or thirty minutes of the appointed hour, and often get underway within ten or fifteen minutes (which probably reflects Christian influence toward clock-time punctuality—and away from the community-based punctuality of Islandtime). Church services have a general form at each church though the number of hymns and the duration of sermons and extemporaneous Bible commentaries and the number and duration of incidents of healing and bearing witness may vary the duration of any one service from just over an hour to three hours and more. Church services are less likely to be delayed in their commencement by tardy arrival of key personnel, though services occasionally commence with only one of the three or four ministers and half the choir present.

Meetings of groups whose constituent members are both non-Islanders and Islanders generally conform to clock-time rules-of-order meetings. Though the gavel rarely falls on the stroke of the appointed hour, it generally does so within a few minutes. Pre-circulated agendas are generally adhered to, though rarely finished, and such meetings are as often disbanded as a solution to irresolvable and escalating conflict as they are formally adjourned. Islanders usually arrive later than others, though they are often prepared to stay later in order to get business finished. Islanders are also less likely to attend meetings of mixed Islander and non-Islander membership. There are a number of contributing reasons given by reluctant Islanders. Most noticeably (to them) has been the re-emergence over the past several years of Aboriginal-Islander violence and its escalation. The commonly posited cause of this
resumption of interracial conflict, which broke what was said to have been nearly a decade of calm and growing cooperation since 1962, was the massive inflow of federally-funded projects and development programs for Aborigines. The logic of violence having been caused by competition between groups of principally Aboriginal membership and groups of principally Islander membership over cuts of this juicy housing, medical aid, legal aid, and welfare pie.

The Likelihood of Something Happening

The avoidance of mixed meetings for reasons of the possibility of more and increasing violence between Islanders and Aborigines is symptomatic of Islanders' reasons for attending gatherings. That is, it is apparently saying something about violence, and particularly about interracial violence between Islanders and Aborigines. Certainly adult Islanders rarely participate in violent encounters, and are constrained by their consociates to explain any known public violent behaviour. The dictum which governs violence explicitly prohibits offensive violence. More than that, the stories and legends from which it derives make it quite clear that even defensive violence is only permissible when one has been attacked on one's own ground. At any other place one must seek immediate extrication from the situation, even if one has been sorely offended. However, the dictum also prescribes the form for retaliative violence in defense: one must attack, swiftly and silently, and one must win. The rule is made explicitly in the advising of the people of Mer by one of their Educated Ones in a story from the Ancestors' time. And his advice has also made explicit the governing principle: the principle of welcome. In the story he reports to his people why he did not enter a foreign village after he had been seen by its residents but not welcomed. Implicit in this tale (and explicit in others) is the dictum that people are not obliged to welcome others. If you wrongly persist in forcing yourself where you are unwelcome you are liable to instant, lethal
attack, for the persistence of the unwelcome constitutes aggression, an aggression which one cannot extricate oneself from since one cannot leave one's own ground. And it is instructive that one of the names for sarup, the sea ghosts who return with their bodies, is "the uninvited".

There are a couple of messages in this dictum from the Ancestors' time about the likelihood of things happening. One is that the likelihood of extreme violence greeting an uninvited aggressor is very great; the other is that violence is something done on one's own ground. For Islanders, then, to engage in violent conflict with Aborigines would be wrong, unless it was done in defense from Islander ground. Mixed Islander and non-Islander meetings are never held on Islander ground. Usually they are held at some nominally neutral place which is in fact seen by Islanders as Aboriginal. It is not part of the Islander calculus of ground to account for the rules of non-Islanders. So there is no question of whether or not the Aborigine will treat the Islander's entry into this ambiguous space as aggression. The Islander will be (theoretically) free to extricate himself. The problem is that he must, in order to attend the meetings, place himself in ambiguity. He may, once inside the meeting, be required to defend his person, having entered without explicit invitation and unable to extricate himself after the fact of entry.

The logic of his participation has to do with the increased probability of something happening. A battle waged not in defense is a happening which is bad. Bad happenings are to be avoided, for they mark their participants as uneducated, and the uneducated are throwbacks to the time when they were irresponsible children and not real men. Islanders who avoid mixed Aboriginal-Islander meetings do so because to do otherwise would be unwise. Some Islanders rarely avoid such meetings. Such men are marked by their knowledge, and are marked as the truly educated among the living. It is their place to know more about situations, and to reckon well the various likelihoods of things happening. In the ambiguity of whose place the
putatively neutral meetinghall is they make it truly neutral by staking the claim of presence. They are physically the definition of neutrality, and their fellow Islanders may enter, not because he has established Islander suzerainty and may invite them in, but simply because it has become anybody's.

In the Islander idiom he is said to be pas [first]. This definition of 'first-ness' (the translation is problematical, and has to account for concepts in three languages, but the notion of 'first-ness' is derived from a concept of "currently in the process of being first") is distinguished from the definition of apta [after], or 'afterness'. First-ness and after-ness lie on either side of a conceptual median which may be said to divide each reckoning of Islandtime. First-ness is singular and marked, in the case of the neutralization of the meetinghall the man of presence both embodied first-ness and was the first (man). Everyone else was after, and the happening which was their entry into the hall was one in after-ness. On this occasion the man of presence was told, "Yu go pas". There was no need to confirm that they would come apta, for in this constrained situation first meant after.

What I want to emphasize here is that there is no notion of 'second', nor of third. It is not a matter of mapping events or happenings onto some notional sequence. It is not sequential at all. Had the man of presence not entered and redefined the territory there would have been no first and no after. By moving in, he altered the context of the Islander movement in the situation. The difference between the constitution of the commencement of this mixed meeting and the repeated meetings held by Islanders only on Islander territory in Islandtime is striking. In each case the Islander commencement of the happening is what is not happening, but the likelihood or an Islander commencement of the mixed meeting was nearly zero, and the likelihood of the commencement of meetings in Islandtime is always very high. The difference between the two is that the mixed meeting required the presence of first-ness while the common meeting usually requires just one more body.
I suggested above that Islandtaim is a way of marking Islander things to be done in Islander ways. When participants are all Islanders, and are meeting on Islander space, Islandtaim is a word which is uttered in order to decide upon the way of doing things. When it is proposed at one meeting which has drawn on from 8:00 p.m. until 2:00 a.m. that any further business (there is always further business!) be taken up at a meeting same time next Tuesday, amid the tired gasps of assent the question may be heard, "Whiteman-time?, or Islandtaim". Those who want to try to prevent yet another meeting stretching to the wee hours of the morning will propose, "Whiteman-time. Whiteman-time!" These proposals may be countered by overwhelming calls for Islandtaim. If not, it is tacitly agreed that everyone will try to pay attention to the time next Tuesday. What is marked is done with a word which splits off Islander ways of doing things in space-time from all others, and which, in focusing on an appointed clock-time hour, poses the question "clocks or no clocks?"

For events of longer normal duration than evening meetings, clock-times are never used. Islandtaim is the only time for funerals, gravestone ceremonies, weddings, Saturday afternoon picnics. Large gatherings for gravestone ceremonies and funerals (2,000-3,000 people have attended some) are simply notified of the date; smaller gatherings such as those for weddings (and most funerals) have only to be notified of what's first and what's after: a Saturday afternoon wedding or picnic is scheduled by 'after shopping' (function to commence around 1-1:30 p.m.), or perhaps by 'eat first' (function to commence sometime after 2:00).

The troublesome situations are those which are not governed by Islandtaim, for it is in these that time must be made. Each time the ambiguous situation must be resolved for Islander participation, for to participate in events outside Islandtaim is to do everything 'at (in) the wrong time'. To generate Islandtaim is to generate a time-frame of subsequence out of (for mainland Islanders particularly) a sequential environment. A first-ness must be enacted, and in doing so the after-ness is brought into being.
Islandtaim, the way of marking Islander happenings, is a time-frame of injunction, of prescriptive description of the likelihood of something good happening.

Postscript. Tag lu, the Wrist-Thing

Tag is the Meriam word for hand/wrist/arm, lu is a thing. Since the Ancestors' time the men of Mér have worn wristbands. They have worn them for dance, always for the sacred dance, and for war and for finery. Boys do not wear them (though they may do so for dance, and they pretend from time to time with plaited leather and grasses). No one knows what they are for, or what they might have been for at one time.

What they are for is for being a man of Mér. I met an Old Man who told me of a young whiteman who had been adopted by the people of Mér and whom he had taken a great liking to. He had taught him things of how to be Mériam-man, and had bought for him a fine dancing shirt. He said that this boy had turned out very fine indeed. Then he stopped and looked at my naked wrist.

'What! No tag lu?' He was aghast. 'You must have a tag lu. Then you can be proper Mériam-man like that boy of mine'!

'Here,' he said, 'get one like mine.'

He held his arm up high and proud. Strapped to his wrist was a broken ten-year-old Seiko.
Culture cannot altogether be brought to consciousness; and the culture of which we are wholly conscious is never the whole of culture: the effective culture is that which is directing the activities of those who are manipulating that which they call culture.

T.S. Eliot

"Notes on Education and Culture"

CHAPTER 4

On Education and Expulsion

The people of the island of Mér accord themselves the ancient designation Mériam lé—The People of Mér. To be a Mériam lé, a Mériam person, is to command a set of forms for being and forms for action (see Sansom, 1980). To be a Mériam lé is to confirm a way of being, a way recorded in and prescribed by the tonar—the corpus of stories, legends, religious and secular forms, and the rules for social action and social being which they describe. Mériam lé are not born; only children are born.

The way of being which is called Mériam lé is, in the terms of Peter Berger (et al. 1974:94), a "package of consciousness"; "Mériam lé" is the name of the 'package' of The People. It is a package of identity, and to use the name of the package is to identify persons. Berger and Luckmann (1971:35) suggest that "different objects present themselves to consciousness as constituents of different spheres of reality", that we are conscious of "multiple realities". "Mériam", in its sense as 'of Mér', adds things to a particular reality, a reality which is in turn bound by all of those things which may be described as 'Mériam'. The agents of ascription are those persons who are Mériam lé, persons who inhabit the Mériam reality, a reality whose boundaries incorporate all former Mériam lé.
and all of the things which they have ascribed to the reality known as Meriam.

The 'record' of prior ascriptions is this thing which Meriam people call their tonar—"Meriam tonar"—that which I have glossed and translated as 'corpus' (cf. Cromwell, forthcoming). The tonar provides names for sacred and mundane locations, places of transcendental import in the days of the cults prior to the arrival of Christian missionaries) and gardens and villages and reefs and shorelines on the map of everyday activity. Meriam tonar also provides stories of legendary and historical activities and actions, and records the descent of contemporary Meriam people from those legendary and historical actors. Most importantly, it embodies events of exemplary behaviour, of forms for action and forms for being which were established as, or taken to be, appropriate for those who would act and be Meriam le. Goffman puts it this way (1975:563), that "what people understand to be the organization of their experience, they buttress, and perforce, self-fulfillingly. They develop a corpus of cautionary tales, games, riddles, experiments, newsy stories, and other scenarios which elegantly confirm a frame-relevant view of the workings of the world."

For Meriam le there is no question of the reality of the tonar. That is, in the simplest sense, there is no way to distinguish 'real' tonar from 'unreal' tonar. In its everyday usages, tonar is glossed by multilingual Islanders as custom, practice, way (as in a way of doing something), habit, and in pidgin as we and pasen ['way' and 'fashion'], and is directly translated into its Western Torres Strait language equivalent, powa. The distinction which Meriam people make is between the customs and practices of other peoples—habits of observable daily life which may or may not be informed by an actual corpus of examples and principles of behaviour—and the Meriam tonar. The distinction is made through nuance, by motions of the head or hands, but is never articulated. There is no way to say what all Meriam people know, which is that the tonar of other peoples is merely an aggregate of examples of current
behaviour. The 'reality' of such behaviour is limited to the domain of ordinary and observable realities. The difference is that while other people merely do things, Meriam people do things which are more or less in accord with a template for doing things. To do things in ways which are concordant with examples of doing provided in and by the Meriam tonar is to do real things. It is in this sense that tonar is not open to questions of reality, for tonar—Meriam tonar—is the domain of reality itself.

I have suggested above that it is 'Meriam' which ascribes things to reality (or reality to things), and which does so by placing them within the bounds of the universe of tonar. To speak of 'Meriam tonar' when the situation is a priori a Meriam scene is to be incomprehensibly redundant, to introduce a notion of comparison with some apparently other tonar, one which was not present in the conversation. But, aside from comparison, to speak of 'Meriam tonar' when unmarked 'tonar' will do is to impute a larger domain within which 'real' tonar (i.e. 'Meriam' tonar) and 'unreal' tonar are opposed. Were this possible (i.e. meaningful), then those things which enjoy reality or are assigned to unreality by reference to the tonar would be subsets of real and unreal tonar, sets of tonar distinguishable within some larger framework which included both reality and unreality. Such is not the case. For Meriam people the tonar (i.e. the tonar, the Meriam tonar) is the domain of final reference, the corpus of examples against which they may test their behaviour.

Insofar as the constituent items of the corpus are known to individual Meriam le, each may assess his ongoing behaviour as according with models of behaviour (prescribed or proscribed, real or unreal). But no one knows all of the tonar, and all tonar cannot possibly be known, not only because all of the histories of all of the people who have inhabited the Meriam reality is too much for any one person to remember (or, put differently, the notion of tonar encompasses a 'reality' not bound by the known, but extending to all things ever known to be Meriam), but also because those 'real' people
who comprise the Méram le are ascribers of tonar, actors whose ongoing activity may be ascribed to an ever-generating tonar.

Simply, then, people who know each other to be Méram le perform according to principles of behaviour provided by (their) tonar, performances which, if they are taken to exemplify principles of behaviour, may in turn be transformed into exemplary tonar. Persons whose behaviour is consistently exemplary of the tonar, whose actions are more likely than the actions of others to become examples of tonar, are called 'Méram le kar'—'real Méram le'. They are said to know, or to act according to, mamor tonar—true tonar. (Mamor is used as an accentuator when applied to tonar, as a pointer toward ideal behaviour or toward the epitome of true Méram action, rather than as appositional to nole mamor [not true] which may only be used in reference to the tonar of other peoples.) The idiom of Méram mir is kar, real. All Méram le are not real, and few real Méram le are real (i.e. act in 'true tonar') all the time. Insofar as any Méram le can recognize mamor tonar when he sees it, any Méram le can assess the reality of himself or others as actors. But real-ness can, in effect, only be adjudged from 'within' the tonar.

The problem which arises from this perspective is this: While anyone who can recognize mamor tonar can be deemed, ipso facto, to be looking from a position situated 'within' tonar, persons who presume to adjudge behaviour as nole mamor tonar present themselves as always 'within' the tonar. The specific problem, then, has to do with the ability to negate. In order to say that some action does not accord with the record of approved actions, the person who so says claims effective knowledge of all recorded actions.

Since it is recognized that all actions of all Méram le cannot be recalled by even a consortium of knowledgeable men, let alone by a single man, the man who ideally would know all of the tonar is the man who actually knows the most tonar. There are few of them, and it is these few men who I have designated "the educated". They have each become educated by learning the tonar as taught by older educated men. Each educated man is both source and resource, saying what the
particular tonar (qua model or template) is for any action or event, and turned to in matters of dispute.

Correcting a Sexual Assault

When his pronouncements are ex-tonar, when he is adjudging behaviour on the grounds of prescription or proscription provided in and exemplified by stories and legends and histories which make up the corpus, the nature of his pronouncement is straightforward. A niece of an educated man was assaulted in her flat late one night by a young man bent on sexual conquest. The niece was bruised and battered, but managed to stave off the sexual assault. Such an assault was a rare and distressing occurrence. The niece was sufficiently frightened to request of her uncle that he meet her after work each day and escort her home in order to prevent any further attacks.

In his account of the incident, the educated man expressed a double distress. He was worried, as an uncle, that his niece should have been victimized by adud tonar [bad 'practice', or bad behaviour] enacted by the young man, and he and other elder men in the family took action to ensure that such victimization should neither continue nor be repeated. But he was also worried, as an educated 'keeper' of the tonar, that the young man was a Mériman boy, and that he had exhibited nolé mamor tonar [not true behaviour], behaviour which was nolé Mériman tonar. His subsequent actions were twofold, actions intended to mitigate both aspects of his dual distress.

He joined the other elder men in the family in ensuring both the protection of the young woman and the disuasion of the young man from pursuing his interrupted conquest. He and other male cousins and uncles provided escorts in public places, and protection of the niece at night. He sought the young man on the streets in order to render both emphatically preventative advice and punitively corrective blows. He was thwarted in this by the young man's knowledge of his relationship to the niece and the young man's powers of observation:
every time he approached the young man the young man saw him coming and ran away. The young man was not so fortunate where the niece's other elders were concerned. Though he knew most of her cousins, he failed to spot a couple of them on one occasion and received a severe beating. He was more unfortunate in the case of her father, a man who lived out of town and who was not widely known on sight. Though the young man saw her father approaching him outside the railway station, he didn't know who the man was until the father knocked him nearly unconscious. Thusly attending to both protection and prevention, the elder men responsible for the welfare of the young woman acted in response to an act of adud tonar, acting according to the dictates of Meriam tonar, and attending to the perpetrator as they would have no matter whether he was the Meriam boy that he actually was or a boy of some other Islander or ethnic identity.

In addition to these attentions, the educated man alone paid attention to the correction and prevention of adud tonar which was expressly (given the identity of the perpetrator) nolé Meriam tonar. When he heard about the incident he visited the niece, and those members of family to whom she had turned on the night of the assault, in order to ascertain the particulars of the incident. He then visited the last known place of residence of the young man, but the young man had not been seen there for some time. He endeavoured to locate the young man (who kept running at the sight of him in town), and eventually got word of where he was staying. He went there, found the young man not in, and left word with those present that the young man's behaviour was now widely known, that it was adud, and that such behaviour was nolé Meriam tonar and would not be tolerated. He received reports shortly thereafter that the young man was lurking around the niece's place of work, and he observed him following her one evening as he escorted her home. He returned to the house where the young man was staying, confronted him with the pronouncement that now not only would his behaviour not be tolerated but that his presence would no longer be tolerated. He ejected him from the house and told him that he did not want to see him in that town again.
Later, unconfirmed reports indicated that the young man had stayed that night with relatives on the other side of town, and that he had not been seen in town since the following day. A couple of weeks later a confirmed report from a member of the niece's family placed the young man in a town 300 miles away, a town which he left shortly thereafter for places unknown.

An important point in this series of events is that the perpetrator of the assault was not a man, he was a young man. He was referred to variously as a "young man" [English], "yangman" [pidgin], "Ilanboi" [pidgin: Island (i.e. Torres Strait Islander) boy], "Mérian boy" [English], "Mérian-boi" [pidgin], "Mérian werem" [Mérian mir: Mérian boy-coming-to-be-a-young-man]. His identification as someone of Mérian heritage who was not yet a man characterizes his treatment. When asked if the assailant had been a "Mérian le", the educated man shook his head and said, "Nolé kar. Emi yangman." (Nolé kar is an idiomatic expression composed of nolé=no, not, and kar=real, really. It is occasionally glossed in English vernacular as 'No way!, and may be translated as 'Really not!', or some other emphatic negative. It does not mean literally 'not real', since kar in a following position renders it a modifier, and since nolé used alone expresses a state of existence (a particular state of absentness) rather than expressing negation. When asked if he had any money (bakir), the man without any may answer 'Nolé bakir kak' [lit: no money without], or 'Ka nolé bakir kak' [lit: I no money without—nolé and kak surrounding the absent thing as do ne + pas in French]; the man who is flat broke will likely say 'Nolé kar!' [Really none!] and pull out the insides of his pants pockets to prove it.) He followed his statement, 'He's a young-man' [pidgin: "emi yangman"] with a slight toss of his head and a considered staccato laugh. "Hah. Emi laki oli no killem" [He's lucky they didn't kill him].

His luck, in this case, was due to the fact that he wasn't yet a man. Because he was yet young, he belonged to that group of not-yet-adult people for whom all Mérian le are responsible. He was
not actually 'lucky' that he hadn't been killed, for to kill a child, one for whom one shares responsibility for upbringing, is a dire act. The statement 'emi laki oli no kilem', one which could as easily have been uttered to the young man (e.g. Yu laki oli no kile yu [You're lucky they didn't/haven't kill/ed you]), is characteristically a statement of the educated man. In so saying he exposed a principle of retribution-for-offense which is grounded in tonar. The 'luckiness' was that luck of being identifiable (i.e. young-man) as belonging to a category of persons who are not liable for their actions (along with insane people [pidgin: krezi, kreziman, krezioman—'crazy woman'], senile people [usually referred to in pidgin as sile—'silly'], people with identifiable specific physical and mental disabilities, and people of non-Islander ethnic groups). Tonar provides a further categorical distinction between those who are not liable for their actions because they are inerradicably flawed (the physically and mentally disabled, old people insofar as they exhibit situational senility, and most adult members of non-Islander ethnic groups who have been raised in a condition of nolé tonar kak [no culture] or adud tonar [bad habits, bad customs]), and those who are not yet liable for their actions because they don't know any better. The distinction is between the 'uneducable' and the 'uneducated'. And killing is a form for social action which is retributive and punitive, but which is not corrective. Islander children are defined as uneducated, more or less (i.e. the closer they get to adulthood the more educated they are taken to be). Corrective discipline is the discipline meted out to assist in the education of the (as yet) uneducated. Killing, because it is patently not corrective, is not an allowable educative device.

So the young assailant who might have been killed instead received several 'educative' pommelings. It was generally accepted by the adults involved that he had failed to learn from these, for he persisted in his attentions to the niece. The girl's father was reported to have said, after his encounter with the young man at the railway station had apparently failed to dissuade his attentions,
"Emi prapa laki I no bi kilem" [He's damn lucky I didn't kill him]. The implication was that the young man's 'luck' from the point of view of the molested girl's father was in the fortunate restraint showed by the father in only knocking him unconscious. And the further implication, that the young man ought to realise when he's been lucky and desist. (Had the father actually killed the young man with a single blow, the incident would likely have been viewed in retrospect as understandable, if unforgiveable; the father's motives being weighted clearly on the side of protection and retribution, rather than on educative correction, a weight which might have caused a heavier blow than the father would otherwise have intended or delivered.) The dilemma for the niece and her elders was the inability to do anything more than beat the boy up and knock him unconscious. It was then that the educated man, the girl's uncle, stepped in to expel the assailant from the community.

Expulsion is a known form of correction. Its correctiveness is two-fold, for it both removes the perpetrator and defuses the potential escalation of the punitive expeditions by the girl's family. Expulsion of adults dates from ancestral days, and includes a range of effective expulsion from a familial living area to expulsion from the known world. In the latter case, persons were put to sea from Mer never to be seen again. The definition was critical, for if they were seen again, if they attempted to return to the island under cover of darkness or by abandoning their canoe and surreptitiously swimming ashore, it was not them who were seen but their ghosts. By definition, anthropomorphic figures appearing on Mer alone and from the sea were lamar [Meriam mir: ghosts]. Ghosts whose host-bodies were convincingly human were frighteningly unreal, and men moved immediately to deprive the ghost of his body. So this legendary form of final expulsion was the redefinition of a person as a ghost, the instant of redefinition being the passage of the canoe over the horizon.
Persons so dealt with were always adults, and the 'correctiveness' of the action was the rendering unreal of someone whose unconscionable act was taken to be an intentionally real repudiation or flouting of tonar. In order for such action to be both intentional and real, the actor had to be a person endowed by definition with the ability to intend his actions and to have his actions taken to be real [kar]. Persons so defined are the Mérian lé—the (adult) people of Mér. These are the people who are sufficiently educated in tonar to 'know better', who, even when their comportment does not accord with recorded ideal examples, know how to behave in accordance with exemplary principles. Children and young people are not yet real people because they do not yet know what it is to be a real person. Children of Mérian people are never referred to as 'Mérian lé'. The question asked of the educated man (above) about whether or not the assailant was a Mérian lé was an elicitation of the island-origin of the assailant. The response of the educated man was an identification of the assailant as not-a-man. The elaboration of the identification was subsequent, and only after it was established that he was only a young-man was it made clear that he was some Mérian people's young-man.

Ideally such an attack would never be perpetrated on a Mérian young-woman by a Mérian young-man. Both young people were around nineteen, no longer children [Mérian mir: omaskir], and old enough to have learned some basic principles of sexual behaviour. But such occasional errors are made by young people learning to be adults, and are matters for correction. The response of the girl's cousins was optional, as much governed by considerations of what they wouldn't let their age-mate get away with as by any concern for tonar, and not all of her brothers and cousins participated in the punishments. But the entry of one of the girl's uncles (in the first instance not the one whom I refer to as the educated man) was an exception to the tonar for dealing with adud [wrong, bad] behaviour of someone else's offspring. Normally the punishment would have been meted out by the boy's father, or perhaps by his mother (if he was younger, i.e.
further away in years from the world of men). And in the case of the punishment failing to correct the behaviour, it would have been the boy's family who expelled him by sending him to live with distant relatives. In regards the punishment, the boy's elders didn't render any; and they were preempted from effecting the expulsion by the prior intervention of the educated man. In fact, there was no knowledge extant among the members of the girl's family of any attitudes or actions of the boy's family at all.

The reason for this disinterest in the response of the boy's family had to do with the fact that they were known to not care about the tonar. In elaborating on the identification of the young-man, the girl's educated uncle said that he was a boy from a particular family, and that "Oli no prapa Mëriam le, [pidgin: They aren't proper/true/real Mëriam people] nolé Mëriam le kar [Mëriam mir: not real Mëriam le]." Though they were of Mëriam stock, and had been born on the island, their behaviour since they had arrived on the mainland had been assessed as consistently nolé mamor tonar [not true way]. There was not even a question of awaiting their proper response, and they were said to be people who were no longer even ashamed of such filial misbehaviour (it was said, "Oli no sem"—'They have no shame'). It was up to others to correct the behaviour and rectify the situation. When the repeated public punishments failed, the social interaction resources were exhausted. The reality of the problem was transformed from an interactive domain to an active one. The accompanying shift in community perspective was from engaging in activity with the boy—speaking harshly to him and him listening; beating on him and him changing his ways—to engaging in activity toward him. With the reservoir of interaction exhausted correction became impossible with removal.

Actually 'removal' is not adequate. 'Absenting', with its accent on state of being after the act, its lack of distinction between in absentia and 'absent from', is much better. What had to happen was the boy who would not learn had to be absented. This might, in circumstances of this kind involving other boys from other families,
have been done by the parents, either by sending him to live with relatives elsewhere (as I suggested above) or by arranging for relatives elsewhere to invite or demand that he come stay with them for a while. But with intercession by the boy's family out of the question, someone else had to act. The girl's family acted, but to no avail. Killing, a kind of ultimate absenting, was dissallowed by the prohibition of tonar on the killing of children (and the concomitant definition provided in tonar of the act of infanticide as the act of a crazy person). Permanent exile is a powerful enactment of tonar, and one which is reserved for persons (i.e. adults, fully mature individuals, those who may be referred to an Meriam ló) and must be, therefore, collectively effected by all other persons. The means of absenting this young-man which remained was that of expulsion by someone who was enfranchised to speak ex-tonar, the educated man of the community (who happened, in this case but not in others, to be the uncle of the assaulted girl).

Much of the preceding description has to do with aspects of Islander social reality within which the specific expulsion occurred. The act of expelling was a speech-act. The educated man said 'I don't want to see you around here again'. The young-man departed immediately, and left town the next day. The educated man did not strike the young-man, for in this instance he was acting not as uncle but as one of the educated. Striking is a form of punitive or retributive action; it is not a form for corrective action. Only a killing blow may be used in a striking action which permits no retaliation; any other striking blow is made in interaction. An enactment of an expulsion is patently not, as I have said, an inter-action. (Even small children who are struck by their parents are in an interaction, though by striking back they invite an escalation of blows which the larger parent is bound to win.) Moreover, an expelling speech-act is one which is defined (i.e. provided for by models in the tonar) as talk-only. Borrowing from Austin on speech acts (1965:8), not only is the critical act of speaking important, and appropriate to its circumstances, but also
"it is very commonly necessary that either the speaker himself or other persons should also perform certain other actions" (original emphasis).

The expelling speech-act, one which may be performed only by a man enfranchised to speak out of and for the tonar, is marked by the absence of 'other actions'. The speaker does no more than utter the enactment; the person so expelled neither speaks nor performs any other action save the critical one of immediate departure. He is, in this case, a young-man, a particular kind of individual identified as one who is learning to behave as a man. Were he to offer any response other than immediate departure (which is to say any response at all, since the act of departing is a reaction), he would be proposing an identity (making a "presentation of self", in Goffman's term) not in keeping with the extant social reality, a reidentification which would entail a redefinition of the encounter. Specifically, he would present himself as either a child or as a man. Both representations would place him at considerable risk.

The redefinition of the situation entailed in the young-man proposing that he be dealt with as a child renders the action of the educated man erroneous. To act in error when enacting the tonar is to risk the enormous establishment of erroneous precedent, for the 'real man' [Mériam lé kar] who acts within and on behalf of tonar generates tonar as he acts. Action which is taken not in accordance with tonar either implicates all recorded solutions to similar situations, or admits ambiguous tonar thereafter. The keeper of tonar cannot abide the imputed error, the error of someone not a member of a child's family presuming to send him away. Nor can he abide the ancillary error, the imputation that in speaking the tonar he has misspoken, for the tonar does not lie. It is unlikely that the young-man would reduce his own presence as an almost-man, and even less likely that he would risk the wrath of the educated man by licensing his own discipline as a child.
Nor would he be likely to attempt to resist the expulsion by presenting himself as a mature co-equal. The obvious risk is that, in admitting manhood, the young-man would be liable to death or permanent exile (the logic being that if he is a man now he was a man when he assaulted a girl who was not yet a woman; or, that he has somehow become a man since the assault, a transition belied by his refusal to desist in his attentions, and a particularly burdensome transformation requiring the virtually immediate reidentification of him as a man and the concomitant disposal of the assault into the realm of past childhood mistakes). The more likely risk is that he pretends, in presenting himself as a man, to making fools of the girl's elders who have been dealing with him as a young-man. And he entertains an even greater risk to his own identity, for he renders his beatings at the hands of the girl's relatives to the ineffectual actions of a man who is not a real man, or the actions of a cowardly man who allows himself to be punished by boys (in the case of the girl's young-men cousins). And perhaps his greatest risk is that in confronting the man of knowledge of tonar with his new identity, he risks being dealt with (by the educated man and by others) according to tonar which he (even as a newly emerged full-man) cannot yet know—an evocation of especially potent unknown terrors.

All of these things are normally more or less known to the young-man as well as to the educated expeller. Such knowledge, shared by the participants in this rare occasion of expulsion, is part of the "preparatory conditions" (Searle 1969) of the expelling speech-act. In fact, in cases of utterances of expulsion, beyond the prerequisite of face-to-face encounter of the educated man and the young-man at the time of utterance, all of the preparatory conditions of shared knowledge and social reality. More precisely, the expulsion enacted by the educated man generates a new social reality, one which is different from the reality extant just prior to his expelling utterance. Simply it is a difference in personnel: the community is now one young-man short. But the nature of the difference lies in the nature of absence.
Berger and Luckmann, building upon the sociology of knowledge of Mannheim and Scheler and others, and the critical redefinition of that sociology by Schutz (1964[vol. II]:121) as having to do with the mechanism of the social distribution of knowledge, propose that "the sociology of knowledge, therefore, must concern itself with the social construction of reality" (1971:27). In these terms, the young-man, the educated man, and the rest of the Islander community knew what was going on (i.e. could make sense of the expelling action and the boy's departure) because they knew what had happened, and who the young-man and the educated man were. Not only was their knowledge of the assault and subsequent events in terms of their appreciation of 'real' Islander events, but also their knowledge of the identities of the participants was grounded in the reality of Islander people. As Berger and Luckmann put it (1971:195-6), "Theories about identity are always embedded in a more general interpretation of reality", and must be understood "in terms of the logic underlying the latter"; finally, "psychological status is relative to the social definitions of reality in general and is itself socially available knowledge that the young-man had failed to learn. The encompassing theory, that which includes both persons and knowledge (culminating in the tonar which joins them), is the theory that real persons are emergent entities from a process of learning.

Since the notion that a person (i.e. the entity which I have been referring to as 'person') is a psychobiologically distinct member of any typical personnel which he characterises, there is a question about what it is that is 'real' in a 'real person' [lé kar]. A boy child is destined to grow up into a 'real man'. But destiny incorporates provisos: there is no destiny but the provisional one. In the destiny of a child of Mer there is the obligation of the Meriam lé to provision him for maturity. This obligation remains in force until a child demonstrates his uneducability.
Provisions in an Educational Framework

In Meriam mir the dictum is erwer. Erwer encompasses learning/education. A school (building) is erwer meta [education house], and its curricular and other accoutrements are erwer lu [education things]. But, while a child who is going to school may be said to be going erwer metaem [education house-ward, with suffix—em='toward' ] as he boards the schoolbus in the morning, a child who is 'going to school' as a function of his regular daily life must be said to be erwerare [occupying a state of being in the presence of education]. There is no inherent logic which posits the educated 'improvement' of the child as the effect from the cause which is the teacher. The logic of the language does not admit the functional giving-receiving distinction of teacher-and-learner. The 'teacher' is erwer le—'educated man' [man in/of educatedness]—while his pupil is erwer kebile [little-man in/of educatedness]. Pidgin provides analogous forms. Lern glosses as erwer in Meriam mir and as teach/learn in English: 'Yu lerne dempla kolera langgus.' [You teach them English (whiteman language).] 'Dempla lerne kolera langgus. [They are learning English (kolera=Meriam mir for "whiteman"; langgus-pidgin for "language").]

The telling case is the erwer kebile ['student'] who fails to learn his lessons. The 'teacher' may shake her head in disgust at such a state of affairs and say, 'I lernem bat em no lern' [I'm teaching him but he isn't learning]. A teacher who so remarks on the failure of some student to lern is commenting on a state of affairs. This is critical. The dance-master [kab le=lit. dance man, both in the sense of 'masterful dancer' and 'master of the subject of dance'] who is erwer le to some erwer kebile for dance may remark on the state of affairs in which his students have (to date) failed to learn the dance(s): 'I bi lerne dem kebile bat oli no lerne dans' [I am/I have been teaching those kids/young-people but they aren't learning the/to dance]. His remark does not admit the interpretation of
causal failure, nor does he exhibit distress. His remark is a report of a state of affairs in which his students are no less erwerare for not (yet) having learned the dance(s).

The distinction is that of provisioning versus improvement (or, in another sense, between the common sense of improvement as increased command or expertise and the sense of 'improvement' which underlies the proof of matured alcoholic spirits or the proving of bread dough after it has risen and been shaped and just before it goes into the oven). The dance-master who enters into erwer with some young dance-learners enters a state of affairs which is given as logistical. He provisions his erwer kebilé with dance-stuff. His responsibility is to provide everything that goes into the making of one or more dances, including not only his expert command of dance steps and repertoire of whole dances but also the presence at any dance lesson of experienced drummers and singers. He is not responsible for scheduling the lesson, nor for ensuring the attendance of students. And he is, finally, not responsible for turning out competent dancers. In short, his responsibility is not pedagogical. He cannot 'fail' to teach dancing because he is finally not an educated man, he is a dance-man.

In opening my discussion of erwer above, I glossed erwer lé as 'educated man' [man in/of educatedness]. This was a translational device established in order to point out the principal distinction between erwer lé and their erwer kebilé without ignoring the fact that the erwer lé is who he is by dint of having learned enough dance-stuff to become an expert. That is, in Mèriam logic, erwerare—occupying a state of being in the presence of education—is a state of affairs both of and for erwer lé and erwer kebilé. Strictly, then, erwer lé is 'education man' to the erwer kebilé's 'education boy/girl', with the logical assumption that the normal course of events sees the erwerare happening in and to the boy or girl rather than to the man. (In fact, adults do learn things from children; but though the adult can say that he has been erwerare it makes no sense to suggest that for the duration of that 'lesson' the
child was erwer lé, for this requires the adult to become kebilé [child] to a child who would have been a 'whole' [i.e. adult] person.) While it is sensible to gloss an erwer lé as an 'educated man' in order to show that the adult is normally the participant in an education-state-of-affairs who has already been educated, it is a misnomer to refer to him as an educated man without marking the term (e.g. with single quotation marks) as one of situationally and processually restricted reference. The dance-man who is not, or who is no longer, instructing dance-learners may not be meaningfully referred to as an 'educated man'. He is properly a dance-man, one who provides dances and who may be called upon to provision dance-learners, and it is the one who may call upon him to do so who is truly educated man.

This truly educated man, the one who may command the resources of others in the instruction of kebilé, is the pedagogue. The requirement which this pedagogical reality imposes is the requirement of a primary framework (Goffman 1975:21-6 et seq.), one which imposes some constraints on interpretation which have been implicit in my description of the expulsion and of the dance-instruction. That is, in bringing in a dance lesson to inform an expulsion of a young-man I have implicated some third thing which is prior to both. The third thing is a whole framework of 'education', a way of seeing what is going on, both in the common instances of dance (and other) instruction and in the rarer instance of expulsion. It is (borrowing from Goffman, 1975:25) "chiefly relevant and provides a first answer to the question 'What is it that's going on here?' The answer: an event or deed described within some primary framework."

From this, the 'question' could be 'What's going on in this confrontation of the young-man by the educated man?'; or, 'How are expulsions of young-men like dance-lessons?'; or, best of all, 'Why are young-men sometimes sent away and almost all children taught to dance?' The sense in which this last question is 'best' is in its sensible conformity to the terms of the framework. It elicits almost
no other answer except that which, grounded in (or in terms of) the primary framework of education, "is seen by those who apply it as not depending on or harking back to some prior or 'original' interpretation" (Goffman 1975:21). Most importantly, the framework entails a domain of meaning (or meanings, or meaningfulness) such that responses to questions which elicit frameworks are not generally taken to be sensible if they question the framework. For example, the response 'What do you mean?' is not a sensible response to the question 'Why are some young-men sent away and almost all children taught to dance?' The question is such that the questioner knows (may be taken to know) the differences between young-men and children, between learning to dance and going away, and apparently suspects that there is a meaningful domain in which the differences (or something 'about' the differences) are the same. (I am assuming that the question is serious, explicitly precluding its utterance as a riddle or as a playful apparent absurdity.)

Depending upon the supposed knowledge of the questioner, the insight of the person questioned, and so forth, the answer may be more or less elaborate. The answer 'Education' is clear, but does no more than establish the framework in which (according to which) the two things may be connected. But this single-word answer is more appropriately responsive to the second question above, 'How are expulsions of young-men like dance lessons?', and presumes a great deal of concordance in what the questioner and questioned mean by 'how'. 'Education' could also be an answer to the first question, but would be unlikely unless prior conversation had established the domain of discourse as the domain of interpretive frameworks (the question then actually paraphraseable as 'In which framework is this confrontation meaningful?').

The best answer is the one which takes into account the apparent knowledge of the questioner (though the apparent erudition of the question could be fortuitous, and the questioner taken momentarily to be more knowledgeable than he is ), responds by applying a primary framework, and refines the response by exposing the similarity of the
order of difference as it locates them. It is in the simple answer that the primary framework, applied in its own terms, renders "what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful" (Goffman 1975:21) most clearly. The framed answer has to select which of the differences (e.g. differences between young-men and children, being sent away and being taught to dance, young-men-sent-away and children-taught-dance, 'sending away' and 'teaching') embedded in the question are meaningful, and to expose the domain of that meaning. The well-framed answer to 'Why are young-men sometimes sent away and almost all children taught to dance?' is, 'Because they are uneducated.'

As Goffman points out (1975:25), once some primary framework is brought to bear by a meaningful answer, "then one can begin to worry about the microanalytic issues of what is meant by 'we', 'it', and 'here'..." or on this Islander sample, about what is meant by "they" and "uneducated". The answer 'Because they are uneducated' clearly establishes a domain of meaningfulness (which I have encapsulated in education), but it also proposes a conjunction between young-men—'sometimes—and ('almost') all children which in turn informs what is meant by (or, what can be meant by) "they". Obviously, at base, it is clear that there are frameworks within which young-men and children are the same 'thing'. And it is clear that one of these frameworks is 'educatedness' (there may or may not be more than one, and this single question-and-answer does not establish whether 'educatedness' is one of several frameworks, the one which comes first to the answerer's mind, or perhaps the most important one). And, moreover, it is clear that the sameness, the 'thing' (about young-men and children) which is the same, is a thing which isn't. It is a thing which isn't 'in' the young-men who are sometimes sent away and which isn't 'in' almost all children. The 'thing' which isn't in them is education; 'educated' is that which they are not.
In that last sentence I have exposed a double translational error, the correction of which will hark back to my discussion of the Meriam word erwer. It is erroneous to speak, as I have done, of 'education as the thing which isn't in the young-man and the children', for it risks the retranslation back to erwer. There is no way that erwer can be 'in' somebody. While it is possible for young Islanders to be said to be "getting an education", 'an education' is not what he 'gets'. And, while it is said that they are not educated, when they do become educated, 'educated' is not what they are. This fundamental distinction between education and erwer is the distinction which Heidegger (1962) made between word-things [Wortedinge] and significations [Bedeutungen; cf. Hacking 1975:49-53 for a discussion of the translation and retranslation problems of Bedeutungen in language philosophy]. That is, education is an English word-thing, a function which can be dealt with (e.g. said and talked about) as a thing. One can get it, have it, miss out on it, and even incorporate it. Erwer is not a Meriam word-thing; it is a way of signifying some other thing, a form of signification. In its simples sense, it is a form of and for signifying a building [meta, lit: house] wherein the process of education takes place, an erwer meta, or 'schoolhouse'. But it is not for designating a building, nor is it of something called education' it is a form of and for a significant process which is usually localized in particular buildings with the participation of persons who are erwerare—'embodying a state of being in the presence of education'.

I noted above the teacher who remarked 'I lernem bat em no lern' as an illustration of the sense of the pidgin 'lern' as it may comprise both 'teach' and 'learn' in English. And also the students who, although 'oli no lerne dans' ['they aren't learning the/to dance'], were nonetheless erwerare. I suggested that provisioning was a better comparative notion than 'improvement' when looking at (i.e. interpreting) a sense of educational process in which there is no causality to undergird an implicit teach—learn directionality.
principally Eastern Islander students were not picking up the Western language which she was instructing: "Dem kids oli bi lern an lern dat langgus blo mipla bat oli no lernem" [Those (them) kids, they've been learning and learning that language of mine but they aren't learning it].

Of course, I could have translated her remark thus: Those kids have been studying and studying that language of mine but they just aren't getting it. Or I could have glossed over the teach-learn duality of the pidgin verb lern and rendered it: Those kids have been taught that language and taught that language but they just can't learn it. The problem with translation (translation proper in Jakobson's sense [Jakobson 1959]; what Steiner [1975:260] terms "interlingual translation" (Steiner) is that translation entails what I call transframing. Transframing is implicit in a great deal of ethnography and linguistics and sociolinguistics. Gregory Bateson first began the explication of it, as far as I know, in 1940 (see "Experiments in Thinking about Observed Ethnological Material"), when he spoke (Bateson) of "having got some sort of conceptual frame within which to describe the interrelations between clans" (1973:52). The initial sense in which Bateson 'transframed' was in using a concept from biology which dealt with animal segmentation in order to analyze social relationships (cf. Naven). What has interested me is that he used a modern Western (albeit scientific) frame in order to apprehend an Iatmul framework. (It was a later use of frame by Bateson [1955] which Goffman cites as precedental to his [1975; see pp.7, 40-41] theoretical development in Frame Analysis.) Moreover, he reintroduced that frame—i.e. brought it 'back' from New Guinea social organizational analysis—into modern Western thinking, but he did so by using it anthropologically rather than biologically. He began to talk about complementary and symmetrical relationships (Bateson 1936; 1973 passim, esp. pp.41-2, 50-53, 64-5) among people (rather than radial symmetry and transverse segmentation in animals).
This sort of transframing is incorporated in my proposition of 'education' [erwer] as a Mériam primary framework (and, subtle differences aside, as an Islander [i.e. all Torres Strait Islanders] primary framework). Transframing is that which reduces the absurdity of "When Islanders are getting an education, education isn't what they have after they get it". Semantically it is relatively easy to distinguish erwer from 'education'. Education is not something that can be 'got' via education. And there is no past participle, no way to say that some Islander 'was educated'. If derwerare happened in the past, one is said to 'have been being educated' [dewerda] (or, 'have been being taught', 'have been learning', etc.). Perhaps the colloquial usages of 'school' come the closest in English to erwer: being schooled; getting some schooling; was being schooled. The only aspect of erwer that is not present in 'school' is the necessary (and, in erwer, explicit) component of valuable content. That is, in the vernacular, 'getting schooled' has an incidental component of curriculum, of some sort of valuable information being processed; in erwer the valuable information is central rather than incidental (and in this aspect, 'education' connotes something closer to erwer). Leaving aside the discontinuity, however, 'school' becomes a relatively faithful formal translational device. Erwer meta is literally a 'schoolhouse'; derwerare can be the vernacular 'schooling'; erwer kebilé is 'school boy'; and, allowing nominal equivalence of 'man' and 'master', an erwer lé can be a 'school master'.

But, unlike 'school boys', erwer kebilé never leave school' parents can never visit erwer lé at any place other than school. For that matter, they can't even visit "erwer lé" at school—that is, though they may physically visit (pay a visit; seek, to question or converse with) the person who is erwer le for the duration of a lesson or series of lessons, the person they visit is not erwer lé, for he is not their erwer lé. Nor is erwer lé ever visited by 'parents', even as he is visited by the brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, cousins, aunts and uncles, distant relatives,
acquaintances, and strangers who are in fact the parents of his erwer kebilé. That is, though it is true, in an English-language/Western-tradition context, to report 'several parents paid a visit to the erwer le' (providing that a visit was paid to an Islander instructor by several parents of students of his), such a report is not true in any Islander context.

Transframing in Interpretation

Such a report of a 'visit of parents to the erwer le' is most simply untrue because it does not answer the question, What's going on here? (see pp.18-19, above). It is instructive to explore just how it fails. George Steiner, whose description of "hermeneutic motion" is the inspiration for my "motion of the contentious self" (see Steiner 1975, Ch.5), describes the three principal failures of literary translations which are unfaithful to their originals: diminution, magnification, and transfiguration of the original (pp.396-407). But, although ethnographers share with translators something of the interlingual motion which Steiner calls hermeneutic ("The translator invades, extracts, and brings home" [p.298], little has been written which exposes the similarity of the motion of self of the translator and the ethnographer. The ease with which dissimilarity may be ascribed has, I think, to do with the apparent preeminence of the personal physical movement of the ethnographer away from his 'home' to the homes of his informants, a movement which stands in apparent contrast to the 'motion' of the hermeneuticist who may never physically leave his study. And yet, though the ethnographer insinuates himself physically into the world of the other, he must also, in the words of Sir James George Frazer (1931:237), "apply for information to the mine of a Zulu or a Hottentot" [emphasis added]. Or, as Steiner says (of translators, p.300), "We encircle and invade cognitively".
More than this, ethnographers share the translators' risks at the 'bringing home' of the other, risks of importation which "can potentially dislocate or relocate the whole of the native structure" of the ethnographer or translator, and risks of self as "we come to incarnate alternative energies and resources of feeling"—alternatives which are for some, and at some times, so pervasive that "writers have ceased from translation, sometimes too late, because the inhaled voice of the foreign text had come to choke their own" (Steiner, p.300). For Steiner, the fourth and final stage of the hermeneutic motion is "compensation", or "restitution" (p.395), the restoration of parity between the translation and the original without which the translation paradigm is "dangerously incomplete" (p.300). Without this final stage, the 'motion' of translation is denied, and the resultant stasis of individual or society locked in the third (incorporation) stage evident in translators (or ethnographers, or explorers, etc.) who have gone 'native' or 'troppo' and in receptor-societies which have instituted such skewed importations as cargo cults.

I have turned to Steiner's proposition of a 'motion' of translation in order to appose something of a motion of ethnography in which the ethnographer also "invades, extracts, and brings home", but in which there is a different fourth stage. Or, rather, there is a fourth stage in which a further operation must occur: the operation of transframing. (The sense in which transframing is a 'further operation', additional to the operation of "compensation" in the final stage of hermeneutic translation, is that in which an event which occurs in another culture does not expose its own framework(s) in the way that an original text does.) Goffman (1975:22) has suggested that "social frameworks provide background understanding for events that incorporate the will, aim, and controlling effort of an intelligence, a live agency, the chief one being the human being". In Chapter 9 of Frame Analysis—"Ordinary Troubles"—he itemizes the common problems which occur in "misframings" which entail ambiguities of frame or errors in framing.
Misframings are common, and their duration often depends upon the duration of the context which supports them (Goffman [p.309] cites Bar-Hillel's [1954] discussion of "indexicality" in presenting the problem of English-German bilinguals hearing nein as 'nine' in conversation with one another). But ambiguities in primary frameworks "seem typically short-lived and for a good reason: because these frameworks are fundamental to the organization of activity, because a whole tissue of organization derives from each, any point of doubt will usually be resolved quickly by information from a multitude of extraneous sources" (Goffman, p.305). It is this information from "extraneous" sources which occasions both the embarrassment and relief in the war veteran who, having returned home, dives into a snowbank at the sound of a backfiring car which he has (in some sense) 'taken' to be a rifle shot. The resolution is accomplished, in this case, by "clearing the frame" through sharply attending to surroundings (pp.338-9) which become apparently insupportive of the mistaken premise that the sound was a result of "guided doings" (p.22) rather than something "purely physical" (or, a social rather than a natural framework).

It is precisely this possible 'clearing of frame' which focuses attention upon the existence of something like a 'framework of frameworks, an organization which has to do with what Clifford Geerta has called the "context of intelligibility" (1973). That is, in order for frames to be misapplied, or to be mistaken, there must be some more fundamental order of organization in which their unintelligibility is intelligible. In some respects this may be simply a more fundamental framework (Goffman, p.22), but in others the appeal to a more comprehensive order of organization is not so clearly an appeal to another (albeit larger or more fundamental) framework. It is in this rendering intelligible of an organization of experience in another culture that the language of ethnography, like the language of translation, "has its own status of vulnerability, of unhousedness, of elucidative strangeness because it is an instrument of relation between the foreign tongue [or
culture] and one's own" (Steiner 1975:395). The vulnerability is acute, for the language must serve both exegesis and explication.

Simmel noted the importance of language in human interaction as "the type, as well as the essential instrument, of these common elements" in the ideational worlds of men (1950:315). "A collection of human beings...becomes a society only when the vitality of these contents attains the form of reciprocal influence; only when one individual has an effect, immediate or mediate, upon another" (1959:315). Language, especially the language of talk, is both the means and meanings of this attainment. In Simmel's terms, it is an 'essential instrument' of both social forms and individual (cf. Simmel 1959:314-15, passim; 1950:40-44, 385-87; Weingartner 1959), embodying and embedding a dual reciprocity: "between the non-logical and contingent reality of the ideational process and the logical and teleological selection we make of it in order to show it to others" (1950:315); and between "processual life in the narrower sense and its counterplay of persistent forms" (Kantorowicz 1959:5).

The point here is that social phenomena have to do with both being and becoming, with human life as process. This comprehension is elemental in Georg Simmel's philosophy and sociology (as it is in the works of Heraclitus and Hegel and Heidegger). What is essential is to understand that the very separation of being and becoming belies the single reality of any social phenomena or process. In order to correct the erroneous epistemology which undergirds such artifice there must be a reformulation on the order of Anthony Wilden's BOTH-AND (1972:203-29). That is, human life is BOTH-AND being-becoming in process.

Kantorowicz (1959:3) has suggested that it is this meeting and fusing of "the old poles of being and becoming" which lies at the core of Simmel's thought, of his concept of life which "includes both open flux and closed crystallization; both the process of life incessantly newborn and the entities which emerge out of life". Process and entity are subsumed under Simmel's formulation of "mere aggregations of individuals" who are transformed "into specific
forms of being with and for one another" (1959:315). The explicit subsumption of "with and for", and its reciprocal simultaneity, echoes in Wilden's "cybernetic both-and thinking" (1972:226). And it is intended in my proposition of the language of talk as both the means and meanings of attainment of such forms (see p.27, above). It has, perhaps, been most clearly stated recently by Sansom (1980:1) in his analysis of "the specified grounds of and for relationships" (my emphasis) among members of urban Australian Aboriginal fringe-dwelling groups, and their shared knowledge which is "both produced by and the basis for social action" (p.2, my emphasis).

In order to obtain his analytic purchase, Sansom (ibid.) provides "a translation in which Aboriginal models of social organization are fairly represented" to which he contributes a "commentary of interpretation" in order to "make something of the words I heard and the actions I observed". It is his explicit duality of translation and interpretation which is so important: it is, in its whole, an exegesis and an explication—a BOTH-AND translation-interpretation. This approach has considerable affinity with Bruce Kapferer's recent (1979) presentation of Sinhalese healing rites in which he addresses himself to "the purposes for which social activity is explicitly organized" (p.108: Kapferer notes the prior urgings for this approach by Geertz [1966] and Kaplan and Manners [1972]). His examination of performance is a contribution to the question, "How does a healing ritual cure?" (ibid.), one which centers on the vital presence of "an attentive audience" and "the achievement of a cure, as understood and received by ritual participants" (p.148). Both are concerned with how it is that social actors understand their activities and actions, and with how it is that these understandings may themselves be understood. In part this has to do with (and is dependent upon) what Steiner calls "the final secret of the translator's craft...this insinuation of self into otherness" (p.359). It is an "understanding of understanding" (Steiner, p.414).
Steiner poses the question, "To what extent is culture the translation and rewording of previous meaning?" (p.415). His argument, that "meaning is a function of social-historical antecedent and shared response" (p.465) is persuasive. "We are", he writes, "so much the product of set feeling-patterns, Western culture has so thoroughly stylized our perceptions, that we experience our 'traditionality' as natural" (p.462). Goffman has proposed the importance of frames in the production-reproduction of this 'naturalness':

Moreover, what people understand to be the organization of their experience, they buttress, and perform, self-fulfillingly. They develop a corpus of cautionary tales, games, riddles, experiments, newsy stories, and other scenarios which elegantly confirm a frame-relevant view of the workings of the world. (The young especially are caused to dwell on these manufactured clarities, and it comes to pass that they will later have a natural way to figure the scenes around them.) [1975:563]

My gloss of the Islander (Meriam) word/concept of tonar echoes Goffman's sense of "corpus" here. But I include an additional aspect, one which renders frames as incorporate in the tales, games, etc. That is, the stories and legends and conventions which comprise the Islander tonar do not so much 'confirm a frame-relevant view' of the world as frame the world. These contexts, in and of which frames are elemental, these "roots of determinism which underlie the 'recursive' structure of our sensibility and expressive codes" (Steiner, p.462), are "embedded in our semantics, in our conventions of logic" (ibid.).

As Geertz has urged, "societies, like lives, contain their own interpretations" (1973:453); when one attends to cultural forms one is attending to "an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles" (p.452). In analyses of collective forms which recognize them as 'saying something about something' (a tag which Geertz [p.448] takes from Aristotle), one is faced with a problem in 'social semantics' (p.448). Geertz's analysis of the Balinese cockfight shows it to be interpretive—"a story they tell themselves about themselves" (p.448)—a text for "a kind of sentimental education" (p.449) in
which "the Balinese forms and discovers his temperament and his society's temper at the same time" (p.451). This simultaneity of 'formation and discovery' lies at the heart of analyses such as those by Kapferer and Sansom. It bespeaks the BOTH-AND thinking of Wilden and, because it explicitly attends to the individual (temperament) and to the society (temper), it evokes Simmel's "forms of sociation" (1959:314-15, 319-20, passim; cf. Wolff 1950:lxiii on Vergesellschaftung ['sociation']), especially those forms which mediate between the individual and culture (cf. 1950:257).

Such mediation of society appears in Kapferer's (1979:148) and Geertz's illustrations of the importance of the audience, which is involved intellectually (Kapferer), or kinesthetically (Geertz, p.451n) in the focused gathering and its process. In Sinhalese healing ritual it is essential for the definition of the cured patient; for the Balinese at a cockfight it is for learning "what his culture's ethos and his private sensibility (or, anyway, certain aspects of them) look like when spelled out externally in a collective text" (Geertz, p.449). As Simmel pointed out long ago, the importance of society—as audience, for Kapferer's analysis, as consociates for Sansom's, or as co-participants for Geertz's—is that "society's 'in front of' the individual is, at the same time, a 'within'", an import which is particular "as regards the genesis of cognition" (1950:258; 257). This is important for the Sinhalese to know he is cured, for the fringe-dweller to know "what bin happenin" (Sansom, p.136), for the Balinese to discover his temperament.

Expulsion: An Educational Short Story

In this concluding section I want to return briefly to the logic of the act of expulsion. I have taken the title of this section from Clifford Geertz's suggestion (see preceding page) that the cockfight is, for the Balinese, "a story they tell themselves about themselves". So is expulsion a kind of story the Mériam lé tell. The difference is that it is a very very short story. It has only one
antagonist, and only one protagonist; it is only 'told' once, and its
telling takes about two minutes. Nevertheless, as a 'story' it is
part of the tonar, known to all Meriam lé, and they attend to its
telling no less as audience than are the audiences at cockfights.
Sufficient unto its comprehension (by Islanders) is the logic of how
persons come into being (i.e. become).

The logic of how persons come into being. This is a very thick
sentence, redolent of 'realpeople', and tonar, and
erwer/education—and of the educated men who govern the process.
Wittgenstein suggested that to "understand a sentence means to
understand a language" (1958:1/202). It seems to me that this
underscores the terrible tenuousness of interpretive 'language', of
the language of any interpretation of social and cultural 'texts'
which must engage what I have called transframing. That is, in this
case, no Islander (to my knowledge) would propose that he understands
a rare and extraordinary event such as an expulsion because he
comprehends 'the logic of how persons come into being'.
Nevertheless, this is exactly the comprehension which informs his
understanding of the expulsion. He understands that children do not
always become persons, and he knows that they may not fail to become
persons as a result of his neglect of their education. He knows that
all Meriam lé are responsible for seeing that all educable children
receive the provisions of the tonar, and that the way of
being-becoming educated is provided in the framework of
erwer—'being in the process of provisioning-reception'. He
'learns' by engaging his teacher and his subject-matter and his
tonar, all at once. He says, E kerbi oderwerlare..."We are currently
in the process of him being out teacher." He 'contracts' a kab lé
[dance-man] to be erwer lé [education-man] thus: Ma kerbi mara kerkar
kab derwerare..."We shall be in the process of you teaching/us
learning your new dance." This is not a request; there is no
question. There is only a (known) kab lé, some erwer kebilé, and a
new song: Someone Who Knows + Someone Who Doesn't Know + Subject
Matter. As long as this calculus is attended to, uneducated children
are being in the presence of education to become educated persons. And as long as the process keeps working there is nothing for the educated men, the pedagogues, to do, save provision of themselves as erwer là.

But any failure of the erwer-system, any incident extraneous to the framework, occasions the governance of the educated man. When a new dance doesn't get provided, when a dance-student can't find a teacher, when an instructor doesn't know or can't provide some crucial subject-matter, then an educated man steps in. While the erwer-system is not self-correcting, the tonar is; and the educated man, the man of knowledge, is the Corrector par excellence. He is the only one who may move the comprehension of a situation out of the framework of education, who may place it squarely in the reality of the tonar. He is the only one who may speak extempore for The People of Mer.

He is, above all, the artist of the social form. From the palette of tonar he paints the picture of the way to be; he shapes from the coloratura of everyday life with a knife of True Speech the stories which the Möriam lé tell themselves about themselves. He is the Prime Listener, the one who has heard all the stories and watched all the enactments of them; as such, only he may cease listening in order to pronounce the tonar. He is primus inter pares, but his equals are all dead and gone; yet the Way which he utters is the Way which they uttered, the corpus which they now inhabit as he creates it. And he and he alone is responsible, only he is actually able to respond to the dictum of the Way.

Everyone else may only be, yet must be, responsive. As the children of the Möriam lé become persons they respond to the provisioning of and by their elders. Elders and children are correspondents within a framework of education according to the logic of how persons come into being. When the father of the assaulted girl set out for the railway station he said he was going to 'teach that boy a lesson'. When the thumpings and pummelings had failed, the girl's relatives sat dumbfounded around a pot of tea,
saying 'Boy, I thought he'd learned his lesson'. He was too old to spank, and too young to kill. Not yet a real man he couldn't be permanently exiled; and he had no real parents to arrange his absence. He didn't seem to be responding...and they had no responses left.

No one called in the educated man. Only he could author his own entry into the situation. For only he could assume the risk of perpetrating a person not coming into being, only he could send someone away, out of education to fend in the tonar which he did not yet inhabit. He found the young-man. The young-man was silent, and did not run away. And the man of knowledge told him a story about himself in a single sentence. I don't want to see you around here again.

Endnote.

The young man has been gone for quite some time, perhaps a year or more. He may return; he may not. But if he does return it will not be until he has become le, a person. Even if his more-or-less adult body comes back, without a le 'inside' he will reside as non-person, a man of no account.
That people actually understand what their tongues are babbling. And that eyes do shine to understand, and that responses are made which indicate a soul in all this matter and mess of tongues and teeth...

Jack Kerouac,  
Satori in Paris

CHAPTER 5

Bar kak mir. To talk with no curves.

To talk with no curves is to talk straight. In the islands of the Eastern Torres Strait, the country of the Meriam lé, talk which is straight is talk which has no curves. Bar kak mir [literally curves-without-talk] speaks truth, as the path of a good arrow is true. It is powerful talk, talk never used unwisely nor unadvisedly. The language of such talk is Meriam mir, the spoken language of the Meriam lé, the people of the island of Mér. Generically, Meriam mir is the traditional language of the Eastern Torres Strait islands and, among it's colloquial speakers, is the name of the traditional language as it is spoken by those Eastern islanders who still speak it. But it is a generic terms, this name for their language, and is taken to be so among its speakers. It is, finally, the language of the Meriam lé; and while the language of Mér is spoken throughout the Eastern Torres Strait, the Meriam lé are the people of a single island. And the island of Mér is the island of traditional authority. It is, originally and finally, only the Meriam lé who enable bar kak mir.42

There is a sense among the speakers of the Eastern islands that talk is more or less real. The Meriam mir is kar. In the lingua franca of the islands of Torres Strait, kar has been rendered most commonly as prapa. But prapa is certainly directly from the
pidginized "proper" which arrived with the Bislama pidgin of the Pacific bêche de mer and pearl trade in the nineteenth century. So, in translating kar into prapa, the Meriam le translated out of Meriam mir and into Torres Strait Creole—into a language wherein there is no authority. The kab kar of the Meriam le [lit: dance real] translated into the prapa dans. The problem has been that there are no 'creole dances', so to speak. That is, in translating the name of the dance out of the language, the dance itself was put into a domain of unrestricted dance.

This is not to suggest that a traditional Meriam kab kar, performed correctly and well, is a different dance, or less of a dance, when so performed in the Torres Strait Islander communities which have grown up in the cities and towns of modern Australia—despite the fact that these are Torres Strait Pidgin speech-communities whose Eastern and Western and Central Islanders share only their creolized lingua franca. What it does suggest is an acute problem arising from the preclusion of re-translation. That is, whereas kar was initially translated as prapa by Meriam le who were translationally defining and naming their dance to Torres Strait Islanders who did not command Meriam mir, they could not in turn allow retranslation of unrestricted prapa back into Meriam mir kar. At the most mundane level, there is the problem inherent in the additional adverbial meaning of prapa. Prapa translates variously into English as "proper" and as "properly", as well as into contextually expanded meanings of "rigorous", "careful", "attentive" and "attentively", "correct" and "correctly", and more. It means nothing in Meriam mir to speak of 'kar kab'—transposing the literal "dance real" to 'real dance'—but the transposition of prapa dans renders an adverbial and accepted meaning of prapa, dans prapa. This is commonly heard from adults instructing misbehaving youngsters who are learning to dance: "Dans prapa!" The cessation of their misbehaviour, as long as they have learned the dance, may bring the affirmative encouragement, "Gud. Now yupla make prapa dans!" And, in creole, such encouragement may be given upon the successful
performance of any dance. But its use to encourage learners of a kab kar would be to admit the Mériam kab kar, the real dance of Mér, to the domain of any dance.

I suggested above that it means nothing in Mériam mir to speak of (the transposition) kar kab. I was sacrificing accuracy for brevity in order to make my point about transposition. But this speaks exactly to the reality of translation from one language to another among the four principal languages extant in Australian mainland Islander communities (Mériam mir, Western language, Torres Strait Creole, and English). It is misleading for me to suggest that it "means nothing in Mériam mir to speak of kar kab". In doing so I am utilizing a sense of 'meaning' which is not commensurate with Mériam mir. In fact, there are two possibilities for that transposed form: 1) it is never said; 2) it is not Mériam mir.

I can imagine, in the case of the first possibility, that children and other persons who are learning Mériam mir might say "kar kab". And in this way that particular erroneous transposition may be uttered. But, as long as children and others who are learning the language persist in making such errors, they are not taken to be speaking Mériam mir. Which is to say that they are, for the duration of their learning, generating utterances which are the second case: not Mériam mir. The reality of this is that meaningful Mériam mir [mir encompasses "word", "speech", "talk", "utterance", and "language"] is only Mériam mir. A speaker is not taken to be more or less meaningful as he learns more or less coherent Mériam mir; rather, until he commands coherent Mériam mir his speech permits no meaning whatsoever. While it is useful to occasionally describe speech, as I have done, as 'meaningless' or an 'meaning nothing', such uses are admitted only for analysis or exposition. It would be wrong for me to propose actual examples of 'meaningless' Mériam mir, for such are impossible. For the Mériam le, Mériam mir is the gateway to meaning.
It is not unique that speakers of a language take that language as encompassing all meaning. But it may be relatively uncommon for the full implication of my statement of Meriam mir as the gateway to meaning to be granted. Yet this is exactly the case: Meriam mir enables access to all things meaningful to Meriam le. I should mention that there is no synonym in Meriam mir for the word "meaning". And there is a measure of infidelity in my using it focally in analysis or exposition. However, since its absence in Meriam mir precludes my glossing or paraphrasing some existing word, I shall establish it as my own device, and refine it as I require it.

When I say, for the world of the Meriam le, that Meriam mir enables access to all things meaningful, I am simply saying that the language enables access to all matters of import, of power and authority, of consequence. And it is in language that Meriam le are empowered to monitor access to matters of import. The gateway to meaning is, for outsiders too, the Meriam mir. And the gatekeepers are its speakers.

The question which emerges from this initial assessment of mir—of words and talk and the language in which such happen—is who it is that 'gatekeepers' of the Meriam mir come to be. Certainly it is possible to learn to speak Meriam mir, and, as I have suggested, for the duration of the learning of the language there is no way in which the learner may be taken to be a 'gatekeeper'. Moreover, the notion of a duration of learning is commonly held. The learning of language is taken to be a task of serious mien, and one of some considerable duration. It is uncommon, in the multilingual mainland communities, for a young man to be taken to be a speaker who has not reached age twenty-two or so. There is a kind of operant normative ideal which posits the acquisition of 'real speech' at about the same time that a young man comes to be taken as a 'real man'. And there is a reciprocity which operates publicly on these two aspects of personhood. Only the most extraordinary of men may be taken to be a 'real man' without command of 'real talk'. Among the middle-aged men's voices which hold sway in Islander communities there is always the grating suspicion of nuance that such ostensibly 'real' men are,
finally, lacking. It is not so much that they are excluded from daily events, but rather that in events of 'final' import it must be kept in mind that such men are 'really' disqualified. As their disability is a consequence of their lack of speech, so is their silence at final events a consequence of their disability.

It is at such events of grave or final import, those which I call final events, that speech abilities and disabilities are critical. The rare man who is taken to be a 'real' man for all practical purposes is confronted by the critical event in which his disability renders him no longer a practical participant. In a final event the ostensible 'real man' may not be a real man. For in a final event only the man who commands the mir kar may speak. Final events are invested with meaning, with consequence. The actual event itself is a consequence of the crisis which engenders it, and the actions attendant in and from the event must generate the solution to the crisis. That is, it is the final event which must be the means to solution. For the resolution of the crisis to be a consequence of the actions which comprise the final event, the actors who participate therein must be men of consequence. Men of consequence are men whose speech generates consequences. Speech which generates consequences is real speech—mir kar—for only 'real speech' has meaning, and only in real speech can a man mean for real things to happen, real things to be known.

It is in such critical events that the implicit regulations of speech-action may be made explicit. In the arena of the mir, the arena which is the domain of everyday talk, the monitors of language are de facto. Those with relatively more knowledge of words and language are free to instruct others' and corrections of misspoken words, erroneous verb forms, mistaken grammar are common. Misspeech is rife in the mainland Islander communities. Conversations among half a dozen or more people proceeds according to the nominal lingua franca of the group. Utterance is likely to be initially in the language of greatest proficiency of the speaker. Wholly English dialogue is rare, but English words and phrases are common.
Conversations about railway work are commonly marked with railway words. Island men have worked for Queensland, New South Wales, Western Australian and Northern Territory railways for forty years or more, and there is much talk of "ties", "rails", "fettling", "laying track", "foremen", "leading hands", "supervisors", "subcontracting", "carts", "cars", and "companies". The most common railway conversations are among mixed groups of Eastern, Western and Central Islanders, and Torres Strait Creole, the *lingua franca* of the islands and of Islanders on the mainland, prevails. Many of the railway words in the creole occur in their pidginized forms, where "rails" is *rel* and "compan(ies)" is *kampani*. But in unconstrained conversation the speaker is most likely to say his railway words according to his normal practice. An Islander who is a leading hand on a Queensland Railways fettling gang may be relatively proficient in (railway vocabulary) English, and say "leading hand" in speaking of his position with the railway. A young Islander newly arrived on the mainland from, say, Darnley Island in the Eastern Torres Strait, may be working on the railway only long enough to earn his fare in order to go to the Kimberlies in Western Australia in order to seek a reputedly well-paying job in mining construction. He is likely to refer to his gang boss as a *lidingan* [/lidiːjan/], or generically as a *bas blo mi* [boss of my, my boss] where 'bosses' needn't be categorized as leading hands, foremen, and supervisors.

Neither the leading hand nor the newcomer in casual employ, however, will translate general or specific categories of supervisory people or positions into traditional language. The leading hand may be a Saibai man, or a Mabuiag man (i.e. born on the Western island of Saibai, or Mabuiag, or of Saibai or Mabuiag parents), but he will not translate "leading hand" into Western language; nor will the young Darnley Islander translate his boss's title into *Meriam mir*. Leading hands do not exist in the islands of the Torres Strait. Simply, no railways exist in Torres Strait. More importantly, neither do leading hands. And finally, neither do any equivalents of such as a "leading hand" might be in traditional
society. There is no generic term for 'boss' in Meriam mir. There are no _general_ 'bosses'. The absence of a generic equivalent renders translation problematic. The Meriam mir speaker who commands also creole and English may, having spoken of bas blo mi in conversation with assorted Western and Eastern Islanders, turn to an English-only speaker at his side and render the explicative translation "my boss". But, should he be required to translate for an older Meriam le in the group, he will say kara bas, using the Meriam mir "kara" [my;mine] but retaining the creole "bas" in translation.  

Problems occur when unfamiliar foreign creole or English words are introduced in Meriam mir. When equivalent words are unavailable, the foreign word must be explained. The explanation necessarily occurs in Meriam mir, and must be rendered by a more or less competent Meriam mir speaker. In everyday conversation, it may be that the speaker who introduces the foreign word in Meriam mir simply does not know, or does not recall that word's Meriam mir equivalent. In such simple and passing cases he is briefly notified of the Meriam mir by whichever other speaker first realizes the error. The most senior and competent Meriam mir speaker present monitors the dialogue. He may or may not speak, depending upon how much attention he is paying or how important he takes the explanation to be. Where he has not been the Meriam mir speaker to correct the utterer of the foreign word, he may or may not refine the equivalent Meriam mir. In matters of unimportant translational explication he may not speak to the issue at all (and if he is dozing he will not be awakened to (literally) pass sentence). He is not required to be the one to correct the original misspeech, nor must he adjudicate disputes over competing translations of the foreign word. If, however, he does propose the first Meriam mir equivalent, his is the final word on the subject. He may, if he does so, be only interested in reducing a potential delay in the proceedings; he might be waiting to make a point of his own and not want to wait while others less capable in Meriam mir dilly-dally over a translation or correction which is obvious to him. Whatever the case, if he speaks he speaks last.
The language monitor in any situation is known. He is the 'real man' present who is the most competent speaker of Mériam mir. His authority is extraordinary, for his jurisdiction is the mir—the matrix of meaning, the generator of consequence. It is he who commands the mir kar. Where the situated speech of others may be taken as more or less meaningful. And his pronouncements on language are de jure, for he speaks to the mir from the mir kar.

My suggestion of a de jure language monitor is commensurate with statements of Mériam lé about their mir. But I am, in distinguishing a position of de facto and de jure authority over language, abstracting from the much more general Mériam corpus. Among other aspects of my abstraction, in distinguishing de facto and de jure I risk a characteristic distinction which is only a situational distinction among the Mériam lé. That is, a language monitor is what I have called de facto when he is present and either not speaking or not speaking to the question of mir. His monitorship becomes de jure whenever his speech is to the point of language. A Mériam lé who is a monitor of Mériam mir may come to be recognized as something of an authority in English, and may correct speakers who are learning English, or who utter English words in other speech. His 'monitorship' of English is, however, never more than de facto. As he monitors the English speech of others he acts as does any de facto monitor of Mériam mir who commands relatively more knowledge of the language than does the speaker he interrupts to correct. His actions in monitoring language other than his own mir are only instructive, and any claim he may make to correctiveness is grounded in his observed competence as a speaker and in his reputation. His reputation and competence may be enhanced by his proven or reputed ability to invoke authoritative sources, and an Islander who speaks English will be rarely challenged on his corrections of the English of others if he has attended English-only schools, can use an English dictionary, or can invoke the opinions of more or less recognized English language authorities (e.g. writers, journalists, lecturers...
in English). But he may never claim jurisdiction over the language, and is always liable to be challenged, contradicted, or ignored.  

The point of this comparison is to identify what I referred to above as the "general Meriam corpus". If Meriam mir is the gateway to meaning, the Meriam 'corpus' is the domain wherein meaning has its being. "Corpus" is my translation of the Meriam word tonar [/tonar/;/tonar/[^47]], a word which Meriam le translate variously as "culture", "way", "style", "custom", and less commonly "practice" and "knowledge". Tonar is occasionally rendered in creole as we [/we/;/we/] or pasen [/pasen/-/fasen/[^48]], but is normally accepted by creole hearers as a reference to the original tonar (or to its Western equivalent, powa). While we or pasen are commonly retranslated back into Meriam mir tonar when they arise as nominal references to the Meriam concept, otherwise indiscriminate uses of we or pasen (such as in description of habits or manners of others) are carefully translated into the Meriam mir for the actual 'ways' or practices described. To allow translation of any old we or tonar risks the degeneration of tonar into a generic term for just any old practice. Tonar, unmarked, is heavily value-laden. The tonar of other peoples, in so far as they have any identifiable corpus of values and customs, are lesser tonar. To speak of the tonar of others when the actual practice or body of knowledge has no Meriam equivalent is to identify the alien practice; to speak of the tonar of others as comparable to Meriam tonar is to derogate it. Derogation is suspended by modification or specification, and the 'such-and-such' customs of another people may be compared more or less favourably with the contrasting Meriam tonar. But where no redeeming customs or practices have ever been discerned in an other people, the term for 'so-and-so's tonar' becomes an expression of approbrium, often held up to misbehaving and recalcitrant children as a model of their expected demise if they fail to rectify their behaviour. The childspoken to harshly with "Koléra tonar!"—Whiteman's custom!—knows well that he has gravely
The pattern of his behaviour has not been provided or allowed for by the Meriam corpus, the Meriam tonar.

This is not to suggest that nothing of cultures or customs outside the tonar of the Meriam le has become integral Meriam tonar. Quite to the contrary, the Island people who reside in the mainland Australian towns (including the Meriam people among them) have largely accustomed themselves to common public Australian town-dwelling behaviour. And the Island child whose table manners have been corrected with admonitions of "Kolera tonar!" may, as he grows up and enters the Australian workforce, be advised to pay attention to kolera tonar as he learns how to behave with his fellows at his first casual construction job.

At the extreme, the first Torres Strait Islander apprenticed in the hotel trade (in 1978) has had to learn a 'job tonar'—the customs and practices extant in his chosen field of employment—which is almost wholly a kolera tonar.\(^5^0\) The apprentice entered the hotel trade from a devout fundamentalist Christian family, a family of professed tea-totallers which lacks virtually any etiquette of social drinking (i.e. any 'drinking-tonar'). Except for the serving of those of his customers who are Islanders, he has survived as an apprentice to the extent that he has learned to behave as a principal functionary in a domain of kolera drinking tonar.\(^5^1\) Which is to say that he has had to behave according to the corpus of rules and practices for social drinking in (local) white culture, whether or not he is able to formulate the generative aspects of that while culture or, even, whether or not he is able to formulate the actual rules governing his own day-to-day presence behind the bar.

Insofar as his behaviour is within the domain of kolera tonar, and is exclusively or solely so, the Islander in the Australian workforce embodies no fundamental problems. Work is not the whole of life, and work which is not encompassed by traditional tonar is not liable to the dictates of that corpus. The young Islander apprentice in the local pub is an extreme case. The aspects of whiteman's culture which provide the 'drinking-tonar' according to which he retains his
job are virtually never in conflict with any Islander tonar. He is constrained to learn English pub vocabulary, and to behave behind the bar according to pub sociolinguistics and decorum. And, although this requires the whole of his learning how to become a 'real man' to be done outside the pub and work hours, neither is his behaviour at work admissible in discussions among his elders regarding his maturing (or not) into a potential 'real Island man'.

Problems occur for the worker whose job requires his behaviour in a domain of competing tonar. The vast majority of employed Islanders in the mainland towns work for white entities. Certainly the companies and firms and agencies who employ Islanders have been generated by, and in, and according to koléra tonar. But in contrast to the extraordinary case of the pub, most employing entities are engaged in work which is governed more or less by traditional rules and custom. For the Meriam lé on the mainland there is Meriam tonar for nearly all of his possible job opportunities. The Islander who becomes a builder's labourer brings in him to the construction site a corpus of rules for behaviour and decorum governing the construction of houses and communal buildings in the Islands. He may, in fact, be prevented in particular circumstances from even getting the job in the first place.

Around noon on Friday I stopped by to see if Koiki was free for lunch. It had become our occasional habit to duck the midday North Queensland heat for an hour or so. We would retreat into one of the two or three coffee houses along the main street and bask in air-conditioning, flavouring our talk of what had been going on lately with freshly brewed coffee and maybe a curried egg sandwich. I hadn't seen him for a couple of days, so before he could tell me his usual story about how much work he had to do and how many people were waiting to see him, I reminded him of his doctor's orders to stop working so hard and learn how to take occasional breaks from the pressure. He'd had a long and hard morning and was easily persuaded. We went to what was becoming our favourite coffee shop. And the Danish proprietor ensured his establishment as our favourite when, seeing us coming through the window which looked onto the shopping mall, he had planted one black
coffee and one cappucino at the cornermost of our two usual

I told Koiki that I had been in the city yesterday and
had looked for him around lunchtime. He said that a couple
of girls had arrived on the mainland yesterday from Mér.
Their plane landed at around 10:30 in the morning and they
had fronted up at his office at 11:15 or so, straight from
the airport. They were here to look for work, and for a
place to stay, and wanted Koiki to help them get organized.
So he'd had them wait around until his lunch hour and then
the three of them toured the central city area while Koiki
pointed out 'Island places' in the city. He'd taken them
to his bank and introduced them to his bank manager so they
could open savings accounts to put their excess traveling
money into, and so they would be able to cash paycheques if
and when they found work. On the way back from the bank
they encountered some Meriam countrymen shopping, and all
eight or ten of them decided to continue swapping stories
of Mér over lunch.

A cousin of the new girls was there, a young man in his
mid-twenties, along with an older maternal aunt of his who
wanted to know all about the girls' mothers, cousins of
hers whom she hadn't seen since she left Mér twelve or
thirteen years ago. They went into the cafeteria on the
ground floor of David Jones department store, went through
the queue for their food, and shoved a couple of tables
together so they could all sit and talk.

Koiki started to chuckle. He said the young man had
started to eat his chicken with his hands. I figured it
for barbecued chicken in a paper bucket, or maybe fried
chicken and chips thrown on a plate, and wondered why this
was funny. Koiki caught my look, and shook his head, still
repressing his chuckle.

'Mmph. No.' he said. 'Chicken with all kinda sauce and
vegies all over it...an' he just picked it up.' I laughed a
bit with him, then, but was still not sure which of the
transgressions of koie etiquette were laughable.

He said the old auntie was aghast. She stopped eating
and reached across the table to pick up the young man's
fork.

'Agera tonar! Agera tonar!' she said in a disgusted,
forceful whisper, and tapped him on the arm with his fork.
He dropped the food back onto his place, and everybody had
a good-natured giggle, especially when they noticed that
the new girls, fresh over from the islands, were already
eating with their forks.
Fortunately the young man was still young enough to be excused a transgression which, given his youth, would only be taken as incidental. His mistake would have been graver had there been any kolé eating with them, for the transgression of the knife-and-fork rules would have pointedly insulted any whiteman whose very tonar was so blatantly ignored. But I was surprised that anyone so old could still be admonished, even by his own aunt and among relatives, with the very strong 'Agéra tonar!'

I had seen little children picking up dirt and putting it in their mouths have their hands slapped with a whispered 'Agéra tonar' ['(Australian) Aboriginal practice', or 'Aboriginal culture']. But among adults this was normally an epithet. And it was, when uttered between men, a curse which was usually prevented from causing a fight by the intervention of an older man present, if the potential combatants were fortunate to have an elder there. Koiki said that one of the funny things about it was that the old woman must have been really disgusted to make such a big thing of it. All she would have had to do was remind him that they were eating in a kolé place, and were eating koléa lewer [whiteman food], and so he should eat according to koléra tonar. Part of the reason for the younger people's delight was the excess, and perhaps the slight error, of their old lady. It certainly wasn't the same sort of thing that had happened to Eidi.

A week ago a windfall of four jobs had come up with a construction outfit that was known to accept Islander applicants. The word had gone out and the Islander job-getting network had mobilized to locate five of the best known out-of-work construction workers, put them in contact with the Commonwealth Employment Service in order to obtain CES introduction cards to show to the foreman first thing Monday morning. (The CES cards were proof not only of the validity of the unemployed status of the applicant, but also proof that the applicant was listed in the CES construction labour pool and had been referred, usually by telephone, in advance to the personnel officer of the company listing its vacancies.) This had been accomplished. And working fathers and uncles with functioning and registered cars had been organized to get the applicants out to the construction site on the edge of town by 7:30 Monday morning. The Islander record with this construction outfit was a good one, and pains were taken to ensure that only good and regular workers would be the Islander applicants. It was known that, barring incident,
it was possible that all the vacancies could be filled by Islanders, and the prospect of scooping any non-Islander applicants added to the excitement of getting young men into jobs.

Eidi had been selected as one of the five applicants. The selectors were an informal aggregation of older men with acknowledged experience in whiteman jobs who assisted Koiki, the Islander expert in obtaining jobs 'whiteman-style'. They had proposed him despite the fact that he had lost his last construction job shortly after flattening a foreman who had insulted him. There was no question that an insult had taken place, nor any question at all of his response—given the proviso that his story of the event was accurate—having been inappropriate. But there was a risk of alienating this particular employer, a risk which had to be weighed against the number of kids Eidi and his wife were having to support on unemployment benefits. There were other factors in his favour over younger and unmarried men still able to live with their parents and relations. And in the end Eidi appeared on Monday morning at job-granting time. By Monday evening I had heard that the four jobs had gone to the four younger Islanders, but that Eidi was still out of work.

I asked Koiki over our third coffee what had happened. I hadn't seen Eidi since last week, and nobody I had talked to had been able to say anything more than the job had not, apparently, suited him. The nuances of the reports, however, indicated a confrontation of some sort had occurred, or had nearly occurred, and that this was typical of Eidi. Whatever the case, the patchy reports indicated that this was one of those things which I shouldn't be surprised at. Not knowing as much as I was credited with, I had been neither surprised nor unsurprised. Finally I got to ask Koiki about it.

'Eidi he turn up on time,' Koiki said, 'but he sense kolé foreman no like him.'

'Why?' I asked. 'Because he knew him? Or did Eidi do something?'

'No. Because he Island-man. Eidi knew this foreman no like Island-man.'

'But what about the others? They're Island men too.'

'They Island, but they too young,' Koiki said. 'They not know.'

I asked Koiki what he meant by this, and how it was that Eidi knew this foreman didn't like Islanders. Did the foreman do something, or say something, to give Eidi the impression that he disliked Islanders?
'No. Eidi he just sensed it. Maybe this kolé no like black man, maybe he only no like Island-man. So Eidi say he already got a job, sorry, and he do 'way.'

I was incredulous. 'Eidi sensed the foreman didn't like Island men so he told him that he already had another job!? He said he was sorry to bother them, and then he just left?'

'Wao' [(/wao/ - /wav/) = affirmative exclamation, akin to "Right!", or "Sure!"] Koiki nodded. 'This proper Meriam tonar. When Meriam lé sense he not welcome he must go quietly away. In Meriam tonar, meriba adgizera tonar [lit: our ancestors' time], one of the Old Ones went to a village he didn't know. He waited outside the village and people come out. He sense they no like him, he not welcome at this village, so he tell them he must go on his way. He say this mamor Meriam tonar [lit: true Meriam way]. When he come back to his people, he tell them, Meriam mir kar: when Meriam lé sense he not welcome, he must go quietly away.'

I understood then the ambiguity in the earlier, patchy accounts of Eidi's encounter with the foreman that Monday morning. I ought to have been both surprised and not surprised: It was mildly surprising that Eidi, known to be a competent and experienced participant in whiteman scenes, had opted for the uncompromising code of Meriam tonar: but, having done so, it is not surprising that he did not take the job, for a Meriam lé may not enter or remain where he is unwelcome and he must go quietly away. It was to Eidi's credit, among his countrymen, that he behaved as a mamor Meriam lé [true Meriam man]. Meriam tonar did not require that he opt for behaving according to its strictures. The scene was not an Island scene. The foreman was kolé, and the language of hiring and firing is (except for all-Islander crews on the railways, or cane-cutting, or on fishing boats) English. It does not discount his behaviour that he was unable to announce his exit from the scene in Meriam mir. In fact, in the case of extricating one's unwelcome self from an English-speaking scene, the extent to which one is able to make one's untroublesomeness and courtesy evident is the extent to which one conforms most closely to the stricture of Meriam tonar.
Later reports from those hired at the construction site indicated that the foreman looked momentarily nonplussed at Eidi's apparently having arrived at job-granting time with a job already in hand; but there were no indications that his was more than fleeting interest. Certainly I was the only one asking such questions, and the foreman's reaction after the fact was in no way part of the account. It was sufficient to the tonar that Eidi had been courteous, had not made anything of what was taken generally to be simply common racial prejudice, and had left. The event was never recounted as exemplary of Eidi's proper behaviour as a Meriam lé. To do so would have been to impute that he was not, or to allow the interpretation that it was somehow possible to be a Meriam lé sometimes, and sometimes not. The implication of whim, of personal choice in the matter of being a Meriam lé inherent in such an imputation would impugn the Meriam tonar.

There is a sense in Koiki's explanation of Eidi's behaviour of tonar as 'corpus'. His reference to the story of the Old One was not prompted, nor was there any thoughtful hesitation during his statement to break the tempo of the flow from recounting Eidi's encounter with the foreman to recounting the Old One's encounter with the strange villagers. Moreover, the critical instruction "he must go quietly away" is faithfully recorded in both instances in my account here. That is, Koiki's final utterance in the tale of Eidi's recent encounter exactly presaged his final utterance in the tale of the Old One. And this final utterance, though rendered in English, was an exact rewording into English of a recorded instruction, the instruction of the Old One to his people of several centuries ago. It was the Old One's instruction to Eidi to be Mérimam lé: go quietly away.

Explicit references to the Old Ones, and to the ways of the ancestors are relatively infrequently made. And it was quite some time before I was comfortable with the notion of tonar as corpus. Accounts such as this one of Koiki's certainly underscored the translational idea of 'corpus' as it began more and more to press
itself on me. The mundane problem, or one of them, was that "corpus" was not apparently in any Islander's English vocabulary. And tonar was translated for me as "culture", and "custom" by more or less fluent English speakers, and much more often was translated into creole we or pasen. The real problem, vis à vis my comprehension, was the increasingly refined distinctions made (for my benefit) between the tonar and the mir. The paramount distinction became that of mamor and kar, of truth and reality.

I suggested above the meaninglessness (or, senselessness) of saying 'kar kab'. Such is simply not the way to say 'real dance', which is properly said "kab kar". And my misspeech, when I said 'kar kab', was simply and passingly corrected by whichever man or men in the group were authorized to monitor my language. (My nominal age during my sojourn with the Islander people was around forty, which is a few years older than I actually was. In my ignorance of the language, almost every man around was 'authorized' by his greater proficiency to monitor my speech, given the proviso that he was at least as old as I was taken to be.) These relatively more proficient speakers were what I have called de facto monitors, people who could correct my grammar and pronunciation by interrupting me in mid-sentence and who could respond to my questions about my erroneous speech (so long as such elaborations were appropriate in the situation). They could not correct each other's speech with such aplomb, but were generally free to argue over whether or not the initial correction of my speech was the 'most correct' correction available. So there were a lot of arguments over my speech and over corrections of it, but very few corrections of each other's speech—and no arguments.

Such misspeech and correction is the domain of the mir, of the common language. It is the arena of the de facto language monitor, and the speaker who interrupts to correct the speech of another makes a claim to de facto monitorship. When corrections of points of fact are made, monitors claim (or assert) the authority of expertise and command over specialized vocabulary. The interruptions are
authorized after the fact, according to whether or not exception is taken to their claim to greater knowledge or experience. Exception to corrections of my speech were never made by me, for I had only the minimum authority: the authority to listen. (For a long time I had not even that minimal authorization, and was by definition unwelcome in Meriam mir speech-scenes.) My authority to listen, and to attempt to respond in mir when spoken to, enfranchised my presence, but not my unprompted utterance.

But my misspeech was so frequent that my errors generated a large number of disputes over correct mir. I was not party to the disputes, but was obliged to accept the final verdict. The final verdict in cases of my errors was always given by the speaker who established final de facto monitorship in each situation. And I was on occasion presented with two conflicting 'correct' versions, and sometimes even by the speaker who had proposed the 'less correct' of two versions shaking his head in the direction of the 'winner' and reiterating his version to me sotto voce. All of this action and interaction proceeded, as I have said, de facto, in and about the facts of the common language. But there were, early in my sojourn, instances which seemed invested with more import than others. I have since learned to take these less frequent and more important incidents as more consequential, for I learned to recognize the men of consequence. In the domain of the mir it is the man of consequence who commands meaning.

The presence of a man of consequence renders any de facto language situation de jure. There are not, on the Australian mainland, many of these men. But all of them are known to the Meriam lé on the mainland, and in conversations which turn, from time to time, to matters of talk, they are closely watched. He may or may not be otherwise a person of means or authority (though among those few on the mainland he is likely to be), but his is the jurisdiction of talk, and his verdicts are final. He may not engage in de facto disputes over more or less correct mir. De facto disputes over correcting the misspeech of a learner may go on in his presence, but
only so long as he does not indicate his interest in the matter. He is teacher and adjudicator and source, and may allow informed discussion or dispute to continue in the interests of the education of those disputing their proposed corrections. But his indication of interest in any such matter commands silence, for his is the vested interest. He is the language monitor de jure, and a single downward nod of his head suffices for him to express his verdict.53 There is no rejoinder, nor rebuttal, and it is extraordinary for even the most assertive posers of corrections to take sotto voce exception to the verdict. Those who do so are reminded with a commanding "Ssst", usually followed with their whispered name if they persist. And such whispers are from others, not from the language monitor, for in making the persistor mindful of where he is they are seeking to defuse the situation. Were the persistor allowed to continue to express exception to the 'verdict', the whole situation would escalate into confrontation.

Confrontations between a de jure language monitor and another's Meriam mir occur, though seldom. It is not possible for the de jure monitor to be unknown (I am restricting this discussion to mainland scenes), so confrontations are, by definition, escalations. The de jure language monitor is the speaker of consequence, and his verdicts over disputes in the mir are final dicta. The speaker who expresses his exception to a verdict challenges the jurisdiction by his very expression. The language monitor may not let such expressions of exception pass except at the risk of his office, a risk which is exacerbated by the limited number of language monitors on the mainland.54 That is, a challenge which risks the very office of the de jure monitor, when there are no other de jure monitors available, risks his being 'deposed' and the 'office' left untenanted. The spectre of the ensuing free-for-all, of the unchecked suzerainty of de facto verdicts over the mir, weighs heavily on the incumbent monitor. While exception may be momentarily taken among others, especially as they discuss and learn the implications of the 'verdict', the monitor may not permit exceptions to him. As teacher
and source he is obliged to enable speakers to improve their language, and he may well allow ad hoc disputations to his verdicts among those discussing them. He may or may not participate in such discussions. If he does he does so with caution, for his responsibility as teacher must not be overwhelmed by his presence as source: he must allow sufficiently free discussion in order to enable the mir—the common speech—to be informed by his pronouncements of the mir kar. Except as ancillary issues of language dispute may require his intervention, either requested or proferred, the language monitor is seldom readdressed during discussions whereby the consequences of his dicta are consolidated. But in the case of his verdict being disputed to him such consolidating discussions are preempted by confrontation. They may be deferred until later (they often are, with discussion of the final correction resuming after the resolution of the confrontation), or they may be simply forgotten or disregarded. Whatever the case, the potential discussants are rendered audience at the instant of the utterance which protests a verdict of the monitor. The monitor eschews his presence as teacher, momentarily, when a protest to his decision as adjudicator challenges him as source.

The protest is, then, a matter de jure. Insofar as it persists in a confrontation of the monitor it escalates the confrontation from the domain of adjudication toward the domain of source. The de jure language monitor is in final position. He has no appellate jurisdiction, for his is the jurisdiction of first and final arbitration. There is no more real speech than the mir kar. In taking exception to the dictum of the monitor the challenger pretends to consequence; his pretense is his claim to meaning. For meaning is a matter of consequence, and the mir kar is its means. All speech events are, by his de jure pronouncement, final events.

The language monitor is enjoined to be careful and accurate by the burden of real speech. His mir kar is by definition precise and true, and exceptions to it are not voiced lightly. Also, in arguments over points of language, when one of the disputants looks like heading for
a confrontation with the language monitor, another speaker will often assert himself as a \textit{de facto} monitor in order to maintain the dispute in the arena of the common \textit{mir}. But when, despite all efforts to the contrary (which may even include the monitor himself ignoring the developing situation\textsuperscript{55}), a protest is said, everybody else gets out of the way. They will physically move if they are obstructing the monitor's and protester's clear view of each other, and may even leave the room. They monitor their facial expressions and potentially expressive limbs in order that they do not signify participation. And they fall quiet.

There are two principal reasons for this quietude at the lodging of a challenge to the language monitor. On the one hand, nobody but the perpetrator of the challenge wants to be taken for announcing the challenge; on the other, if they fail to keep silent they may be taken to be \textit{de facto} alliance with the protester. These two reasons are related, subtly different, and have to do with consequence. Challenges are, as I have said, never lodged lightly. And challenges of a single individual are made by more than one person only under a cloud of cowardice. Nobody fights the battles of a \textit{Mérim le} for him. This is a dictate to be found in the corpus of the \textit{Mérim tonar}, and one which is reiterated on the occasional battlegrounds of the streets of mainland towns. To require an ally against a single opponent is to signify fear; to engage another as the witting accomplice of a fearful man is shameful. Moreover, a man attacked en masse is bound by no strictures of fair play, and the most extraordinary displays of deadly proficiency are found in the legends and tales of \textit{Mérim le} who were attacked while outnumbered by enemies. A challenger, therefore, who requires allies is in implicit contravention of \textit{tonar}, a contravention which, if made explicit, threatens his identity as a \textit{Mérim le}.

The second reason, that of \textit{de facto} alliance and prevention thereof, is more commonly an effect of the silence of those not lodging the challenge (as against the first silence which bespeaks a motivation grounded in \textit{tonar}). That is, the notice of challenge is
easily given and obvious because the challenger is the only one speaking. Everyone else, including the language monitor, is silent. This is the consequence of the delivery of the verdict of the language monitor. His is the final say in all matters of language. When his say is a verdict, a pronouncement of and in the mir kar, it admits no rebuttal nor comment. In passing judgement he may speak only the mir kar, for judgements of talk are of themselves real things. And the mir kar is silence, for by definition further talk is inconsequential. The consequences of final utterance lie in the domains of action and of knowledge. When a final utterance is a judgement (correction or verdict) of language, the consequences are twofold: in the domain of knowledge, the pronouncement must be henceforth known and remembered as mir kar; in the domain of action, there must be no talk. And this is so. Depending upon the severity of the correction by the language monitor, and depending upon the investment made in proposing his erroneous speech (or correction of another's speech) by the speaker, a silence of some seconds follows the pronouncement of the verdict. Ipso facto if anyone is talking he is challenging the judgement.

This post-judgemental silence places a mandate of meaning on the utterance which breaks it: the silence-breaking utterance means challenge. This is the only possible meaning. In matters of judgement over minimally important points of talk, the person who 'accidentally' keeps talking (having, say, not noticed that a judgement was being made in another quarter of the conversation) is chagrinned. His chagrin is obvious, and is accurately taken to reflect his having realized what was going on. Once he has realized what was going on, he is silent. His comprehending, if late, silence is often signified by a slight bowing of the head; but, however he so signifies he may not, for instance, apologize, for apology is utterance and utterance during post-judgemental silence is challenge. In acknowledging his error and in signifying it by being silent as soon as he realizes his gaffe, the errant speaker 'erases' his utterance. This is critical. He is no way retracts it, neither
what it was he said nor what he meant. The distinction between whatever he said and whatever he meant at the time is dissolved by the dictum of the mir kar. In speaking he meant to challenge. When it becomes obvious that he was not entering a challenge (to the judgement which he wasn't, obviously, aware was proceeding), he is deemed to have not spoken. And the language monitor may not make the mistake of taking his unaware utterance to have been a challenge, for by signifying his 'erasure' the speaker has, post facto, never spoken, and the monitor who takes the now non-speech as challenge risks the humiliation of making something of nothing. In this convoluted logic of mir and mir kar the monitor who generates anything of consequence from an erased utterance not only misuses his office, but also debases the mir kar by attending in real speech to an utterance which never 'really' occurred.

This dual silence after a judgement has to do with the domains of truth and reality, with (as I mentioned above) distinctions of tonar and mir. The duality of silence to which I refer is the silence of the language monitor after he delivers his verdict, and the silence of those present at the delivery. The distinction is between having nothing to say and being speechless. It is exact, though this particular analytical distinction is most often explanatory rather than diagnostic among the Meriam lé. The language monitor who has delivered his verdict has nothing to say, having just delivered a final utterance in mir kar. He waits, silently, for any discussions among his hearers regarding his decision, discussions which he does not participate in; or he waits, sometimes anxiously, for challenges which may rarely ensue; or he waits, along with everyone else, until the requisite silence has passed and discussion of non-language matters may resume. The agent of his silence is meaning, for he may not speak without consequence and the consequence of meaningful judgement is silence. The domain of his silence is the mir, the language, and is a particular consequence of his office as utterer and monitor of the mir kar, the source of all mir and the precedent
for all adjudications of mir. He is silent. He is the only one who may speak. And he has nothing to say.

The speakers who make up his audience embody a very different silence, a silence of a different order. They are not momentarily not-speaking; for the moment they are speechless. They have no mir. To choose to speak from speechlessness is to enter the constraints on meaning which inhere in silences of the mir kar. The meaning of the breaking of post-judgemental silence is restricted to challenge, and challenge of the monitor may not be made with impunity. The choice to speak is not the choice of speaking and not speaking, it is the choice of challenge versus speechlessness. Post-judgemental silences are defined by, and happen in the domain of, the mir kar. There is no inconsequential mir kar, and only the monitor and the challenger may speak mir kar out of silence. The domain of the everyday mir, the common speech, is by definition suspended. More-or-less real speech is unwelcome in the domain of the mir kar. Those who keep silent after the delivery of a verdict are, in their speechlessness, keeping the tonar. This is the Meriam way. The corpus is almost never explicated. It is sufficient unto each incident that the would-be challenger is reminded of the severity and risk of his action.

The burden of proof and illustration on the challenger is enormous. In challenging a monitor of language he lays claim to superior knowledge and more skillful command of the mir kar. There is, as I have said, no appellate jurisdiction of mir kar. The appeal of the challenger must, therefore, be made to the monitor and the audience. The audience, to the extent that they have complied with Meriam tonar, have already exempted themselves from the confrontation. It is no small thing for them to rescind their own exemptions. They must not only risk alliance with the challenger, but also each risk contravention of the mir kar, even to the extent that active listening is participation in speech. And the probability of the challenger requiring the monitor to 'overturn his verdict' are slim, for in doing so the monitor either risks his
position as supremely able speaker or he admits to error in the mir kar. And in the mir kar there can be no error.

Notionally this is because errors are unreal things. Errant speakers, such as the speaker mentioned above who continues speaking through a post-judgemental silence, do not 'correct' their errors. They cannot. Real speech may not engage unreal things. What such errant speakers do is render their mistaken utterance unreal. The language monitor who has rendered a judgement in mir kar cannot render it unreal. Once mir kar is uttered it is out there, in the public domain, and it is a real thing. It may not be made 'unreal', nor can its utterer qualify it after the fact. He cannot modify it at all. He can't even apologize for it. So the best the challenger can hope to do is make his point and leave. If he does so nobly, and with courage, his community has grounds for moving to reduce his exile. In doing so, when they so choose, their appeal is public and is grounded in the values of forthright and courageous individual action. Their implicit claim for redress is wider rather than higher, and is public rather than privately made to the language monitor whose decision was challenged.

This wider more public appeal is a wider and more public appeal made in light of the tonar, the corpus which is wider and larger than the mir. It is also a corpus which is more public. The values and prescriptions provided by Meriam tonar are generally known to all Meriam le. Where specifically precedental myths and stories are restricted, the template for Meriam behaviour which they encode and provide is not. Most Meriam le will not know certain stories of the legendary activities of cult heroes, for they are not privy to the cults which possess them. But all will know of the fundamental values of courage and knowledge which those stories underwrite. It is in light of these values that appeals may be made to invite the challenger back into the action of the community. This appeal is implicit rather than explicit, and is often in the form of utterances pointed to induce responses from him in public (especially where his silence vis à vis the language monitor had become a more general
silence) and pointed invitations to him for his attendance at (or increased participation in) non-language matters of community activity. Until such time as the language monitor challenged is replaced (effectively never, until his death), the transgression of the mir kar stands, and is never either referred to or alluded to. The grounds for his resumed inclusion are the grounds that he is a Meriam lé. To the extent that his challenge is remembered (and it is never forgotten by everyone), he may ameliorate the blot on his life-record as a Meriam lé to the extent that his transgression is transformed into merely an error (either an error of mir, reduced in its effect as he becomes a more competent speaker, or an error of personal judgement, reduced in its effect as he becomes more mature). But the best it can ever be is an error. And this is a problem. For, just as 'erroneous' speaking of the mir kar is assigned to the domain of unreality, so is erroneous behaviour as a Meriam lé assigned to the realm of untruth. The assignment is at times explicit, and it is said (by those senior men who are authorized to make such far-reaching pronouncements) as some once-Meriam lé, those who have succumbed to the degenerative influences of a life-style of drink or of the pervasive adud tonar [bad culture, ranging from bad practice or bad (i.e. poor) custom(s) to the extreme of bad (i.e. defective) culture.] of white or Aboriginal society, 'E nole mamor Meriam lé' [lit: He no/not true Meriam lé].

The point is that a man degenerates from Meriam lé to nole Meriam lé by accumulating errors of tonar. He may do so by contravening Meriam tonar (i.e. by acting in adud tonar or [creole:] bad pasen), or by adopting behaviour commensurate with the customary and characteristic adud tonar of another society. It is important that he may not degenerate in his capacity as Meriam lé by committing errors in speech. While the corpus of the tonar informs good speech, both in manner and style and in what is said, and while the mir kar (and in everyday life, the common mir) is the means of access to the tonar—what I have called the gateway to meaning—the domains are critically different. A Meriam lé who gains extraordinary
proficiency in the mir kar, as language monitors do, does not become something other than a Mériam lé; rather, he becomes an extraordinary one. A man who is a known speaker of the mir kar who outdoes even his own usual high level of proficiency at a public speaking event is applauded, and the audience acclaims his speech in the manner of 'Hear, hear!'. But the Mériam mir acclamation does not record his verbal efforts so much as his personal prowess. That is, the applause is not accompanied with cheers of, say, débé mir [lit: good speech]. Complimenting the speech efforts of another is not done without risk of insult except to a child who is learning the language. The man who presumes to speak in public in Mériam mir must a priori command the mir kar. To compliment "real speech" with something like 'good talk!' is to reduce the reality of the mir kar to a domain wherein good and bad are applicable. What the audience shouts is "Au débélé! Au débélé!" [lit: Very good-man!; colloquially translated, for instance, "Good man! Good show!"]. Granted that the speaker commands the mir kar, he had demonstrated superior command. He is already a Mériam lé (he must be in order to address a formal public event of Mériam lé), and has enriched his presence as lé with the addition of skilful public command of the mir. And it is so that, finally, it is in skilled and knowledgeable individuals that the domains of lé and mir may coincide.

To achieve this coincidence of lé and mir, in the highest achievement the coincidence of tonar and mir kar (so far as command of the entire corpus and ideal command of real speech are possible for one human being), is to become educated. The educated man is the most man there can be. As long as there are educated men to learn from, any Mériam lé can learn all of the tonar there is to know and can learn to speak the best possible speech. Among Island people the reverence for education is deep-rooted and profound. It is virtually impossible for a Mériam lé to be taken for an educated man if he does not (yet) command the mir kar, for the Mériam mir kar is the language of the educated ones. (Similarly it is virtually impossible for a non-Mériam person to become educated, for the domain
of education is the Meriam tonar. In language, the language monitor, the educated speaker who is teacher and source and judge over language, is the actual gatekeeper to the learning of meanings. He must literally accept the would-be language learner. He is obliged by the tonar to assess the willingness and ability of the potential student of the mir kar. In the days of the Torres Strait cults, even up to the days of the contemporary Islanders’ grandparents, this assessment was public announcement of readiness and acceptability for initiation into the ways of educated men. Nowadays it is assessment of readiness and acceptability to study with the local language monitor. On the mainland, students are few and far between. And the poignance of the educated man’s regret is keen, for, finally, without educated men there may be no true men, no mamor Meriam le.

It is only the educated men who may know consequences, and who may be able to deal with whole meanings. The Meriam le invoke this responsibility and obligation of the educated man to the rest of the Meriam people in the idiom of bar kak [lit: curves without]. The tao of the Old Ones is known, and it was a troubled and confusing way, 'straightened' only by heroic efforts of educated men, men of forethought and foresight; the tao of contemporary Meriam le is an eventual one, one whose 'curves' must be met and straightened by educated men.

The man who is educated in the ways of dugong and the making of baur [spear] throws his spear only once, for the baur of the educated man flies true and bar kak and, flying true, confirms that it was made and thrown by an educated man. The men who go to sea with an uneducated navigator are unwise, for only the educated man may navigate bar kak through the reefs and currents of the Torres Strait or the North Queensland coast. Those who listen to uneducated men, even to those who appear to speak well and use the words of the mir kar, listen at their own peril. For meaningful and consequential speech is powerful, and commands action and knowledge. It is only the educated man who known the tonar and may perceive consequences
and dangers which lesser men do not see. It is only, in the end, the
educated man who speaks the talk with no curves, the bar kak mir.

I had received an invitation on Thursday evening to come to my cousin-brother's house for "kikem lewer". I knew lewer to be food, and that kikem was the time of day ranging from early afternoon to midnight. The invitation was explicitly extended to me for both me and my wife, but she worked until late afternoon and I didn't know yet whether it was less discourteous to show up on time alone or for both of us to arrive late. The best translation of "kikem lewer" I could get was creole "aptanoon kai-kai"; but such a literal translation of the Meriam mir of the invitation was little help in the dilemma. And there was no chance for error. This was not only my first visit to the home of my cousin-brother, it would be my first formal meeting with the Aule [literally (and respectfully): Old Man] who was staying there. I had only just been publicly 'authorized' as an acceptable 'learner', and would be expected to be well-behaved in the presence of an Aule.

I ran all over town until I procured an English translation just in time to get cleaned up and get both of us to the house in time for 'evening meal'. We were welcomed into "our house" [meriba meta:our house, where 'our' includes both speaker and those spoken to], had kikem lewer of traditional Meriam cuisine, and retired for tea and talk with the Aule and his wife.

'Lare em stadi we bio yumi,' my cousin-brother said, by way of introduction, to the Old Man. "Em wante lern tok bio yumi ana prapa Meriam tonar. Em sabe pisin ingglis ana kebi-kebi Meriam mir.'

[Larry he studies our ways....He wants to learn our language and proper Meriam tonar. He understands 'pidgin English' (i.e. the vernacular name for Torres Strait Creole) and a little bit of Meriam mir.]

Aule turned to me. 'Yu stadi tonar blo mpla yu mas lern langgus blo mpla.' [(If) you study our culture you must learn our language.]

'Wao,' I said. 'I sabe kebi-kebi Meriam mir.'

'No good!' The Aule speared the air between us with his finger. 'Nole kebi-kebi!—Au Meriam mir!'

'Mmmm. I wante lern prapa tok blo yupla,' I nodded. [Uh-huh. I want to learn proper talk of yours.]

The Aule half-rose to his feet. 'Prapa tok?! No "prapa
tok"! Mériam mir! Yu lérn mamor Mériam mir!—Mériam mir
kar!...BAR KAK MIR!
Silence among Torres Strait Islanders is a means of social action, and the significant Islander is one who, among capacities, is able to be silent and to command the silence of others. Silences are more or less meaningful in Islander talk on the mainland of Australia, sometimes varying in meaningfulness according to the variously meaningful languages in which the silence occurs, and sometimes employing meanings of silence which refer to domains of action outside language. Silences are language-bound by one language, linguistically bound to the domain of all (available) language, and unbound by language but bound by culture and custom. And there are silences which are doubly meaningful (such as those which are comprehensible both to monolingual speakers of the language not-spoken during the silence and to speakers of any of the other languages extant in Torres Strait Islander speech communities); and, rarely, silences which are trebly meaningful, powerful silences which invoke culture as they break talk.

My intent in this chapter is to pose a trinomial Islander silence, and to present a discussion of Islander silences grounded therein. The discussion is necessarily explicative, for in proposing a trinomial system I am making propositionally explicit the domains of action and inaction implicit in Islander talk. These domains may be
referred to, notionally and ideally, in Island talk, but they do not comprise any Islander meta-linguistics of silence. My effort here is thereby rendered analytically descriptive rather than translational, for there are no corresponding terms in Islander talk to what I use to label domains of the meanings of silence.

In Chapter 2 I discussed how specific 'jumps' from the familiar (familiar usually by virtue of being in or of one's own culture) to the alien otherness are facilitated by language. From George Steiner's suggestion that we might call the capacity of language to put other than that which is the case, "alternity", I proposed to call those possibilities which have not occurred—outcomes which might have been, eventualities which failed to eventuate—alternities. Loosely speaking, any human silence may be said to imply certain alternities. I have suggested above that Islander silences may imply alternities of talk (other words which might have been said in the situation) or alternities of action (actions other than speaking which might have been done in the situation). But alternities are much more specific than these two general classes of action-alternities and speech-alternities. They are as specific as the differences between what happens and what might have happened that can be discussed by any human participant or observer.

In the preceding chapters I have used what I might call the 'general alternity' of anthropology: what happens (in one culture) versus what might have happened but did not (since it happened in another culture according to the regulation of that culture's happenings). In this one I shall detail the happenings of a meeting, one of the interminable evening meetings of Torres Strait Mainland social organisation. And from time to time, in order to explicate a natural silence by reference to whatever that silence took the place of, I shall detail an alternity.

I do so by using the alternity of language to bring 'the case that is not the case' (after Steiner) to life in order to compare it with the life actually lived and witnessed. Later (see the Conclusion:
Storytime) I shall discuss why in my view it is by stories that such comparisons may be made. For now let me begin the actual account of a silence-filled meeting, which account I shall for my own part fill with specific alternities which I will then stand aside from and discuss.

A dozen or so Islanders are sitting in a rough circle of chairs drawn together in one end of an Islander meeting-place. They are waiting for the meeting to get under way, and fill the time with talk of the day's happenings at the railway yards, news from back home in the islands, possible plans for sending a Torres Strait Dance Team to the upcoming Show in Bowen and how to raise the money for transport and lodging of twenty or thirty kids and adults. It will be a couple hundred miles round-trip, and overnight lodging of black Islanders in white Queensland towns always requires some forethought. Soon the problems of sending a dance team monopolize the talk, and advice of adults who have previously chaperoned dance teams to the Bowen Show are solicited.

A car door closes in the street outside the meeting-place. Footsteps are heard on the footpath outside. Talk continues inside, but ears are cocked at the footsteps and a couple of men near the door stop talking for a moment in order to listen.

Nothing more is heard for a second or two. Then, all of a sudden, footsteps on the front stairs.

All talk stops; every head turns to the doorway. [Silence.]

The silence is potent. It is a reaction to an occurrence which is extrinsic to the business of the meeting. It is also extrinsic to the goings-on which are the conversational talk at the moment. It is an example of the kind of silence which I call immanent silence. It is a break in the action of talk, a break necessitated by potential reorganisation for action. The talk stops because the required action of dealing with the sounder of the footsteps may not entail talking to him. Disembodied footsteps which, by discernment of their sound and direction, promise the entry of their owner into an Islander place are the footsteps of an intruder. Intruderhood is an identity grounded in the facts of Island life; it is open neither to debate nor to speculation. The heads did not turn because the
approaching person might be an intruder, but because only intruders
make disembodied footsteps. The talking ceases because it is
impossible to listen to talk and listen to activity at the same
time—and because the activity of an intruder is more pressing than
almost any talk.

There is no telling what may be required in dealing with the
intruder. He may turn out to be a kole-man or markai-man [whiteman
(Eastern and Western dialects, respectively)]. In that case, except
when the logic of his approaching this Islander meeting-place may be
reasonably inferred from his actions, the Islander present with
the best command of English will likely be called on to approach him
on the stairway and find out what he wants. And there is a remote
possibility that what he wants is something bad or troublesome, when
whatever it is he wants is determined, and that more-or-less
defensive action may be required even after the intervention of the
interpreter. He may turn out to be the proprietor of the building
which houses the meeting-place, the only whiteman with legitimate
(if impolite) access to the building while a meeting is being held.
In that case his business, if he presses it despite the obvious
meeting taking place (as many white Queensland landlords of black
Queensland tenants are wont to do), will have to be taken care of
before the meeting may be convened. (The reason for this is twofold:
Islander business may not proceed in the presence of persons not
privy to Islander affairs; and it is discourteous to proceed with
private business when that entails ignoring an outsider who has a
legitimate interruption.) He may be an Aborigine who, seeing a
congregation of black people, assumed it was an Aboriginal meeting
and approached the meeting-place with the intention of joining in.
Usually, in this case, he sees his error as soon as he gets close
enough to distinguish Islander physiognomy, and goes on his way
without there being any necessity for talk.

Whatever the eventual identification of the maker of the
footsteps, there is dead silence from the moment of realisation of
approach. I have posited this case as that of immanent silence
because, in their silence, the Islanders embody the immanence of subsequent action. That is, the silence of which this is an example is not, somehow, immanent in the footsteps of the intruder; nor does the silence itself generate any activity out of itself. It is, rather, a silence of potential action, and the action which is prepotent in the silence is action disconnected from any action preceding the silence. A group of singers practicing some new songs will cease drumming, singing, and strumming guitars at the approach of footsteps. Their silence is an immanent silence (and may be a relatively more potent one than usual if their singing has masked the approach of the footsteps until they are very [i.e. 'dangerously'] close), and the action which signals the end of the silence may be talk, or physical movement, or other action in which they do not return to their songs. In the cases which I collect under the rubric 'immanent silence' there is nothing in the silence which promises anything more than something is going to happen (next). In many cases (though probably not in most), the ensuing action is the return to the business at hand. There is no feeling at these times of having got ready for something which didn't happen. That is, there is no sense of unfinished action. The relief which attends the exhalations of pent-up breath is the relief of having prepared to get ready for anything which might have happened. And it's just as well that it didn't.

All talk stops; every head turns to the doorway.
[Silence.]
A man steps up the last step into the light of the doorway.
(A black man.)
He scrubs his feet on the edge of the step to dislodge any mud from his shoes.
(An island-man.) A few people begin to exhale the tension.
He raises his head and turns to enter the meeting-place.
(The Chairman of the meeting! Whew!....)
'Hello,' says the Chairman to the meeting at large. He turns to some countrymen, 'Debeki.' [Meriam mir: 'Good
'Debeki marim,' one of them answers. 'Nako ma nali.' ['Good evening to you. How are you?' (lit: How you going?)]

'Si kak,' he answers, indicating the speaker with a tilt of his chin. 'Nako.' 'Okay. And you?' (lit: Badness none. How?)]

'Au si kak.' ['Pretty good.' (lit: Very badness none.)]

As the Chairman makes his way through the circle, speaking and nodding here and there to those assembled, a good-natured but accusing call comes from a Western Islands woman seated near the head table which the Chairman is heading for. Her husband, recently deceased, was a countryman of the Chairman and she herself is his distant cousin by one of the infrequent but not unknown Eastern-Western marriages which have linked the two halves of the Torres Strait on occasion since the cessation of warring hostilities and mutual distrust between the islands of the Eastern and Western Strait in the last century. Though she speak pretty good Meriam mir, and the Chairman commands a working knowledge of Gomulgau-ya, their shared common language is Torres Strait Pidgin.

'Vai yu bi do that?(!)' she calls out to him, loud enough for the rest to hear her jocular accusation and mock-fanning herself as if to disperse the severe sweat of terror. 'Wai yu no singaut? Yu bi meik mi prapa frait!' She drops her head down and slightly away, indicating to her now-attentive audience the 'enormous' wound she has just received at the hands (or, feet) of this frightening Chairman.

The Chairman glances at her, briefly and askance (to make sure that she is joking). A couple of other people chuckle. The Chairman continues toward the head table.

[The Chairman is utterly silent.]

The silence of the Chairman is his option. Which is to say, technically speaking, in the quadrilingual speech communities of Torres Strait Islanders a man spoken to in this jocular and mock-accusatory manner by a woman who is able to do so (by her close personal relationship with the man addressed, e.g. a woman who is maik le, as this one is: see Chapter 7 next) has the technical option of speaking or not speaking. Usually he does not speak. He makes his choice to speak or not to speak according to whether or not he can think of any rejoinder which is skilful enough to overcome the tacit
acceptance of (even, as in this instance, jocular) criticism which his speaking at all will entail. If he chooses to speak, he will be making a literal exception to the rule of silence. In most cases he will be silent. And his silence is what I call consequent silence. Only the gifted speaker at a time when he is inclined to exhibit his skill with language, or the less-gifted speaker whose better judgement to remain silent is overcome by his pique, will engage in the utterance which is the exception to the rule of consequent silence.

I shall elaborate on this kind of silence, and on the logic of what has been said immediately prior and the common consequences in Islander talk of such silences. Let me return to the story in the meeting-place and suggest some possible events which might have occurred subsequent to the silence of the Chairman. (N.B. These are only subsequent actions which might have taken place which I have drawn from similar speech events for the purpose of elaborating my description of the consequential nature of this kind of silence. I shall return to the actual events of the meeting below.)

...[The Chairman is utterly silent.]

Everybody finishes chuckling at the Chairman having been 'caught out' by the Western woman and returns to their conversations, or rearranges themselves for the start of the meeting.

The Western woman gives a sniff of mock-indignation to no one in particular, then ceases the repartee and readies herself for the business at hand....

In this possible vignette the consequences of the Chairman's silence is another silence (a kind of silence which I shall discuss later). In terms of the action it is a silence, but it is not strictly dictated by the silence which the Chairman opted for in response to the mock-accusation of the Western woman. The woman gives a sniff of indignation to show that she is 'unimpressed' by the silence of the Chairman (she is still pretending). But her sniff may or not be heard by anyone, and it is certainly not directed at the Chairman. For her, her sniff is the mock-defiance of rule-breaking:
in the rules of the repartee his silence was the closure, indicating any of several things but all of them requiring the cessation of the exchange. There is a kind of you-can't-tell-me-not-to-sniff. She sniffs more or less loudly, depending upon whether or not, in her estimation, the audience is sufficiently interested and the exchange sufficiently humourously pointed for her to command their attention in asserting her mock-superiority without their implicit verdict that she was overacting—making too much of the occurrence. However loudly she sniffs, she does so only after being momentarily silent immediately following the realisation of the Chairman's silence. In this vignette, I have had her then give a little sniff, and then conform to the silence of everybody else. They, in turn, have gotten over their chuckles and giggles (more or less loud and long, depending upon how humourous the exchange struck them individually, whether or not they deemed the Chairman to be in a mood for such repartee, and whether or not the humourous appreciation of a few vociferous chucklers had infected the entire group) and have fallen momentarily silent before either preparing for the meeting or returning to their conversations. These options of the Western woman and the audience are all possibilities for action which is a consequence of the Chairman's consequent silence.

...[The Chairman is utterly silent.]

He proceeds toward the table, giving no indication of engaging the Western woman's mock-criticism and accusation.

As he nears the end of the circle, a nephew of his on his immediate left suddenly throws his legs out in front of him and slumps down in his chair in a demonstration of the aftermath of having just barely survived a terrible fright.

'WEEEIIII...' he growns, 'Mista Seaman [pidgin: chairman]! Yu bi gib mipla prapa prait. [You gave us an awful fright!]

The Western woman picks up on this, fanning herself more vigorously and lengthening her face into an extreme parody of pouting hurt.

A few others join in with 'injured' exclamations of how he might have been a ghost or a boogey-man.
The Chairman turns to half-face back to the audience and twinkles his eye. 'Wao.' he says. 'I bi ghost.' [You're right. I am a ghost.' (lit: Right! I am ghost.)]

Eyebrows raise in mock-fear of this ghost. A couple of clowns make moves as if to get the hell out of there.

Some shared laughter, a few closing remarks on how many ghosts there seem to be lately, and the group settles down into the routine of the meeting....

In this possible vignette the good will and communal good feeling and ready-to-joke state of the group enable the expansion of the dyadic exchange into a communal joke. The silence of the Chairman and the waiting silence of the group are both broken by the creative humour of the Chairman's nephew. In his exaggerated feet-throwing and slumping he establishes without room for doubt both the joking tenor of the group (which he has been able to assess while the Chairman was still absent) and his reading of this exchange as having potential for communal expansion. He is good at being funny, and does his relief-from-terror act well. The laughter of others is immediate, and the slide from audience appreciating his performance into participants in the terror is quick. The Chairman would have to have pneumonia or something if he failed to participate in the joke, especially after these huge feet were thrown right into his path. Any failure to participate after that would be the act of a petulant spoil-sport (or someone too ill to either perceive the communal jocularity or too ill or preoccupied to come up with the energy to participate).

In this vignette I have enabled the Chairman to give a particularly creative retort: in admitting to ghost-hood he removes any possibility of being made the butt of the expanded joke as it builds in the group whose communal possession it has become. The point is changed from lack of consideration of a human actor to the characteristic lack of human consideration by ghosts. Everyone knows enough about ghost-fear to act terrified at their near-escape, whether or not they each entertain beliefs in ghosts. The expansion of the dialogue of mock-accusation/silence is a consequence of the Chairman's silence. It is not caused by it; nor
does his silence dictate the actions of his nephew or the subsequent popularity of them as they propose the expansion and elaboration of repartee into joke. But the actions of the nephew and the Western woman and the group are enabled by his silence. They would not have been optional consequences (or, perhaps better, consequential options) had he not opted for consequent silence after the woman's mock-criticism and display of fear.

Let me propose a couple of possibilities which would not have been possible (which is to say would be extra-ordinary actions of an Islander in the position of our tardy Chairman). What I want to illustrate is that the domain of consequent silence is the domain of talk.

...She drops her head down and slightly away, indicating to her now-attentive audience the 'enormous' wound she had just received at the hands (or, feet) of this frightening Chairman.

The Chairman continues on his way to the table, greeting those seated along his way.

Such action by the Chairman would be impossible. He is both continuing his own speech-action and not acknowledging hers. Given that he is not unhealthy or hard of hearing on his right side or otherwise not in full possession of his faculties, these are both transgressions of the code of talk. He is allowed to 'ignore' her mocking utterance, but he must 'say' he is doing so by being conspicuously silent. And he may not generate new speech-acts on his own behalf (such as greeting people for the first time, i.e. not responding to their initial greeting which may have been uttered concurrently with the Western woman's jocular jibe) without first finishing the speech-action which she had initiated. What I have called consequent silence is silence in the domain of talk and subject to its jurisdictional rules: by expressly not-talking he is 'saying his silence'.
...'Wai yu bi du that?(!)' she calls out to him, loud enough for the rest to hear her jocular accusation and mock-fanning herself as if to disperse the severe sweat of terror.

The Chairman pauses and, interrupting her, says to a man on his right, 'What's she talking about?'

This eventuality is impossible. He has, however jokingly, been directly addressed. His error in responding to a third person is a double one: he has failed to respond to the speaker; and he has involved a more or less unwilling ally in what is a dialogic exchange. Until he establishes his share of the authority of the dialogue by entering into it with the initiator, he may not expand its participants. If he is truly in the dark (if, for instance, her nuance has not been sufficient to express the joking frame of her reference to his unannounced approach), he must ask the speaker for clarification. One of the few, and uncommon, means at his disposal of legitimately addressing a third party, or the group in general, is to immediately and jokingly impugn the full faculties of the woman. He may, if he has quickly perceived that he is about to be on the receiving end of a good-natured goad, turn to the man on his right (or to the group at large) and say something like 'Did anyone hear anything?...Hmmm...Sounded like a woman's voice.' This shorthandedly makes the joke a communal property, and at the same time turns the tables on the woman. She has not got to come up with a pretty good quip or lose the duel after having just begun it. (Since I have already mentioned ghosts, I'll offer a couple of common successful humourous breakings of the interlocutionary rule: The Chairman might have followed his "...Sounded like a woman's voice" with a further "Must be ghosts in here" accompanied by a conspicuous search of the rafters and corners of the room which do not lie in the woman's direction; the woman, having had the tables turned on her and unable to come up with a return table-turning, might say, after the Chairman's "...Sounded like a woman's voice", mock-hiding in her chair and with a small voice, "No. No woman—only ghosts."
...She drops her head down and slightly away, indicating to her now-attentive audience the 'enormous' wound she had just received at the hands (or, feet) of this frightening Chairman.

The Chairman stops and turns to her, solicitously, not yet aware that she is joking.

'Sorry,' he says.

This is impossible, for in addressing the Chairman the Western woman has addressed (as she and everyone else knows) a man from the Eastern islands. While he does have the commonly exercised option of consequent silence or the less commonly exercised option of saying something (less common for its explicit exception to the normal silence, an exception with a large attendant burden of being witty and creative), he does not have the option of saying that he is sorry. Such an unthinkable utterance would be a noteworthy transgression, one which, if it ever occurred, might have other Eastern Islanders in the group dropping things and banging their ears to see if they heard right. The importance of this impossibility lies in its ignorance of the rules for Islander talk, and specifically in the rules for talk and language of the Eastern islands. That is, in speaking rather than in opting for silence the Chairman admits to his 'unthinkingly unannounced approach' (within the frame of the joke) and announces his intention to join in. In this light, the serious apology is senseless: there is no way that he can be apologetic within the joke (that is, the premise of the joke is in the imputation of premeditated fearsome behaviour), and there are no means of deferring the joke itself other than by being silent—and thus allowing consequent silence to merge into emergent silence (which I shall discuss below). The only possibility for 'Sorry' to be a possible response is in the case of the Chairman being a Central or Western Islander who is pretending sorrow as his contribution to the building joke. A Western Islander might say "Oh. Sorry, missus." and exaggeratedly enquire after her welfare, making suitable murmurings of hope for her recovery from this terrible event. My guess is that such an option would be rare (even among
those Islanders from the West to whom this possible option is restricted), and would be an especially creative and funny table-turning on the perpetrator of the joke.

But for this particular Eastern Island man, this Chairman, there is no option to even pretend sorrow. The reasons for this are plain, if somewhat complex, and have to do partly with the jurisdiction of the domain of *Mérian mi* and partly with the wider jurisdiction of the *tonar* [*Mérian mi*: (variously) culture, custom, practice, habit, way], the corpus of precedents which provides the rules for constraints on proper and formal Eastern (and, more particularly, *Mérian* [i.e. 'of (the island of) Mé'] Islander behaviour.

The constraints of the *mi*, the language, are simple: there is no word for "sorry". *Ipso facto* there is no way to express sorrow by talking. By "*ipso facto*" I am invoking the logic of the facts of life (and of language) of the *Mérian* people. (That is, I am not making a comprehensive assertion that there is no way to express sorrow in a language which has no clear translation of the English word "sorry"; what I am invoking is an explicit logic, often voiced in explanation of *Mérian* ways to outsiders by *Mérian* people, that there is no way to express sorrow when there is no word for sorry.) However such a language-culture situation came about, it is true that there is no word 'sorry' and that none has been invented or borrowed in order to fill the 'gap'. Before a *Mérian* man could say he was sorry in pidgin he would have to be authorized to say he was sorry in *Mérian mi* (to the extent that he has learned his traditional language and its rules for use). His *mi* does not authorize him to say he is sorry...to anyone...ever. Moreover, his *mi* and his culture [*tonar*] explicitly prevent him from ever using any equivalent form to express his sorrow in words, words of any language. He may not say 'Oh. My mistake.' He may not say 'I didn't mean to not announce myself, missus.' He may not say 'Sorry, I bi poget' [pidgin: Sorry, I forgot]. He may not (were this meeting a suitable gathering for the use of English) say 'My apologies.' In the domain of language, the impossibility of this Chairman making this utterance is the unavailability of this
expression—in his own mir and, by extension, in other tongues. The restriction of consequent silence is that the response must be either an expression of silence or an exceptional expression of words. The restriction of the language of the Eastern Islands is such that 'sorry' is neither a silence nor a word.

Let me continue to use this last impossible vignette in order to introduce my third way of silence, the emergent silence. I suggested above that Eastern Islanders in a group which witnessed one of their countrymen saying he was sorry might be so shaken that they would drop things and start checking their hearing. I was not, in suggesting that, translating some culture-specific scenario difficult to transfer out of its context. Rather, I was suggesting something of the enormity of such an utterance and what it might generate in its listeners. I am precluded from describing any such occurrence and its aftermath by its never having happened in my presence or to my knowledge. My postulated scenario for an event which couldn't happen is based on inferences from other kinds of responsive behaviour occasioned by Eastern Islanders who are present at mentionings or discussions of sorrow by others. When people who are not Eastern Islanders talk about sorrow, say they're sorry, or otherwise express being sorry, Eastern Islanders react. They may bow their heads to indicate nonparticipation or to nominate disinterest; they may leave the conversation (or even the room); they may (occasionally) exclude themselves from the sorry-conversation by generating new and different conversations with those around them. Their children learn very young that expressions of sorrow (I am restricting this to primarily verbal expressions, for the nonce) which they may pick up on the streets are dicta non grata. What they learn instead is that when other peoples are sorry, Meriam people are silent.

This is the one common aspect of all Meriam reactions to somebody saying they are sorry. The Meriam people (and, more or less rigourously, the people of the other islands of the Eastern Torres Strait) are always silent. They may fall silent and then go away.
They may fall silent and then change conversation partners. They may assume the silence of explicit disinterest until something else comes along. This is an example, and is an extreme example, of what I call emergent silence. The telling thing about emergent silence is that it is a silence of inaction; it is being silent when and because there is nothing to be done. It is not expressive, though it may be indicative where it is accurately perceived. It is not a way of 'saying something'; not even a way of 'saying' shut up to the person who has mentioned being sorry. Its consequences are strictly individual and personal, and are limited to the duration and severity of the anxiety of remaining in the presence of expressions of sorrow. The Islander who succeeds in extricating himself from a conversation in which 'sorry' has reared its head has not done so as a consequence of the distressing utterance so much as to avoid the consequential aggravation of his distress. He cannot, for example, succeed in preventing his distress by immediately departing, for his distress is immediate upon his hearing of the word. The best he can do is avoid the increase of his distress which is bound to happen if those people keep talking that way. If he is stuck in conversation with some whiteman or other non-Islander who insists upon reiterating his apology for some slight, or for some real or presumed insult, the best he can hope to do is turn off his hearing. It is, sometimes, as if it will be possible to reduce the volume of the whiteman's voice by altering its angle of impact on the ear, and the Island-man will bow his head, raise it, tilt it from side to side, shake it, jerk it, and try to slide it back on his shoulders without moving his body.

I mentioned in my discussion of the final 'impossible' possibility of concluding the repartee between the Chairman and the Western woman that the only way to defer the joke itself (even for a non-Eastern Islander, who may be able to say 'sorry') was to be silent—and thus allow consequent silence to merge into emergent silence. This implies another example of emergent silence, one which is not fraught with personal distress but which nonetheless embodies
this silence of inactions. Since this is what actually occurred, I shall return to the real story of that meeting:

The Chairman glances at her, briefly and askance (to make sure that she is joking). A couple of other people chuckle. The Chairman continues toward the head table.

[The Chairman is utterly silent.]

The Western woman, head still dropped in the pose of having been ill-treated by the unannounced tread, glances at the Chairman out of the corner of her eye to see if he is preparing a rebuttal. The intermittent chuckling tails off. The audience watches the Chairman to see if he is constructing a late reply, and the woman to see if she will twist the barb by capitalizing on his implicit admission of having intentionally crept up on the assembly.

She raises her head slightly and begins to face toward the Chairman who is now seating himself at the table. It looks like her mouth just starts to open when the Chairman raises his head. The face on his head holds little promise of jocularity.

The audience, quietly awaiting the development or not of the joke, see that there will likely be none. They slide from the silence of communal anticipation into the individual silence of waiting for action. With the meeting looking like starting, there is no time to resume conversations with each other; the Chairman's businesslike visage entertains no likelihood of extraneous conversation; and the Western woman is still engaged with the conclusion of the abortive fun with the Chairman.

Meanwhile, the woman notes the look on the Chairman's face, figures that his silence at her jibe is all the response she'll get, and thinks better of continuing the joke. She raises her head, sits up in her chair, and drops the make-believe fan back into her lap where it becomes her right hand again.

The Chairman, preoccupied with the business of the meeting, organizes the opening business and raises his head to call the meeting to order. He has probably noticed the silence and expected to find, as he lifted his head, a group of people as eager to get on with the business and get home as he is. What he finds is some faces still in the last vestiges of ready-for-joke; others are simply vacant. Nobody is ready for his business, and most of them don't look ready for much of anything. He appears momentarily
perplexed. And, whatever he was about to say, he doesn't say it. He just sits there.

The silence was total for about a minute and a half, and probably longer for some of the audience. It was an emergent silence. Not only was there no talk, but there was little movement, and none that made any appreciable noise. It was a silence which was caused, in a sense, by the natural conversational developments which led up to it. But as those developments were by and large the result of clear options taken up or not, I have called this category of silence 'emergent'. What happened was that a general silence happened, a general silence which emerged from the situated action which preceded it, but which was in no way a required consequence of either the situation or the action. What characterizes it is its inactivity, even unreadiness for activity, and the difficulty of generating activity in the face of it (e.g. the Chairman who stopped from calling the meeting to order, or announcing the first item of business, or whatever he was about to say, and sat at the table without closing his mouth). Unlike the distressing emergent silence of Mériam Islanders faced with apologies, there was no anxiety or dismay in this silence just before the meeting. It was simply a silence in which, for a moment, there was nothing happening.

Most importantly, I think, emergent silence as it occurs among Islanders during speech-events is distinguished from both immanent and consequent silences by its concurrent aggregation of individual silences. It is as if the silences of each of the participants are 'collected' in the temporary situation of no talking and little noise that I have called the emergent silence. In a fictionalized account of the meeting of the Islanders which comprises this story I could present the 'thoughts' and states of mental response with novelistic license. That is, from the omniscient point of view of the novelist I could simply ensure that this last general silence was in fact an emergent one by making the silent participants inactive and more or less unthinking for the duration of the silence.
I have, of course, presupposed an accordance of this real and obvious minute and a half of group silence with my definition of emergent silence in my description of it; i.e. I have posited certain mental actions: "the woman notes the look on the Chairman's face", she "figures that his silence...is all the response she'll get", and she "thinks better of continuing the joke"; I have the audience "see that there will likely be" no further development of the joke' and the Chairman to have "probably...expected to find...a group of people as eager to get on with the business and get home as he is" as he raised his head.

I have done so in order to describe this emergent silence as fully as possible. The problem with doing so for emergent silences, and the warrant for supposing thoughts and individual mental states of being, is that the 'fullness' of an emergent silence is its emptiness. And the silence is not only empty of even thinking about preparing to organize subsequent activity, but also empty of invitation to so organize: it is a prohibitive silence. After noticing these silences in meetings of this particular Islander constituency over a period of the incumbency of this Chairman I asked him about them. He did not share my curiosity about the nature of them, but he did aver that they were characteristic and of a type. About his hesitation in opening meetings against this kind of silence he said, 'Well, what can you do with them? You just have to wait.'

This is what I refer to by the characteristic prohibition on organization, or the absence of invitation to be organized. And, although emergent silences are aggregations of the silences of each participant, they are silences which are felt to be a property of the group. In my telling of the story of the meeting I lump the audience, the ten or so participants aside from the Western woman and the Chairman, into an undifferentiated aggregation of individuals in order to characterize the impression that the silence is a group silence. It may have been on that occasion that seven of the ten were waiting for the meeting to begin and that the Chairman overlooked them and saw only the three who were obviously not 'with it'. Or it
may have been that most of the members of the audience deemed the Chairman's minimal response (his consequent silence) to the Western woman's opening gambit to have been cursory, and had fallen into consequent silence; they may have exchanged glances, remarking to each other the cursoriness of the response and implicitly in their silence and explicitly with their eyes shared the nature of their consequent silence. It may have been that the audience was just a bunch of people, each of whom had their own kind of silence, and the Chairman failed to utter the opening of the meeting after opening his mouth to speak because he thought he heard someone approaching the meeting-place and had assumed an immanent silence of his own, as the rest had done at his unheralded approach.

But my guess is that these things did not happen at this meeting. And my account is faithful to the best of such educated guesses. Unspoken interactions among Island people are subtle and often brief, and I would have been unable to see all glances tendered by people commenting with their eyes on the recent exchange of the principals. But nobody caught my eye, and nobody appeared to answer the tendered glances of others with glances of their own. And the Chairman, upon ceasing his not-quite-begun opening remark, did not watch the doorway, but cast his eyes slowly across the audience. An audience waiting for a meeting to start would be exceptional if its members were not attending to the Chairman who would signal the start of business; as exceptional as would be a group of Islanders silently commenting upon a breach of etiquette by one of their fellows who did not accompany their silence with expressions of dissatisfied crossings and uncrossings of legs and commentaries of raising eyebrows and rearranging dresses.

Insofar as I commanded the Islander grammar of eye-contact and the vocabulary of meaningful personal mannerisms in public settings, my account of this emergent silence is true. Had a few people fallen into emergent silence while everybody else did something different, the silence would not have been noteworthy (unless it was the Chairman, and only the Chairman who had, since only the Chairman's
silences are problematic at the opening of an Islander meeting), and may not have been noticed. However truthful my account, it is an account of an emergent silence insofar as the states of (silent) being which I have inferred did inform the silent action of the group at the meeting. Whatever the actual responses of the individuals present, it is certain that the incident exemplified one of my trinomial classifications, for it is certain that there was a minute or two during which no one spoke nor made any noise. And actually, in the speech communities of Islanders, silences are not simultaneous absences of talk and noise, but various absences of three things: talk, noise, and action.

Silence is what is missing

The problem with describing silence is the problem with saying what isn't happening during the silence. There is in any description of silence a fundamental opposition of something vs. silence. Even this characterization is misleading for the context in which silence is the given something and non-silence is an assumption of a primordial matrix, a grid of values composed of sounds laid over original silence, or a silent grid overlaying original noise. The Big Bang theory of the origin of the Universe posits an original and all-encompassing noise. Whether or not there was some 'pre-Universe' matter present before the Big Bang, there is a notion that, whatever it was, it was quiet. The account of Creation in the Christian corpus is a little less explicit about primordial noisiness or silence. In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was God—and since God is infinitely present, the word has always been. Whether or not this Word comprised the ordering of noise or the breaking of silence is left up to Christian theologians. But there is a fairly general agreement that the Word is God's and that men are constrained to behave accordingly. Ancient Greeks posited primordial Chaos, out of which came Order. Certainly, in this account, human speech was subsequent to the original ordering of the
Chaos, and can be taken to be more-or-less orderly noise. But there is a feeling, I think, that Chaos was awfully noisy before the orderly supervention.

In those contemporary cultures which have an Hellenic or Christian heritage there is a sense in which we may pose questions of the value of silence over noise, or of talk over disorderly noise. And it makes sense to appeal to a corpus of previously-asked questions when proposing contemporary solutions. Richard Bauman has written of the particular problem posed to early Quakers who were enjoined to eschew mortal means in their pursuit of the Spirit which was God's Truth. Mortal means included human language, and this generated a pointed ambivalence in those who would presume to speak Truth in human tongues. Though "Friends began very early in their history to meet together for mutual reinforcement and the comforts which derived from spiritual unity", "worship consisted in the inward attainment of the Spirit" (Bauman 1974:148,149, respectively). There was not only the ideal needlessness of words, but also an additional sense of words being human and thereby suspect.

The problem was that "both Quakers and non-Quakers required some form of guidance in the attainment of the proper inward experience, and here silence alone would not serve—words were often indispensable" (1974:146-7). The solution, proposed by early Quaker ministers, was via an explicit reference to the Christian corpus: "if any man speak, let him speak as the Oracles of God" (I Peter 4.11). Thence, while at meetings of the Friends, "each member of the meeting followed his own silent way to the attainment of a direct inward experience of the Light". there were openings "in which speech was not only appropriate but necessary...when a member of the meeting for worship—any adult member, of either sex—became sensible in his attendance on the Inner Light that the Spirit was leading him to a means of helping them to reach inward to the Light..." (1974:149).

As Bauman reports, even with this license for divinely inspired speech, most people did not speak much. It was those who were moved
to speak more often and who "were especially effective in fostering
the spirit of worship...who were recognized as ministers"
(1974:152). And even for these apparently Spirit-moved talkers
there was early appeal to Christian precedent for their authority:
"The use of words in the work of salvation, is to awaken such who are
asleep in sin, and to turn them, as Paul turned the heathens, to an
inward guide" (1974:153).64

My point in borrowing this example from Bauman is to annotate my
formulation that silence is what is missing. From Bauman we get the
clear idea that human talk precluded the attainment of the Spirit for
the early Quakers (cf. also Bauman 1970, 1972). In a sense, in the
midst of talk which was mundane and not of divine inspiration, the
Spirit was missing. Whether or not the would-be worshippers present
were sufficiently informed and guided along the path toward the
Light, it was certain that attainment of the Spirit could only occur
(and inspired speech only come out of) not-talking: silence was what
was missing.

In the Chaos of Hellenic mythology the sense of what was missing
is not so clear. I have suggested that Chaos strikes me as having
been noisy. I think this notion of primordial noise reappears in the
cacaphony which ensued at the opening of Pandora's Box, and in the
irrevocable 'noisiness' perpetrated by the proliferation of human
languages upon the destruction of the Tower of Babel and other
mythical statements about noise and order in speech. Whether or not
there are grounds for suggesting that sounds may only be
distinguishable one from another by the sometime-occurrence of
no-sound, it is legitimate to suppose that silence was not an
attribute of Chaos. That is, not only was the orderliness of the
sensible sounds of speech (both divine and human, in the case of the
early Greeks) missing in Chaos, but silence was missing.

The astrophysical Big Bang theory gives a very different
primordial picture. Without attending too rigorously to the
speculations of astronomical theory (and ignoring for the purposes
of this chapter the fact that the Big Bang is only one of several
theories about the creation of the universe extant), I have suggested the sense of silence before the Bang. There may have been some 'little bangs' going on; there may have been a kind of 'reverse' solar wind, all the universal matter moving toward the center of what would have been the Bang. Whatever was missing before the Big Bang, it caused a lot of noise when it was, all of a sudden, no longer missing. And after the Bang, silence was what was missing.

Some of the differences between these theories of noise and silence and orderly sounds are akin to the differences between the kinds of silence which obtain in Islander scenes. I have found it useful to characterize Islander silences according to 'what is missing'. Sometimes words are missing, sometimes something else is; and sometimes it is the silence that is missing. The problem for both analytical and descriptive characterizations is the problem of establishing and 'describing' something that 'isn't there'. This problem is somewhat ameliorated when we deal with general cases, with types of silence which have generic identity within and among whole societies. In this view I can say that there are times, in most societies, when silences occur in the absence of talk, and that some of these occurrences may be in the absence of someone to talk to (when the silent one feels like talking), or in the absence of a particular someone to talk to (when the silent one feels like talking about some particular thing which he and the absent interlocutor share), or in the immediate absence of talk which answers or responds to something said (by someone), or simply in the absence of any talking (there may be nothing that anyone wants to say).

But even the relatively straightforward description of silences which are the soundless discontinuities in talk becomes problematic for individual instances. While it is usually clear that some kind of talk is what is missing, the problem for description is what kind of options for speaking are not being taken up, and are any of these expressly (meaningfully) being eschewed by those who would take them up. In the most constrained (and usually formal) talk-scenes, express not-talking is usually obvious to participants and audience.
The actor who forgets his lines and is not experienced enough to ad lib across the forgotten dialogue, or indicate to his fellow players that they had better help him cover his mistake by keeping the show going, may have the unfortunate experience of having his cue whispered too loudly from off-stage and of his distress offering the audience nearby some extra amusement. There is no possibility that the actor has expressly refused to utter his lines; and the point of the silence is, further, that talk is what is missing, that it is missing 'by accident', and that even an ad lib—some kind of talk—would be better than the disruptive silence.

In the case of a wedding ceremony celebrated in what is thought of in the Western world as traditional religious style, there is much less possibility for the conspicuous not-talking of the groom to be taken for a talk-error. The officiating priest says 'Do you take this woman to be your lawful wedded wife, to have and to hold in sickness and in health, 'till death do you part?' If there is silence, a number of things may have occurred. It may be that the groom has expired in mid-ceremony. Many of the humorous take-offs on weddings have played with this potential for silence, a silence mostly unheard of. A daydreaming groom may be had to say, 'Huh? What was that?', or, 'What was the question?'. Or he may say, 'Till death?...That long, eh?'; or play on the 'sickness and health' line by asking his bride how she is feeling before he commits himself. Whatever the case, for a real-life groom to be silent would be extraordinary. That is, in this highly constrained talk-scene he may not ad lib, and there is little chance that he has forgot his only line ('I do'). The parents of the bride would be normally warranted in their distress at the silence of such a groom. The only reason for his silence is his not wanting to reify the commitment whose extent he has just realized. Folklore has it that many more grooms simply fail to show up at the wedding than fail to utter the critical assent during the ceremony.
For each of these mundane examples, the silence is a silence amid talk. Whether the consequences are the continuing action and dialogue of a play or the much longer actions and dialogues of a married couple, the silence is a silence because words are what are missing. Richard Bauman has underscored the silence of early Quakers as silence of missing words: "Although silence became the Quaker metaphor for the suppression of every kind of worldly impulse, activity, and inclination, the reference from which it was generalized was speech" (1974:146). Keith Basso has written of silence among the Western Apache which occurs when words are no longer sufficient to enable the event to continue (Basso 1970). Occasions for such silence are tense, and often the silence marks the inability of the Indians either to conclude the event or to engage a medium of action other than words. Such silences occur when the Apache participants "give up on words". Had there been, prior to the ensuance of such silences, any means of talk for continuing the action, such silence would have been precluded. Or, had talk ceased when action was called for, such silence would never have been an option. Such silences are not exactly, as they are in the examples above, 'amid' talk. Rather they follow talk which has occurred and stand in the place of talk which might have been. But, although different, they are nonetheless silences in which it is talk that is missing.

There are occasions of silence amid talk in which it is not clear what is missing. The Western Apache of Basso's study explicate what is missing in the tense and ambiguous silences which Basso described by saying that they have 'given up on words'. We are not, however, always party to or privy to such explications. Karl Reisman introduces his description of the virtual absence of silence in the 'noisiness' of "contrapuntal conversations" in Antigua (Reisman 1974) with reference to Basso's description of Apache silence and to some of his own experience with silence in Scandinavia. He says that "some Danes appear to 'nourish' silence as one might appreciate a cozy fire", and recalls an occasion of a visit by an American friend
whose habit in conversation was to 'fill gaps' of silence. Though there were no obvious conflicts between the Danes and the American, "by the end of the first evening these kindly Danes could stand his presence no longer—simply because an evening without silence was emotionally intolerable" (1974:112). Reisman knew these Danes, and knew something of the common rules for Danish talk as well as something of the feelings of the value of regular silences. But he describes what he calls "the extreme silence in my own experience" which he had among some Lapps in northern Sweden. His neighbours would drop by his borrowed sod house every morning "just to check that things were all right". "We would offer coffee. After several minutes of silence the offer would be accepted. We would tentatively ask a question. More silence, then a 'yes' or a 'no'. Then a long wait." These visits occurred daily. Each visit lasting an hour and broken by six or seven exchanges. Reisman hazards a guess that the silence was one of "the difficulty in expressing one's feelings" in northern Scandinavia, and "perhaps part of their silence was simply that they didn't have anything to say". But he says explicitly, "I don't know what any of these silences represented" (1974:112-113).

Reisman has made some sense of these Scandinavian silences out of his experience in and with them, and out of his observation that conversational silences increase, and "the amount of speech per hour decreases" as one "goes north in the Scandinavian peninsula" (1974:113). But in telling us that he does not know what those long silences represented, he is saying that he did not know exactly what was missing. That is, he was able to describe conversational silences of various frequency and duration by making reference to common conversations (for instance, those in English) in which the amount of talk far outweighs the amount of silence; but he was not prepared to state that the long silences of the Lapp neighbours represented 'talklessness'. In fact, he has roughly outlined a hint of a Scandinavian value on silence, and a notion that there are times (which may be relatively frequent) that it is talk which is interrupting silence: that silence is what is missing. Reisman goes
on to juxtapose this common and obvious silence with the almost complete lack of silence among Antiguan villagers.

Torres Strait Islanders on Australia's mainland are neither mostly silent nor mostly noisy. Actually, in Reisman's sense of noisiness of the Antiguan villages with their simultaneous and often loud utterances by any and all at the same time, Islanders are rarely 'noisy'. Talk, which may at times be boisterous, and occasionally simultaneous, is rarely disorderly. It is ordered according to what is happening. Islander silences, then, are orderly, and are ordered according to what is not happening. Sometimes what isn't happening had better not happen; and it's good that there is silence. Sometimes what isn't happening ought to be; and there is a problem of either bringing the silence to an end or of bringing the situation which has generated unwelcome silence to a close. In either case, the silence is characterized by what is missing, and what is missing is either talk or something else.

In the first of the three kinds of silence which I introduced—the immanent silence of a group awaiting the embodiment of heard footsteps (and any subsequent actions)—what is missing is talk. It is talk which is going on at the time the footsteps are heard and which stops, abruptly. The silence often spreads from those nearest the door (and from those with the most acute hearing) to the rest of the group. The spread is rapid and, if it has completely spread before the 'intruder' is seen, is total. Everyone ceases whatever talk he was engaged in in order to be cognizant of what's going to happen next. There is also absent, for the duration of immanent silence, the talk which could otherwise have proceeded had no footsteps been heard. That is, immanent silence which occurs during talk is the silence of the talk which is missing at its outset and which will be returned to at its cessation. Whether or not there will be a second interruption of the action of talk, such as in the case of the nominal intruder materializing into an actual intruder and having to be dealt with (without any talk whatsoever in the extreme case of silently throwing him out), immanent silences are silences in
the domain of talk. And an immanent silence which occasions consequences prohibitive of returning to the action of talk which preceded it is no less immanent, for it is not the events characteristic of the silence which have prevented the return to talk, but extrinsic events due to interruption. And, unless the promise of the talk of the meeting is rendered after the fact to have been 'not really worth it', the meeting will resume, and its talk-business returned to, even when the delay extends to a week or a month or to the time of the next scheduled meeting. The talk which was missing for the duration of the silence will resume.

The second kind of silence—consequent silence—first occurred in the story of the meeting as the response of the Chairman to the opening barb of the teasing woman. As in the case of immanent silence, what is missing in consequent silence is talk. But in a consequent silence the talk that is missing is specified by the situation, by the frame in which the utterance of which the silent response is a consequence is couched (in the case of the opening gambit of the Western woman, a joke), by the mood and state of being of the respondent, by the specific intentions of the participants and of their audience, by any existing relationship between the participants, and by their identities (such as the primary identity of the Eastern Islander precluding his saying he is sorry) so far as they are known and appreciated by the participants and their audience. Where immanent silence is occasioned by events extrinsic to the talk which is interrupted, consequent silence is occasioned precisely by the utterance which precedes it. Moreover, consequent silence is not an interruption. Consequent silence is expression. It is expressive exactly of the words which, being known options for rebuttal, are not spoken. The silence is an option among other options, all other options requiring speech. During consequent silence it is not merely general talk which is missing, it is the specific rejoinders which might have been uttered. In opting for his silence, the Chairman is 'saying' something which he could not say by saying any of the other options for rejoinder at his disposal. He may
not feel witty, or like participating in the joke; he may be inwardly struggling for a creative and table-turning response until it is too late to utter one without losing face (i.e. having his 'slowness' made apparent); he may have been preoccupied and only realized the barb after it was too late to render a quick and witty turn of phrase in response. Whatever the reason, he renders the common response of consequent silence.

Consequent silence takes the place of talk, of saying some more or less precise and delimited thing, while immanent silence is a quiet time during which talk is not happening. Consequent silence happens when the initiator and the audience are waiting to see what the respondent says. The sense of the difference is present in common phrases which Islanders use to describe or characterize such silences, such as they may do when reporting their events to others afterward. In the consequent silence of the Chairman's response, he is said to have said nothing: 'Emi spik nating' ['He said/spoke nothing]; during the immanent silence of the group awaiting the footsteps, they are said to have not said anything, or to have not been talking: 'Oli no tok', 'Dempla no bi spik' ['They didn't talk', 'Those people didn't speak/weren't talking']. A further difference lies in the likelihood of either of these two speech-events to be reported. The Chairman's tacit surrender to the Western woman's one-upmanship may be reported to anyone interested, perhaps during the course of retelling noteworthy incidents of successful repartee. The raconteur may, at the urgings of his audience's 'what'd he say? what'd he say?', prepare them for the joke on the Chairman by shaking his head and rolling his eyes at the 'terrible way in which ALL menfolk EVERYWHERE' have been let down by the silent response of the Chairman..."Emi spik nating."

But it is unlikely that the silence of the group awaiting the owner of the footsteps would be ever characterized, even during the retelling of the incident. There would be no point. Once he had announced the approach of the footsteps, his audience would have known that everyone fell silent. They would have fallen silent had
they been there. Silence is what happens when someone hears an
intruder. It must. A bunch of babbling people can't listen to
footsteps. Only children would fail to be silent (and only children
very young would not have yet learned the rigourous rule of group
silence which attends such portentious sounds). I can imagine that
the reporting of someone's conspicuous talk having broken the
immanent silence might occur (though I have heard neither of such an
incident nor of any such report). And had the Chairman identified
himself aloud just before coming into view, the report of his
breaking of the silence would be reported, and would engender
empathetic relief in the hearers of the report commensurate with the
relief at those present who heard him say who he was. But it would be
senseless to have to characterize such a silence, unless the
storyteller was particularly adept at creating tension in his
audience and told them, portentiously, 'Dempla no bi spik!...and
then answered their unspoken questions by announcing the sound of
footsteps. The fact that talk is absent is conspicuous because talk
was going on prior to the immanent silence. But the absence of talk
has nothing to do with the content of the silence, a silence which is
as marked by its lack of even minimal activity as it is by its lack of
speech. The possibility of ensuing action is immanent in such
silences, as immanence absent in consequent silence. The
characteristic difference is one of waiting: the Chairman is obliged
by the joke to wait and see if there is any further rejoinder to his
silence, whether he wants to or not; the group hearing footsteps is
interested in waiting to see who it is and if they are going to have
to act.

The third of the three kinds of silence—emergent
silence—happened in the actual story of the meeting in the quiet
interlude between the joke and the commencement of the meeting, and
ensued after the Eastern Islandman Chairman said 'Sorry' in one of my
'impossible' renditions. Whereas both consequent and immanent
silences have to do with the absence of talk, emergent silence has to
do with the absence of action, And in the case of emergent silence,
the action which is absent is generic. The order of difference between generic action missing during emergent silence and the specific action missing during immanent silence (as in the potential action of dealing with the intruder which was, for its being prepared for, specifically 'missing' during the immanent silence which opened the story of the meeting) is the order of difference between the generic talk missing in immanent silence and the specific talk missing in consequent silence. The subtle distinction makes both description and analysis difficult, for both are necessarily _a posteriori_ for dealing with instances of silence. The further subtlety is the distinction between talk as action and talk as speech. By this I am not making a descriptive distinction between two 'kinds' of talk, one of which is putatively 'active' and the other somehow 'inactive'. Rather I am generating an analytical distinction of formal differences between silences in order to inform the differences of content which inhere. The distinction is inferential, and is inferred from a wide range of separate and often apparently disparate occasions of silence. The motion of the inference is expressly toward the formulation of gestalts of silence which both inform and inhere in Islander knowledge and action. My trinomial system of silence is an articulation of the second-order analysis which finds a coherence among the silences, silences in which not-talking and not-acting variously inhere, and three categories in which the various silences cohere.

The difference between an emergent silence which absents talk and an immanent silence which absents action is a difference of priority. In both cases the absence is happenstance, and has to do with the nature of talk as action. In emergent silence, talk happens to be absent because all noisiness is absented and talk makes noise. In immanent silence, action happens to be absent as long as it is being silently prepared for, and any talk signals the end of the immanent silence. Emergent silences occur after talk 'runs out'—after whoever has been talking has nothing more to say and in the absence of anyone else speaking, either by changing the subject of talk or by
remarking or commenting on or developing the just-finished talk of
the principal speakers. Emergent silence just happens. Immanent
silence does not just happen, but is necessitated by (usually
extrinsic) happenings. For the moment of emergent silence talk is
simply not important; for the duration of an immanent silence
not-talking is vitally important. Whereas any sort of (socially
acceptable) talk breaks the emergent silence and may signal its
closure, talk which interrupts immanent silence is dangerously in
the way of everyone else's listening' talk which breaks emergent
silence may be followed by a second emergent silence, but talk which
breaks immanent silence (contra erroneous utterance which interrupts
it) moves the action from silent listening to explicit organization
for action (or may itself be the action, as in the case of the first
person to addressed an intruder).

For consequent silence, talk is speech. That is, the action of
the event is speech, and the consequent silence of one or more
speakers is an expression. It may be requisite expressed silence, as
in the silent response of a child justly reminded by a parent to
behave himself where the child may neither talk back to the parent
nor apologize. Or it may be the optional response of the Chairman to
the opening remark of the woman. Whichever, it is response. It may
or may not, in its turn, generate subsequent response; it may
disallow subsequent response, as in the case of an Islander dance
master who, in speaking to settle a dispute regarding the correct
dance motion, responds to the appeal of the disputants by delivering
what is defined by the cultural rigour of expertise as the final say
(which allows neither rejoinder nor comment, and permits no
response). Consequent silence is an 'utterance' which stands in the
stead of any and all spoken responses which the silent responder, his
interlocutor, or anyone attending the conversation, can think of
that he might have said.
The license of silence

Implicit in the preceding discussion have been rules for when Islanders may be silent, and rules for knowing when, in various silences, they are not talking and are not doing other things which may or may not include talking. I shall turn finally to what I call the license of silence. In my opening statement I characterized silence as a means of social action, and mentioned the significant Islander as one who may be silent and who may command the silence of others. Islander silence is warranted by accords of talk and custom, and it is this 'warrant' which my notion of a license of silence invokes.

But more than simply being warranted by Islander rules for talk and by customary rules for speech-behaviour, silences may be commanded by certain people. These are the people to whom I have referred as "significant Islanders". Significant Islanders vary according to the events and situations in which they act. In my terms, an Islander may be significant in one situation and not in another; and everyone in one situation may be significant, and no one in another. Furthermore, there are instances of persons who are relatively significant, vis à vis each other, in some situations. Significance is my term; it is not a translation of some type of individual so named or referred to in Islander speech-communities. Which is not to say that the behaviour of such persons whom I have designated 'significant' may not be noticed (it usually is), nor remarked (it often is, especially if the significant action is seen after the fact as the turning point of events which, promising failure, resulted in success). Rather, what I have done in collecting examples and reports of noteworthy behaviour during speech-events under the notion of 'significance' is to elaborate on the descriptive congruence of importance in order to infer an analytical congruence of signification. The Islander whom I have termed the 'significant' one is the Islander who may, in various
situations and with varying degrees of impunity, both signify occasions as silent and designate the silence of others. It is exactly this ability which my subtitle is redolent of: means of inaction.

Silence as a means of inaction has to do with the form of silence and the what-is-missing that are its contents. I have referred above to notional Islander distinctions between talk as speech and talk as action. When silence is a means of inaction during speaking-talk, it is expressive and meaningful. It is a way of speaking without talking, and its silent meaningfulness is its eschewance of those relatively delimited things which are expressly not said. As the groom who does not say 'I do' is not about to be married, the (Eastern) Islander who does not say 'Sorry' is not about to be apologetic. When the rules of utterance require his apology (N.B. these must be rules governing inter-Islands or inter-ethnic conversation, for there is no such rule in the Eastern Torres Strait), his silence is pointed and explicit: not being able to both act sorry and retain his Eastern identity, he means to retain his identity and his silence is his means of inaction. Whether or not the dire choice of values with which the Islander has just been presented are known to his interlocutor, the Islander who wants to remain one is faced with a speaking-talk situation in which he may not speak. And, since the action of speaking-talk activities is a priori speech, the Islander is prohibited from acting.

In a conversation with a discerning Central or Western Islander who has prior knowledge of the Eastern prohibition on apologetic speech or behaviour, the Eastern interlocutor only has to wait, doing nothing, until the conversation resumes. Moreover, such occurrences are infrequent among mixed groups of Islanders, since there is a general Torres Strait-wide devaluation on apologetic behaviour, despite the possibility of being able to say a word for sorry in the language(s) of the West and Center. Apology plays no big part in Islander-only scenes, and apologies are demanded only in
extraordinarily rare situations. And they are never demanded with impunity.

There is, too, a more subtle ordering of the incidental relationships of speakers in talk situations which informs the rareness of apology, and which has to do particularly with the explicit silence of Eastern Islanders. Talking, and the silences which are not-talking, are ordered according to who may speak. During a conversation of nominally equal Islanders, significant speakers emerge from time to time according to subject-matter which arises over which the significant speaker commands some knowledge or expertise. It is impolite to interrupt the informed or knowledgeable speaker, and even impolite to interrupt the speaker who is claiming expertise or knowledge until it is clear that his claim is unfounded. Such interruptions are thought to be unwarranted among equals, and are explicitly offensive to the speaker who has a well-known command of a particular vocabulary or subject-matter. That is, in interrupting another speaker the interruptor commands his silence, for two people may not speak at once. The immediate question is has the interruption been warranted by superior command of vocabulary or knowledge.

Only superior command of language (e.g. vocabulary) or greater knowledge may warrant interruption. These two domains are the only domains of what I have called 'significance'. And to command language and knowledge is to literally command talk. In the story of the Islander meeting above, the Chairman came into everyone's view in the light of the doorway at about the same time. I parenthetically indicated the general relief at seeing that the footsteps did not belong to an intruder. In this instance, the relief was collective and at the same time individual. Each anxious person saw who the intruder was at more or less the same time, and were relieved, silently except for exhalations. But had someone nearest the door had a sooner view of the Chairman, he or she might have uttered the identification to the group at large. For those who had still not seen the approaching Chairman for themselves, their relief would
have been only marginally later than the relief of the first person
to sight him (whose relief might have been exhaled in the same breath
that the Chairman's name was announced). Had this happened, the
relief of the group would have been *commanded* by the announcer of the
Chairman's identity' and the warrant for command would have been the
incidentally superior knowledge of having first identified the
intruder. Any erroneous interruption of such an immanent silence
would be disconcerting, and in dire circumstances even punishable,
because the interruption of immanent silences fraught with
consequences is an unwarranted interruption.

The extremely punishable case (punishment comprising anything
from corrective remarks and criticisms after the fact to ostracism of
some duration or even virtual banishment) is that of the uninformed
interruptor who, mistaken about the identity of some intruder,
announces the wrong identity. Had someone announced that it was the
Chairman who was approaching, only to have it be someone resembling
the Chairman but bent on mayhem, the unwarranted claim of the
erroneous announcement would be inexcusably dangerous. The group
which had been readying itself for the possibility of having to deal
with an intruder would have been caught unawares, mid-way through an
exhalation of relief, and been disadvantaged in the confrontation
with the actual intruder.

Talk, then, is serious business, and business which is not entered
into lightly. There is no irresponsible utterance among Islanders.
There are only irresponsible people. People are irresponsible to the
extent that they are uneducated. Islander children are not deemed
born irresponsible; rather they are simply neither responsible nor
irresponsible. In having, at birth, neither knowledge of
consequences nor command of language they are simply utterly
uneducated. Education begins in earnest after the growing child has
acquired a necessary minimal command of speech (around age 4-6), and
accelerates as the child matures toward an adult ability to deal with
important knowledge. The child who matures unable to behave and talk
responsibly is not said to be 'still a child'; he is said to be
'uneducated'. This is a terrible thing to say of another Islander, or of the offspring of another Islander. It is the final condemnation of non-Islander cultures, or those perceived as lacking any redeeming features whatsoever, to say—not that they are 'uneducated', leaving the possibility that they may (someday) be—that they are "people without education". The utterance which suggests that a fellow Islander is 'acting uneducated' is one fraught with the potential for combative confrontation. It not only invoked for those known Islanders who are adults who regularly act irresponsibly, but those non-Islander cultures which are characterized as uneducable. The worst thing that may be said of one Islander by another is that he is a member of some other ethnic group known to be utterly without education, and such a pronouncement has yet-unspoken potential in any utterance which is critical of the 'educatedness' of another Islander.

On the rare occasions when educatedness is aspersed, the response is silence. The reasons for this have to do with awareness of the importance of any talk which addresses education and with knowledge of the consequences of acting on such talk. All Island people have a vested interest in education. The leaders of the most powerful quasi-governmental agencies in the islands of the Torres Strait (which 'agencies' included everything from the supreme leaders of the religious cults to the entities charged with civic 'administration' and order and to the ranking members of each clan who were charged with responsibility for that clan's communal participation and support) prior to the arrival of missionaries and subsequent colonial presence in the late nineteen-hundreds were known as the "Educated Men". A vast majority of Islanders who have fled the constraints of the islands in the past twenty years say they did so in pursuit of education for them and for their children. Both their being Islanders and their being on the mainland of Australia are fundamentally undergirded by education. To say that another Islander is lacking some education is to imply that he is fundamentally flawed. The impact of the implication is the
psycho-physical inference which it presents: the adult Islander imputed to be uneducated suffers the inference from his as-if-uneducated behaviour that he is like the mentally deficient Islander children and the socioculturally deficient non-Islanders—that in not (apparently, or allegedly) acting like an adult who ought to be by now well on his way to becoming educated, he risks being taken for an uneducable.

The response of an Islander so aspersed is silence. He is on the horns of a complex and troublesome dilemma, a crisis of not-talking and not-acting. Whoever has impugned his educatedness (and even dared to assess his educability) has obviously claimed license of silence. That is, the declarer entertains no response, or none other than silence. The next-thing after this punitive remark depends upon the ordered relationship between the two principals. That is, depending upon their relationship, the domain of the response will be either action or talk. The declarer has not cast aspersion on an equal with assumed impunity. He well knows the potential response may be action as easily as it may be talk. Implicit in his utterance is his claim to warranted speech (in this case, criticism); in his expectation of the silence of the other he claims a licence to command the silence of others. The respondent has two choices: he may accept the command to be silent or he may refuse to do so.

In either case his action (insofar as it conforms to Islander prescriptions for action) will be silent. If he accepts the criticism, and implies his acceptance of the claimed warrant of superior knowledge, his silence is emergent. That is to say it is a silence which follows talk, which is a silence of inaction, and which may or may not be in turn followed by a resumption of talk. It is a silence which allows for various states of being by the silent respondent—he may be contrite, he may privately regret his momentary 'slip' into unacceptable behaviour; he may be resentful of having his relative insignificance publicized; he may simply have fallen into the prescribed silence of the justly criticized—but which is not expressive of his particular state of being. For the
audience there is no telling what the nature of the reception of the criticism has been, only that confrontation has not been chosen; and they may silently entertain their own assessment of the justice of the criticism and contemplate what each of their responses might have been had they received the criticism. It is not up to them to disclaim the exercise of the warrant unless they are prepared to criticize the utterance of the critic, and they do so only by invoking a licence of even greater knowledge and at the risk of provoking an even more significant confrontation.

If the respondent is not prepared to accept the specific criticism, but has no wish to challenge the general warrant of superior knowledge or command of language of the critic, his silence is immanent. It is akin to the immanent silence of the group at the onset of disembodied footsteps. It is the silence of preparation for action in a situation in which action is defined as talk. He will not be able to readdress his specific error if his critic makes it plain that his criticism is absolutely the last word on that subject. But this would be rare, and especially rare among consociate Islanders who have some communal responsibility for one another. His silence indicates to the critic and to the audience that there will be no confrontational challenge. But he may well signal to the critic that he feels he has been unjustly criticized (normally by momentary eye-contact), or intentionally or inadvertently indicate (by head-shakes or hand-movement) that he intends to pursue the specific criticism later (because he took it to be unwarranted, or because he did not understand the particular linguistic or cultural licence for criticizing that action in that context). In the case of immanent silence (which may not be easily distinguishable to an observer until after the fact, perhaps when the question of the specific criticism is raised), the respondent's preparation to ready himself for readdressing the criticism is prepotent in his silence. The Islander so criticized does not have the option of taking exception to the criticism without challenging the critic. In order to do so he must
wait until he can raise the criticism as a subject-matter in its own right, and his waiting is characteristic of immanent silence.

There is a third way in which the respondent may accept the command to be silent. He may express consequent silence. The problem is that an educated Islander may not express consequent silence at having been, even justly, criticized. An adult Islander criticized for uneducated behaviour only compounds his uneducatedness by expressing consequent silence. The nature of consequent silence is its stance in place of a delimited range of audible expressions. For the criticized Islander there are no audible expressions available among his options. His options are broadly to either accept the criticism or to refuse to do so. For the Islander who chooses to accept the criticism, there are two options, both inaudible: emergent silence, or immanent silence. Because there are no optional words, there is nothing for consequent silence to express save the erroneous (hence uneducated) assumption that there is something else he might have said. Islander children who have acquired the bad habit of apologizing from non-Islander classmates may go through a period of responding in consequent silence. Their elders are quick to point out the error of uttering an apology, and the child learns quickly that this is not the Island way. But until he is educated to a command of Islander silences, he may respond to criticism in silent apology for having erred. This is one of the rare examples of the occurrence of consequent silent response to criticism. The apologetic look on the learner's face usually gives his consequent silence away, and parents are quick to educate the learner to the value of immanent silence—in which the learner is simply silent upon receipt of criticism, but free to raise the point of proper Islander behaviour later. In the case of the emerging adult, consequent silence may be honestly expressive of distress at having erred—and adults present may allow it to go unremarked if it is deemed that the erroneous behaviour was expectable at the stage of education which the learner has reached, and that nothing but unnecessary embarrassment can be gained from reminding the learner
of the differences between silences which he is already fully cognizant of (even though he does not yet competently command them). The adult Islander who expresses consequent silence at having been criticized does so only at the risk of admitting that he is an uneducated child. The adult Islander whose consequent silence is explicitly a silence in the place of apology runs the even greater risk of being in contravention of cultural proscriptions of identity; of being taken for someone who is simply not an Islander, rather than for an Islander who cannot control the rules of speaking which have to do with criticism.

The critic is also silent after he utters his criticism. Among equals who have no vested interest in claims to relatively superior knowledge, and between whom only helpful and incidental criticism passes, the silence is consequent silence. Since the equally educated have no reason (nor grounds) for mutual criticism, equals are equally uneducated. They may criticize each other in the interest of mutual edification, of testing their own knowledge, or in inconsequential tests of notional 'superiority'. Such things are common among Islander adolescents, and are less common as they mature. It is also possible for an adult who is, or who has been nominated for a particular event or skill or body of knowledge as, an educator to await the comprehension of his critical instruction by his student in consequent silence. But such critical instructions are, by definition, corrections rather than criticisms; and the teacher who awaits a response from a learner assumes the consequent silence of educational dialogue (having been able to think of no further exemplification of his point, or simply having nothing else to say until his student's comprehension is evident) rather than a consequent silence after criticism. (Also, the educational situation defines the relatively educated and uneducated, precluding the possibility of impugning the student by declaring him to be uneducated.)
The silence of the critic is, therefore, immanent silence. He knows that the addressee of the critical utterance has the option of refusing to accept the criticism. His is an immanent silence because it is a silence of inaction. He known that the response (or eschewance of response, or deferral of response) to his criticism will be silent. And he is charged with the responsibility of his licensed criticism to have uttered the final word. He must to the best of his linguistic ability have, in manner or in style, provided no admission for audible response; and he must have made no error in invocation of cultural prescriptions of Islander comportment. His silence is one in which he awaits acceptance or refusal. In waiting for emergent or immanent silence (more commonly the former), he is simply inactive; in waiting for refusal he is tense with anticipation of being attacked. He may be more or less relaxed or tense, depending upon his anticipation of the response, which is in turn based upon his assessment of the gravity of the criticism he has just uttered. He may have criticized someone only recently granted adulthood, in which case there is no question of warranted challenge, and only minimal chance of the young adult 'losing his head' by announcing a challenge of which he will think better later. Or he may have, in the other extreme, just criticized someone his own age or older, someone who doesn't like him much anyway, and who is not prepared to let what he chooses to take as a character assassination pass unchallenged. If this latter is the case, the immanent silence of the critic is tense with his readiness to receive the challenge.

Criticisms which are refused provoke crises which are almost never seen. By his refusal the challenger's action promises disrepute for the critic, for the culture and language which licenses him, and implies the irresponsibility of all those who adhere to his directions. In the extreme, there may be a fight between the challenger and the critic. Such fights are exceedingly rare (perhaps fewer than one every twenty years), and bring disgrace upon all Islanders by their occurrence. And the onus of consequences lies almost entirely on the challenger, for the critic who is performing...
his corrective and educative function is the protector of all
knowledge and of the language which provides access to it: he is
neither permitted to overlook errors of speech or behaviour, nor
allowed to defer criticism of any transgressor—not even in the face
of an angry and overpowering challenge. To the extent that he has
accurately perceived an error of talk or comportment he has no option
but to correct it immediately. And although the possibility of
physical combat between Islanders is remote, it is nevertheless
present in every potential confrontation.

The distress of the transgressor who (feels he) has been unjustly
criticized is exacerbated by the dictum of refusal: while acceptance
may be expressed in the silence of talk, refusal must be silently
enacted. The unjustly criticized man is a man who has been attacked.
There is no other definition possible for Islanders. The rigour with
which this rule is applied varies somewhat from island to island, and
among Islander communities in mainland towns. But the various
applications are different according to whether or not the addressee
is empowered to assess the justness of received criticisms, or
whether or not the utterance is deemed to have been critical or some
sort of less potent instruction or educational correction. The rules
for response to attack do not vary.

There is only one rule: retaliation must be immediate, fierce, and
successful. In explication of this rule to youngsters or to
non-Islanders who have been granted permission to learn Island ways,
the cultural corpus is often invoked. Stories of legendary heroes
prove not only their uncompromising and instant retaliation, but
teach that victory (and vindication) may be dependent upon swift and
sure response. This holds for stories of wars with competing
islands, or whole villages or tribes from the Papuan coast, as well
as for tales of individual combat. The rules for debate prescribe
forthright and crisp speech; but the rule of retaliation prescribes
no speech whatsoever. When the enormous implications of this
invariant rule first struck me, I was reminded of the
challenge-and-response rules of the cat-like aliens called the
"kzinti" in Larry Niven's novel *Ringworld*. An earthling had just survived a near- (and certainly fatal) battle with a kzin whom he had challenged, in the *rigueur* of saving face, "Tooth against tooth, claw against fingernail". A kzinti ambassador saves the situation, but takes the opportunity to comment on the earthling's brave but very un-kzinti challenge: "I found your challenge verbose. In challenging a kzin, a simple scream of rage is sufficient. You scream and you leap." Such an ideal challenge would serve Islanders, though it would be found distastefully noisy.

It is just such potential retaliation, silent and immediate, which governs any refusal of warranted criticism. Islanders do not attack one another. Islanders may not sustain any attack with retaliating. In the end, the second of these cultural dicta will apply, for an Islander's personal identity as Island-man [*Ailanman*] is sustainable in isolation. That is, while the first dictum has to do with social identity—since an attack must incorporate both attacker and attacked—the second has to do with the record of individual behaviour, and its accordance with (culturally) ideal behaviour, which informs and sustains personal identity. In the final assessment, it is the individual who lays claim to Island-man identity. The question of his assessment of himself as concordant with the assessment of him by his fellows is the question of dissociation. No one may stop him from acclaiming himself a full and proper Islander—which is exactly what he does in refusing criticism of his behaviour—but they need not listen to him as he does so. Since they (i.e. generally) may not command his silence (because they are not warranted to license silence), and because he has refused the command of silence from a significant Islander, they expect that no only may command him to be silent when he persists in claiming cultural precedents for his controversial behaviour. (In theory, he could 'win' the confrontation. But the consequential double shift of responsibility and duty away from the significant critic in order to invest the challenger with them would
be unheard of: the warranted critic never loses.) They are left with no option except that of not listening to him.

For the challenger who won't be silent, the organization for not listening is the organization of denying him an audience. The degree of gravity of his transgression informs the extent to which such organization is articulated (e.g. 'Is he going?...Oh, I don't think I/we feel like going.), and the extent to which it is made explicit (e.g. 'I'm/we're not going if we have to listen to him spout off.') For optional-attendance events, the denial of (specific or incidental) audience will likely be organized by ensuring that he will not attend. It is relatively easy to exclude anyone from family-only or single-island-only events by either indicating that he is unwelcome or by explicitly not inviting him, since Islanders must conform to the cultural prescription that they neither attend nor remain where they are not welcome. But among groups whose membership is given as consociate—groups whose members share island-group, island, village, intra-village community, name, or family origin—or those whose membership is defined as consociate for the term of membership—e.g. dance teams, churches and congregations, in-laws, schools, celebrants of marriages or other important events—there is no way to absent the transgressor by indicating that he is unwelcome.

Welcomeness or unwelcomeness is not an identification available to members of consociate groups. A participant in an event which is not limited to attendance by consociates may express consequent silence to a non-consociate whose absence from the event is sought. In doing so, his silence stands explicitly in the stead of an invitation, and is commonly understood in its consequent meaning. (Often the would-be inviter is not a perpetrator of the unwelcomeness of the invitee, and may not be in accord with it; his consequent silence is nonetheless both meaningful and explicit, although his intent may simply be to save the prospective unwelcome attendant from the distress of showing up where others deem him unwelcome, or the increased distress of showing up expecting to be welcomed and having
to conspicuously discover that he is not welcome and leave.) But such an expression of consequent silence is not an option among consociates, for there is no invitation for the silence to take the place of. Consociates are by definition welcome at events of their group(s)...more precisely, welcomeness is a no-thing among consociates. Decisions to attend an event at which others would rather not see him, and decisions to prevent the attendance of someone the group would rather not see, are decisions potent with dissociation. For events whose stipulated attendants are an aggregation of non-consociates gathered together for a particular event, dissociation is a priori. But for events whose attendants are consociates, potential dissociation of a member is dangerous to the group.

There is no way for a group to indicate that a particular member is unwelcome at, or for the duration of consociate activity (as when a challenge arises during the course of a meeting or other event, and is a challenge which promises to escalate into confrontation). The group may not want him to attend. But if they do not, what they do not want is disruptive and dangerous incidents. If they are silent in response to the unwanted member's solicitations about plans for the upcoming event, their silence is not consequent silence. It cannot be, for there is nothing which they might have otherwise said. That is, there is no delimited range of audible responses plus consequent silence from which they choose silence. His solicitation of consociates requires nothing more in response than whatever each of them feels like saying. If he were to utter solicitous remarks to people who were not his consociates, he might well be soliciting an invitation or other expression of welcome. But this couldn't happen among Islanders, for Islanders are culturally prohibited from soliciting welcome: they are proscribed from entering where they are not welcome, a proscription both on solicitations which may engender dishonest invitation and on explicit solicitation which might engender a refusal of invitation which would in turn require the instant retaliation of any solicitor who deems invitation to be his
right and refusal of invitation to be, therefore, an attack. Thus, the silence of consociates which ensues at solicitous remarks of a troublesome fellow is not the consequent silence of non-invitation or unwelcome. Nor is it expressive of responses which might have addressed the subject of the upcoming event which the recalcitrant consociate has raised. That is, it may be that any or all of the group members might have thought better of joining a discussion of the plans for the event with this troublesome colleague, but their silence does not express their decision. They are not obliged to answer. There is no Islander stricture which demands that subsequent responses conform to subject-matter, nor that conversational openings must be accepted or even answered.

In this case, in the case of no one feeling like talking to the transgressor about upcoming events, he is faced with an emergent silence. His interlocutors either do not feel like talking to him at all, or they would rather not talk (to him, or in the implicit inclusion that his physical presence mandates) about their plans. There is, in this case, no stress in the silence (though there may be some anxiety in the solicitor, if he takes the silence to be reflective of the enduring censure of his consociates). Nor is the silence stressfully directed at the solicitor, since as unexpressive silence is is not an expression. Emergent silence is not even a response; there is no way that the solicitor can take the silence to be an answer to his opening remarks (the fact that it was subsequent to them notwithstanding). If he responds to the silence, he must make his own grounds for taking the silence to have been expressive; he must ex post facto render the silence a consequent silence. This is exceedingly rare, since the advent of emergent silence signifies that, while no one yet feels like talking to him or expressly planning for his eventual return to full participation, his transgression is not generally held to have been worth any further action or censure. Any Islander who would make such an emergent silence into an explicit consequent silence runs either the risk of exposing his shame or regret at having earned their disrespect, or
the greater risk of offending them by presuming to tell them what they 'said' in their silence. (And he runs the personal risk of reifying a degree of approbrium which he fears is still present but which in fact has passed as the group gets over whatever it was that he did.)

It may be, however, that the solicitous consociate accurately perceives that the silence which greets his opening remarks is not the 'empty' emergent silence of simply not answering and not doing anything about the solicitation. He may notice heads being turned, or slight movements away from the conversing group, or other attendant actions which are not noisy and which are neither habitual nor arbitrary. His perception of this response as an immanent silence is correct, and will be confirmed if he receives any brief eye-contacts from anybody sufficiently stressed by implications of his remark. These brief eye-contacts are both communicative and observant, and may be either or both during immanent silence. As communication they precede a potential retaliation (though they do not in any way commit the person establishing eye-contact to any action).

Islanders who establish brief eye-contact with non-Islanders prior to retaliating against a perceived attack are not communicating their prepared attack, but are usually attempting to get information (sometimes they are trying to see if the perceived attack was in fact intended, or whether, for instance, they are in an interaction with a non-Islander whose own cultural rules are preclusive of an attack-and-response definition in the situation). This eye-contact is incidental to the watchfulness of observation. When information can be got from the opponent's eyes, the brief eye-contact is in order to add any information communicated by his eyes to the general information available by watching his arms and stance (and any prospective allies which he may have present). This watchfulness of an opponent who is another person is the same watchfulness of the group meeting in my story who watched the doorway in order to see who was intruding. It is the watchfulness of
observation which may or may not incidently include a watchfulness of the opponent's eyes.

But among Islanders who are cognizant of the habit and rule of watching potential opponents, the incidental meeting of eyes is actual and communicative eye-contact. That is, information is liable to pass both ways. The respondent who accompanies his immanent silence with a brief eye-contact lets the other know that his remarks have been stressful and potentially provocative. His glance is the meaningful eye-contact of the Islander about to retaliate. Borrowing from Larry Niven's kzinti ambassador, we could say that, for Islanders, 'You look and you leap'. The rules for eye-contact and retaliation are this rigorous. Islanders do not meaninglessly or casually go around looking into other people's eyes. And a transgressor who generates an immanent silence by reference (always implicit) to the fact of his censure knows it to be an immanent silence by any eye-contact which he receives. As in the immanent silence of a group readying itself for the possible action of dealing with an intruder, the action being readied for in the immanent silence among consociates which is marked by eye-contact is unspecified. But the silence is tense with preparation, and the sollicitant member is warned by the glances of the group. He may respond during the eye contact with an expression which effectively retracts his statement. This effective 'retraction' will be allowed as long as the respondents are not (yet) formally offended. And they are obliged to await the next development by their immanent silence. That is, once immanent silence is entered, the action which marks its conclusion is action in response to whatever threat materializes from the potent interruption. Immanent silence is not the silence of 'look and leap' retaliation. It is a silence full of readiness for possible action or reaction. (And a truly offended Islander who fails to retaliate when he perceives he has been attacked risks the shame of acting explicitly un-Islander, not only in that he fails to respond to an attack, but also in that he implicates allies [and shames them] by conforming to the immanent silence of others who do
not perceive that they have been attacked and are not prepared to
shame themselves by alliance with an Islander who would retaliate
two-against-one against a consociate.) An Islander who commits
himself to immanent silence is response to a potential intrusion by a
human commits himself to the duration of the silence which may only
be broken by further extrinsic action.

However, if the solicitant member's answering eye-contact does
not indicate his 'retraction' of his remark, the action which will
break the silence becomes immanent. The stress which he has
generated in the group will either remain until the subject is
changed (if they so allow the potential confrontation to subside), or
it will build for as long as the solicitor remains (and does not
indicate by demeanor or second eye-contact that he has now thought
better of his decision not to retract). The stress will build until
eventual retaliation is increased in speed or severity by the stress
magnifying delay, or until the stress itself generates relieving
action by the aggravated respondent. In either case, the retaliation
will be excessive, and no longer in keeping with the actual degree of
offense. And in the second case, the respondent risks the shame of
not having been able to control himself, of not being able to handle
his stress until such time as the offensiveness of the opening remark
is confirmed. The rule of immanent silence is that the participants
must be ready, but if their readiness sponsors its own action the
actor is at risk of being taken to be flawed in his ability to act as
an Island-man.

Such events rarely occur, and are prevented not only by the steel
control of the ready-to-retaliate respondents, but also by the
ever-present fear of disassociation. The solicitor who perceives an
immanent silence, and the attendant build-up of stress, will
normally extricate himself from the group. Since immanent silence
may not be ended by anything but action, he is precluded from saying
anything which will dismiss the offense. The only talk which may
close an immanent silence is talk-as-action (such as addressing a
non-Islander intruder in his intrusion). The only action available
to Islanders who find themselves in a prepotentially offensive situation is the action of attack-and-response, and there is no talk which is included in the action options for such situations. Moreover, any talk is predefined as an act, and the only actions available to the offender are to go away or to confirm his offensive remark as an intentional offense. Thus, any talk which so confirms the offense reifies it, and is correctly taken to be the act of an attacker. (And is also likely to be taken to be unnecessarily verbose, since his answering eye-contact would suffice to confirm his offensiveness and would be in proper accord with the rule of silence when attacking.)

The other alternative action which might generate the closure of the immanent silence is the offender indicating by the nature of his answering eye-contact that his remark was not intended to be offensive, but was intended to test the feelings of the group regarding the cessation of his temporary ostracism. An Islander who 'tests' his consociates in this way puts the whole group in a very risky situation, and is ill-advised to attempt such a test without an exemplary command of the vocabulary of inflection and nuance. The 'testing' utterer whose test is obvious in his eyes has failed. And a tester who is recognized for one is an especially offensive individual, for he has generated real action from unreal talk. And insofar as his original testing remark was not seriously uttered he is not a serious person, for utterance may not be of unvested interest. The particular riskiness of such a situation is in fact that the testing which is belatedly visible in the tester's eyes does not actually confirm that the opening remarks were offensive in their meaning, but instead preempts the meaning of the remarks in that it exposes a greater, and prior, offensiveness of manner. It is not that the utterer meant to say something offensive, nor that he meant to say something which allowed the possibility of being taken as offensive, but that his intended manner is one which is a priori offensive.
Its ambiguity, an ambiguity which accentuates the stress of an interlocutor who is readying for action or reaction and belatedly discovers that his reaction may not be one which he is preparing himself for, lies in its potential for changing the content of the utterance after the fact. To change the content of talk is to play with meanings, and playing with meanings in the Torres Strait entails playing with the cultural corpus which has generated them and wherein lies their referents. Islanders may not lightly play with the corpus which provides, prescribes, and grounds identity and which articulates the strictures on behaviour. Islanders who presume to play with the very grounding of Islander-ness must be demented. If their dementia is presumed temporary, it is characteristic of behaviour which slips momentarily into uneducation. If this is the assessment of the 'educators' present (those who are warranted to educate and correct others), then the manner of the 'tester' must be immediately corrected. When this happens (usually by a short and pointed uttering of his name directly at him by an 'educator'), the contents of the opening remarks are forgotten, for they were meaningless anyway. And the immanent silence of the would-be retaliator is broken by the extrinsic action of the educator, allowing him the relief of the group at the meeting who, in identifying the footsteps as those of their chairman, were relieved that what might have had to happen didn't have to. And the event, and its attantant immanent silence, is closed, with nothing remaining unfinished; for the man who would take the remarks of the uneducated seriously not only does his own real language the disservice of presuming that it would entertain unreality, but he also implicates himself as an attacker (since he is precluded from serious reaction by the now-unseriousness of what had seemed an attack) since serious and real attacks may not be made by the demented. And if he remembers the incident, and allows its bothersomeness to prevent it from being finished, he runs the very serious risk of presuming to expand his culture to include utterance and manner which is a priori unserious, unreal, uneduated and excluded. He runs the risk of making a meaning
where none was before, and implying that he is greater than the corpus of meanings.

Lastly, there is a further risk taken by the one who solicits the responses which will indicate his readmission in order to test the mood of the group. His consociates may discover that he has been merely testing them—trifling with them—and may conclude that his non-serious utterance presumes that the group was not serious in their original censure of him. Inherent in such presumption is an accusation (or assessment) that the group who censured him was not a group of serious persons. An entire group is utterly unlikely to be composed of individuals who are each simultaneously in the grip of temporary dementia (the only way that such serious business as censure of a member could be entered playfully). His accusation is implicitly an accusation of transcendant unseriousness (and, unreality), and one which implicates each and every member of the group. This runs the risk of permanent disassociation, for the utterer may face the immediate and simultaneous (and silent) retaliation of each of the men in the group he has just maligned. Reaction will almost certainly be physical, and decisive, for no Island-man may tolerate the attack entailed in an assessment that he is not in serious accord with the prescriptions for Island-men. He will be outcast.68

Postscript. Means of inaction

Throughout this discussion of ways of silence among Torres Strait Islanders I have refrained from predicking my trinomial silence on a basis of relative value or import. Nevertheless, there is a notional scale of silences, one which I apply in the artifice of analysis, but which strikes me as commensurate with the socially situated actions of Islanders if not a translation of some utterable scheme for weighting silence extant among Islander speakers. Certainly in the last section on the license of silence I have moved from usually incidental and explicitly optional consequent silence—standing as
it does in place of speech, and as a kind of explicit but silent 'utterance'—to the final example of permanent casting out of a member of a group at the close of immanent silence. Emergent silence, as I have presented and exemplified it, has a curious medial position. In standing in the stead of all speech and all action it stands in the stead of none. It is the silence of incidence and happenstance; and is meaningless, for it may neither generate responses to it nor serve as a past reference for subsequent action or speech. It is noteworthy only by those who did not participate in it at the time and only for a posteriori criticism (such as the criticism of a Chairman faced with emergent silence and prevented from ending his own immanent silence who chastises the group afterward for not being ready for the meeting; or the ethnographer who gives it meaning by establishing a system in which the meaninglessness of such a silent category renders each categorical instance meaningful).

And, although I have restricted the discussion primarily to silences which occur as breaks or transitions in the actions of speech-events, each of the three ways of silence may occur during happenings which are not situated in talk-situations. I gave the extreme example of emergent silence of an Eastern Islander faced with an uttered apology. While he is distressed, there is absolutely nothing which he may say or do. His distress is not the readying stress of an immanent silence, nor the thoughtful or reactive stress of trying to think of a rejoinder during a consequent silence. Without imputing an equal degree of distress, such extreme emergent silence is also the silence of an Islander pearl-diver forced to watch from the edge of his boat while his colleague is attacked thirty feet below by a shark. There is simply nothing which he may do or say; nor is there anything which he may meaningfully prepare to do. He may only privately imagine that he might have been still down there to help, or try to wish the shark away, or simply be seized by him imminent loss. (and he may, finally, cry out in the Meriam mir
"Weiiiii"—the keening cry which pretends the release of unreleasable sorrow.

There is even the possibility for consequent silence to occur outside of speaking-situations, though this is rare. A group of Islanders silently weaving dance costumes when a fellow weaver joins them would be expected to exchange greetings with the newcomer. Silence on the part of the newcomer or any of those already present would be consequent silence, standing in the place of a delimited range of greeting options. It may be the silence of preoccupation, and only a mild breach of etiquette, or it may be explicit expression of unwelcome directed at a newcomer who is not a consociate and has not been invited. The particular characteristic of a consequent silence which occurs not in the midst of speech is its explicit failure, by not occurring, to signal the opening of talk. That is, the greeting of the approach of a newcomer signals the opening of a speech-event of some duration, and consequent silence which stands in the place of it is an equally available option for the signal of opening. The uninvited newcomer met with silence is free to utter a greeting in response to the consequent silence of the group (though he is likely to simply walk away). Any subsequent silence would be unlikely to be consequent silence, for the talk which might have taken place following the greeting of the silently-met newcomer is not delimited. If he persists in remaining, and the feeling of unwelcome is more a feeling of exclusion, the silence which ensues may be the group's immanent silence awaiting his next move.

The point of this is that, within and without talk, there is a scale of probable consequences which informs my three silences. Consequent silence is an option in the domain of talk, and governed by jurisdictions of real and unreal talk and by the rules of speaking. Emergent silence is both not-talking and not-acting, and has its referents within the individual (and private) domain of each person present, though it is nonetheless real and socially meaningful for the non-participant who is faced with it. Immanent silence is the silence of not-talking and not-(yet)acting, wherein
the absence of talk is prescribed by the priority of (potential) action. While consequent silence will probably end shortly (by someone saying the next thing in the dialogue), emergent silence only happens to end (when anyone present feels like saying or doing something), and immanent silence must end. The educated and significant Islander is one who known the consequences of silences, and who, insofar as he is specifically or generally significant, commands a vocabulary of silence. The significant Islander, warranted by his position as educator and knowledge-holder, is the one who may, finally, command the silence of others.

This command of others is the warrant to license silence. The significant actor who goes to the doorway to take care of the intruder who has materialized into a non-threatening but non-Islander human being enables the immanent silence of the group to merge into relief and emergent silence. They do not have to talk, they do not (now) have to prepare to deal with an intruder, they may return to whatever had concerned them—and if they become silent rather than resuming conversation or action, their silence is the emergent silence of having nothing to do for the moment. They do not even have to attend to the handling of the intruder by the significant Islander, for by his significance he is obliged to know how to handle such things, or at least to not volunteer to do so unless he knows what he is doing. They may, during the course of the handling of the intruder which promises to become threatening, resume an immanent silence of preparation, but they do so as a result of the extrinsic developments of the handling having broken the emergent silence into which they have fallen. It is, in this sense, the action of the significant Islander which is the means of inaction of the group. And if he is forced to intervene when some less significant person who has attempted to handle the intruder fails to do so, his command of inaction is explicit: by his active intervention he explicitly not only enables the group to be inactive, but means for them to be.
The significant Islander who is present at an utterance which is liable to engender a train of conversation resulting in un-Island talk of behaviour may actually command the inactive silence of the group simply by making eye-contact with the principal conversants. He lets them know that, whether they are aware of the probably consequences of their talk or not, in his educated estimation the talk is liable to become offensive of to contravene certain cultural dicta. His silence is immanent, and his look indicates that he is preparing for the action of confrontation if the conversation continues. It is only the look of the significant Islander which may be corrective or educative without being challenging, and only his look which may be the means of inaction of the group. Such a look from an insignificant Islander would not only not be understood to be educative (for he has not the significant warrant to educate, let alone to command the silence of others), but also not be understood to be expressing the challenge of the system of Islander knowledge, a challenge to which mere humans may not respond.

Finally, it is the look of the significant Islander, the man charged with the welfare and education of his people, which is both his means of inaction and theirs. They may (and must) engage no further action, and lose no face in doing so. He is enabled to refrain from uttering or enacting an explicit censure, for by their inactivity they acknowledge the meaning of his silence look. For all of the potency of action prescribed for Islanders by their culture and via their language, it is the potent preventiveness of inaction which provides final cohesion. The man who commands the means of inaction is the one who protects people, and who saves the language and the way. His and only his is license of silence.
"Who am I, Master?" the boy asked. "Who will I become?"
"You are yourself," Olem said, "but you are both yourself and Author of your Self. Remember this, for it is not widely known."
"Oh, no!" he cried. "I am doomed to be only me!"
"On the contrary," said the Master, "you can only be yourself by being someone else."

Olem's Tale,
The Ruel of the Seven Hundred

CHAPTER 7

Mérim to Meriba (the motion of the contentious self)

I want to present in this chapter something of a journey and, along with the journey, an account of a way of looking at such 'journeys'. The tale of the journey will be necessarily abbreviated, since it is that sort of story which is abstracted in order to analyze some aspect or other of it. The account of the way of looking will be necessarily detailed since it is, as far as I know, a new way of looking. The journey is my own venture into Islanderhood—my own specific example of the general case of anthropologists becoming participants in the societies they study. And the account is a theory, one of those things Paul Valéry called a fragment of some autobiography.69

The question of becoming a member of another society is a question little-asked. Certainly, whatever this becoming is, it is done more or less successfully by every ethnographer. And, whatever it means, it has something to do with the identification of the anthropological outsider-cum-insider. Such identifications of membership occur within societies as well. For instance, a doctor who is untrained, or who, for some other reason, has failed to satisfy a statutory licensing authority of his capacity to practice medicine, may be free
to open a surgery until his contravention of the law is discovered by those enfranchised to prevent such behaviour. His assertion comes into conflict with the social (legal) rules of ascription, and if he is discovered he will be prevented from continuing the conflict. Such conflicts (or discrepancies) between asserted and ascribed identity also occur in domains which, though not governed by law, are nonetheless formal.

Over the past ten years or so the convention for noting other names which someone assumes, particular in the case of known criminals, has undergone a transformation. The older convention was to list such pseudonyms as aliases, e.g. John Thomas alias Tom Jones. The latter convention has introduced a neologism into the vocabulary of policemen, criminals, rock stars, and the newsmen and writers who report such persons' activities: 'aykayay', an anagram from "a.k.a." (or, aka), the initials for "also known as". It may have been that a criminal taint inhered in alias which was unsuitable for reporting stage names, writer's pseudonyms, etc.; or that alias tainted the accused who had not yet been tried and convicted; or, perhaps, that alias came to be known for its denotative reference to 'on other occasions', and the more general aka allowed for the possibility of persons who were known to some others by one name and to different others by another (even on the same occasion). Whatever the reasoning (if any), there has been a reduction in the instances of alias and a concurrent increase in the reference aka.

Both of these examples of discrepancies are examples of ascription conforming or not to legal rules or to known ascriptions. There is also the discrepancy which arises when a person asserts a name which is resisted. When Cassius Clay, Jr. announced that his new name was Muhammed Ali, sportwriters and fans were nonplussed. For some reporters there was a period of years until the champion was referred to only as Muhammad Ali, the interim references comprising firstly a period of insisting on Cassius Clay and secondly a long period of reporting both names. The problem here was different than it is in the case of aliases or other multiple concurrent names, or
in the case of labels of functional identification such as medical practitioner. I propose that the fundamental difference is a difference of content. That is, in all three examples there is a conflict of form, of formal reference to the individuals involved and to their (formal) behaviour. The pretending doctor is formally enjoined from both acting in the manner of a doctor and from referring to himself as a doctor through a process of law. Persons accused of law-breaking are lately less often referred to as 'alias So-and-so' until they are formally identified as criminals through convictions (and other persons, outside the domain of law-breaking, are rarely said to have an alias in avoidance of the criminal connotation of having to hide one's 'true' identity, a connotation formally embedded in the term "alias"). But in the case of the heavyweight champion boxer changing his name there is a conflict of the content of Ali himself. It was, literally, the content of self which generated the formal conflicts over what to call him.

Georg Simmel, from whose sociological and philosophical distinctions of form and content my notion of form and content of self is derived, put the distinction this way:

I designate as the content—the materials, so to speak—of sociation everything that is present in individuals (the immediate concrete loci of all historical reality)—drive, interest, purpose, inclination, psychic state, movement—everything that is present in them in such a way as to engender or mediate effects upon others or to receive such effects. In themselves, these materials which fill life, these motivations which propel it, are not social. Strictly speaking, neither hunger nor love, work nor religiosity, technology nor the functions and results of intelligence, are social. They are factors in sociation only when they transform the mere aggregation of isolated individuals into specific forms of being with and for one another, forms that are subsumed under the general concept of interaction. ([1908] 1959:314-15)

Of this interaction, Simmel wrote:

Human interaction is normally based on the fact that the ideational worlds of men have certain elements in common, that objective intellectual contents constitute the material which is transformed into subjective life by means of men’s social relations. They type, as well as the essential instrument, of these common elements is shared language. (Wolff 1950:315)
In twentieth century America, personal and individual names are both assertive and ascriptive. The name is an element of shared language which may inform "objective intellectual contents". Had Cassius Clay, Jr. undergone a private religious conversion to the Black Muslim faith which he was content to leave private, the content of his name may not have generated public concern. That is 'Cassius Clay, Jr.' may have changed only for Clay, and only in its reference to the individual who had previously not been a Black Muslim and who now was. Whatever the reasons of religious dogma or convention, whatever the personal impetus, Clay was interested in publicizing the fact that a very important content of self—of him, as he saw himself—had changed. He chose to change his name to one which was commensurate with the tenets and origins of his new faith.

The ensuing public disconcertion had to do exactly with the changed form of Clay's changed content. In ignoring the new form, those who persisted in addressing Clay as Cassius Clay were refusing to participate in the reification of the new content. His taking of the name of the Prophet proposed a heresy missing in the politically historical statement of Malcolm X, who had refused to wear a surname not his own. Public comment ran not along the lines of whether or not it was a good thing to do, or whether or not it was a good way to get his point across, but along the lines of whether or not such a thing was to be allowed. That is, not whether name-changing was allowable, but whether content-changing was allowable. And the point had to do with this particular content, this new and strange faith. The members of the boxing (and general) public were not obliged to observe Cassius at his daily prayers, nor were they even invited to meet his Muslim mentors. Cassius did not make the tenets of his new faith public meat, nor require of his public anything but that they recognize his name.

One of the operations which occurred during Ali's tendentious name assertion was the social distribution of knowledge: knowledge of Ali's new name, knowledge of what brought it about, knowledge of Black Muslims and what their religion constituted, and
knowledge—often incidental—of the opinions of the sportswriters and others who were taking public issue with the young champion boxer. In a sense, the eventually widespread accord with Muhammad Ali's new name is explicable in terms of the sociology of knowledge of Mannheim (cf. Mannheim 1952) or Schutz' later critical redefinition of the importance of the mechanism by which knowledge is socially distributed (Schutz 1964, esp. p.121 et seq.). But, as Berger and Luckmann have pointed out, "the sociology of knowledge must concern itself with the social construction of reality"; "the sociology of knowledge must first of all concern itself with what people 'know' as 'reality'...it is precisely this 'knowledge' that constitutes the fabric of meanings without which no society could exist" (1971:27). In allowing Ali's name change a public currency, Ali's public 'realized' the change from Cassius Clay. Berger and Luckmann point out, in their discussion, after Durkheim, of the need for religious community in order to maintain the identity of the new convert. As they say of the Biblical conversion of Saul of Tarsus, although the conversion itself was a private affair, "he could remain Paul only in the context of the Christian community that recognized him as such and confirmed the 'new being' in which he now located this identity". And they point out, as was the case for Ali, there are those "who will say, 'Come off it, Saul'" (1971:178).

The conflict is between the presentations of those who will disallow the new self and the presentations of those who will present the new form, and in doing so reify the new content. The critical difference between Saul and Muhammad Ali is the difference between the two communities of context. Saul was transformed into Paul and entered the Christian community upon which he depended for the sustaining of his new identity. Ali was a member of a community of professional boxing both before and after his conversion. He had, presumably, no problem among the community of Black Muslims. His problem lay in the boxing community. It was not the problem that he had become (in the religious sense) 'a new person'; it was the
problem made by the fact that the same person—the boxer—had a new self.

But even this is not enough to explain the (apparent) need for Ali's self to be popularly realized. That is, Ali was not content to be an aka, the also-known-as of two names with two separate currencies. Precisely, he was not content to be known as Cassius Clay. Whereas Paul, in accepting the reality confirmation of his new (in C.H. Cooley's sense) 'primary group', rendered those who would say 'Come off it, Saul' members of now-'secondary groups', Ali made everyone who would call him by name into a primary group. For Ali, the act of saying his name transformed anyone into a 'significant other' (cf. Mead 1934:154ff) more accurately, it demanded of the other that Ali be (or become) significant. The point of this is that the name, Muhammad Ali's name, became publicly important as both a form of being and a form for action. The act of addressing Ali could no longer be completed if the form of address was Cassius Clay' the spoken (or written) act of referring to Ali as Clay generated reactions to the form which were not responses to the content of the reference.

Simmel wrote,

In any given social phenomenon, content and societal form constitute one reality. A social form severed from all content can no more attain existence than a spatial form can exist without a material whose form it is. Any social phenomenon or process is composed of two elements which in reality are inseparable: on the one hand, an interest, a purpose, or a motive; on the other, a form or mode of interaction among individuals through which, or in the shape of which, that content attains social reality.(1959:315)

In this sense, each social phenomenon which entailed the disagreement between Ali and those who called him Clay constituted a disputed social reality. The form Clay was not commensurate with the Black Muslim content of Ali's asserted identity. The general adoption of the new name followed the general awareness that the societal form of previous currency—the name 'Cassius Clay'—had been successfully 'severed from all content' by Muhammad Ali. With
that public acquiescence the severing of content was complete, leaving only the diehards and eccentrics (and those whose need to show 'I knew him back when...') still calling the heavyweight champion, 'Cassius'.

In each of these cases from my own society—the physician caught 'practising without a licence', the aliases which have become akas, and the boxer Muhammad Ali—I submit there is a distinction of form and content of person, or actor. For persons with aliases there was, I suspect, an automatic aspect of content which was unsavoury, automatically unsavoury upon the announcement of an alias. Whether or not this mode of referring to alternate forms of address came about, as I have suggested, in order to avoid casting unsavoury aspersions on savoury persons who came to be known by more than one name, it has certainly been true for a time that "aka Tom Jones" does not signal some villain known in the police files by this and other names. In any case, for the time being the change of form has changed the signalled content.

But in these two cases, there is no certainty that it is the self of the quack or the crook which is at stake. In fact, it is highly unlikely that the 'self' of the quack will be involved at all (unless it proved to be the case that, rather than being an honestly pretentious quack he turns out to be a deluded would-be physician). And in the case of aliases, persons have them not as multiple forms of address for a self but as different forms for addressing the same person. (If this were not the usual case, the more unusual cases could appear as, say, Mr Hyde aka Dr Jekyll.) But in the case of Clay/Ali, there was no simple duplication of forms for addressing the same person (though a few reporters writing shortly after Clay's conversion did make the mistake of "also known as"). There was, on the contrary, a different person. Which is not to say that everyone said there was a different person; far from it (some sportswriters still call him Cassius Clay). But which is to say that Muhammad Ali said there was—that is, he was—a different person. And this new
person could no longer answer to that Clay name in good faith, plus he wished to conform to his new faith with a new name.

Now, because it all seemed so very important to him, and because he risked ostracism and censure and the loss of the very popularity which so obviously sustained him as a public figure, I shall take it that Ali experienced a change of self. As far as I am aware, he did not ever use that word to signify the changes which had occurred and he had made. And even had he done so, we would still have to do much the same sort of interpretation on his speech-as-action in using the word 'self' to talk about himself as we have to do on his actions-as-action in interpreting that the content of what I call the self was what was at stake in the conversion from Clay to Ali. I have used this example because it is one common to much modern anglophone idiom; that is, because I need some generally known example which most readers may be acquainted with. I want to suggest that what was different in Ali (compared to Clay) were some of the 'contents of his self'. Specifically, of course, his religion was different. And almost as obvious a difference was his new-found aggressive black separatist economics. Certainly his new Black Muslim 'spiritual advisor' was in the news, as were some of the new additions to his entourage.

All of these differences were outside of him, however, and can only be used as evidence for the major changes which must have occurred in him in order that he would allow all of these to happen: Old friends could no longer gain access to him; several white comrades were barred from his rooms; long-time members of his entourage slipped quietly away. I do not suggest that such major changes are strange, or new, or rare. In the days of the Jonesville mass murder-suicide, of so-called creationists demanding equal time to teach biblical biology in schools, of a born-again Christian in the White House, it may be that such changes are more common than ever before or, at least, more commonly accessible. What I do suggest, after Simmel, is that this relatively new entity, this thing called a 'self', has both form and content. Furthermore, I want to
talk about the process by which the content of self attains social reality for any question of self is a question of social reality.

"...or, as we say, Meriam people"

In November of 1977, having pitched my Coleman "Villa Del Mar" high-roofed tall-windowed tropical tent in one of Townsville's caravan parks, I prepared each morning to venture out into town in search of the Torres Strait Islanders with whom I was planning to ingratiate myself in order to insinuate myself into their community.

I say 'venture in search of' for I had but a single name, an address to go with the name, a notion of island-of-origin (Torres Strait Islanders, no matter where they are found, always hail from a particular island, and an island particularly in the Eastern or Western or Central group—this bloke whose name I had been given by two countrymen of his in Sydney on the way up to pitch my tent in this meteorologically [30°C] and sociologically barbecued campsite hailed from the Eastern group and from, I was pretty sure, the principal island of that group: Murray). I had been to the address I'd been given. It was a house out in the flat suburbs growing fast up the river in the same part of town as the campground.

The first two times no one had been home and I had returned to my tent in the 34-degree (Celcius) 10:30 am heat to let my blood thin out from a winter in Canberra and relieved, anyway, at having the first occasion of me making a cross-cultural ass of myself with these Island people delayed.

I was not to be continually reprieved, however, and did manage to find the lady of the house at home one afternoon. I did most of the talking, got little more from her but "Mm." a few times and an address where her husband was to be found during the day. That conversation, as well as the next several ones spread out over the nearly tendays it took me to show up in a place where this husband of hers was at the same time as he was actually there—as opposed to his
having been 'just here', or 'he'll be back any minute now', or 'he came the second after you left yesterday', and 'too bad; hard to believe you could miss 'im three times in three days'—took place with me standing a step or two down from the landing of her front porch and her in the doorway, leaning against the doorjamb with, likely as not, a teatowel in her hand and this unchanging look on her face. I'd say I still hadn't caught up with him and she'd say nothing. I'd say, regularly, who it was in Sydney who had told me to look him up (—'look him up'! ha! but what was I to say—that I had been given this man's name and I was planning on bothering him so much for so long that he was going to tell me not only the story of his life and the lives of his Islander countrymen but the most intimate details of his life with this woman and their children since he came to the Australian mainland?) and she'd nod, say "Mm.", and I'd leave, trying not to do anything wrong this early in the piece without knowing the first thing about Islander right from wrong. And, though we did talk about those strange days much later (when we had become family and shared intimate details of our lives), I always forgot to ask her if she had meant to be as ruthless and well-practised as a Fortune 500 company executive handling a rival corporation: she always made me open the conversation; if I obviously needed information, she always made me ask for it with abased explicitness; if her husband hadn't been at the place she said, her short nodding "Mm." said 'message received', waiting for me to make quite clear any accusation I might have intended knowing full well that I did not dare; she kept me a step or two down, putting even my six feet two half a head below her eyes, just high enough still so that she didn't have to point her head down at me but only drop her eyes down along her nose. It was no wonder that the first and early message well-received was that she had a chip on her black shoulder as hard as a half-kilo of anthracite coal and didn't care in the least if I ever did find her old man.
But I kept coming back with my tales of having just missed him at that place he was alleged to be at every day, and assumed my proper place two steps down off the porch, and finally she began to believe that I was just too pathetic to warrant her wielding that hunk of black coal at (they never do believe just how pathetic ethnographers are until they actually run into one, lumbering around on the fringe of another culture as if his entire life depends upon just one person inviting him in...which is exactly the case, of course), and I could not possibly be a member of that other cast of Where-can-we-find-your-husband, the ones with the warrants and the uniforms. (It was this last that put the tiny bit of fearful reticence in her manner, the bit which kept me for so long from realizing a tack to take in our conversations; it was the bit of fear that she so hated, and had grown to hate the whites who had put it there and which kept her always afraid of just singing out, or closing the door, or whatever...and so it kept me on my perch, two steps down, with an imperceptive awkwardness which strained our early encounters but served humbly well in the long run.)

When I finally found her old man it was as if I were only the visage which needed putting on the tales of my visits. I had been 'just there' and 'not quite in time' and 'only just missed' for a week and a half, at his house, at his work, and even at one of the offices in town where he was known to call in from time to time. I told him who I was (he said nothing) and who it was who had given me his name (nothing) and mentioned another mutual acquaintance (nothing). I told him I had visited with his two countrymen in Sydney on the way up (he said nothing), and that one of them—I was reduced to stupid reiteration, having exhausted my three topics of interest—had told me to look him up. (Still he said nothing.) Finally, standing as I was two steps down from the doorsill of the building where I had finally found him, and getting bored with the two-steps-down-and-a-pace-behind feeling that I was starting to get around these Island people, I said that I was wanting to learn something of Torres Strait Islanders, and that I had come to
Townsville because I had been here before and knew that there were a lot of Islanders here and that's why I had been checking with his countrymen to see who to talk to here. He said, "Mm."

So here I was on my same perch: different stoop, still two steps down. I have no idea whether this guy means to be as fierce and black as he seems certainly to be making himself out to be. (Later I would learn that this is the way you look at strange white men if strange white men have ejected you from pubs, ganged-up to beat you up with the impunity of North Queensland Saturday night bravado having mistaken you for an Aboriginal, carted you off well dressed and sober for being found drunk-and-disorderly (which meant for being in the wrong pub, or rather, in any but the one right pub, the 'blackfellas pub') and chucked you into jail overnight and you torn between just-a-borning Black Power righteous indignation and the wife you knew would be frantic with worry until they let you out.) So I started my litany again, hoping for at least his "Mm"-refrain until I could figure out something else to do (and while I worked my centering exercises to remind myself that I was younger and bigger than this Malcolm X lookalike and had no reason to feel as scared as I did):

I've come up from Canberra to study Torres Strait Islanders.

(Glare.)

I know some fellow Torres Strait Islanders of yours.

(—.)

One of them said to see only you and nobody but you in Townsville.

(Nod.)

(—My flattering subterfuge had cracked him? I pushed on—) Yeah, he sure did. Every time I mentioned a name he said No, you!

(Glare.)

I've been looking all over for you.

(Silently: So—?)

You see, I'm from university and Torres Strait Islanders in—

Island people.
—terest me since they have recently... (he spoke!?) Huh? uh... Pardon?

Island people! No "Torres Strait Islanders": Island people.

Ah. Well, Island people interest me since—

...or, as we say, Mériam people.

And that one stopped me. Cold. And stopped cold as I was I must have been less pensive, or dropped my pose, or had my benign confusion read from my face easily because the next thing I knew we were both walking out to the shade of the trees in front of the building. I had somehow fallen in step with him. He had miraculously descended the two steps and began talking as he strolled the thirty feet to the shade. And as it dawned on me that this Mériam he had said was the living pronunciation of the miriam/Miriam I had seen in print, from Haddon’s reports from the last century through some of Jeremy Beckett’s recent anthropology. He was saying something about his people being the people of Murray Island. He may have called them Mériam le way back on that first day; he would likely have, but my notes are patchier than my memory, and mostly I was trying to look as if I were paying attention and trying not to walk too fast, nor too far behind, nor too far forward—there would be a gate only wide enough for one at a time! (I tried an unobtrusive half-step lag just as we approached it which seemed at the time to work just fine... later I understood that he would have assumed his unthinking right of first passage and would only have noticed me had I barged ahead) and all the while my feeble brain was making my very first living Torres Strait Islander social fact: There’s a 'we' for whom Mériam people is a better way of saying "us" than "Torres Strait Islanders" is. (Later, so many months later when all of this had become part of me, I was bragging to a friend of mine whose roots were Scotland’s Outer Hebrides about his regard for these people from Australia’s outer islands with whom he claimed the kinship of disenfranchisement and the second-class citizenship of ethnic minorities since the times of Culloden and before. Working with them in the North Queensland towns he took pains to avoid insulting them.
I told him the Island people thought 'Torres Strait Islanders' to be a name after some White bloke whom they recall sailing by, and advised him to at least say 'Island people', "or," I said, "as we say, Mériam people").

"A brown Jay Gatsby—"

So what to call this glaring, fierce introduction to the Island people ("...or, as we say, Mériam people")? Jay will do for now. Always this problem with real live ethnography. Do you call them by their real names, especially the courageous ones like Jay, the ones who have always been willing to try their luck and take their lumps and niggle out a decent life for them and their kinds in this so so white state, always on the lookout for the ones with the necks sunburnt from bending forward to kick the abos out from in front of the pub?

By next chapter I'll probably be calling him 'my man' or some other such corny pseudo-Black American hipster handle. But Jay, the brown Jay Gatsby will do for now. He reminds me always of Muhammad Ali (that's who Hunter Thompson called "the brown Jay Gatsby", which is where I borrowed the tag). A scrapper as well as a semi-pro boxer (one of the first of a long line of Islanders still carrying the Queensland colours into Golden Gloves and Pacific Games rings). Took on three whites somewhere down at the Sovereign Hotel/railway station end of town one night and nearly cleaned them up all by himself (they left before they were down, probably because they figured it would cost them too much to really mess up this Island Ali). Three death threats personally telephoned to him one day (and one threat to burn down his house with his wife and children inside), and sure enough, there we were (WE!?), going on about our nightly business at the housing cooperative while three carloads of the current enemy faction were cruising around the houses of some Mériam families waving rifles and yahooing like TV-Indians around covered wagons. Funny, except here we are, Jay with his They-
aren't-going-to-scarr-me-C'mon-Larry and me trying to remember that AUTOMATIC move for getting at the blade that's strapped to my leg (anthropologists making retrospective speeches about those ethnographers who've bravely given their lives in pursuit of knowledge is one thing, but the savages in this place are civilized, and carry point-two-two rifles in their Holdens).

But I am getting ahead of my story. My story is supposed to be in support of the idea that a self is a social reality, that we can now begin to discern just how social realities come to be, and so we may be able to begin to understand how selves come to be. The self in question is, of course, mine. It is my Island self. It was never a very complete one, and is less so nowadays, much less so than that night when I left my wife Cherie to sit with Jay's wife and kids until three a.m. with the shutters closed and the kids taking turns dimming the lights and peeping out the door every time a car turned onto their suburban street. Partly it is less because of the effort of coming round to writing about it, part of the price paid for taking the writing as seriously as the research; no censorship, but much discarded or, if not exactly discarded, put aside certainly until the time when it is possible to put that (whatever it was) into words. Imagine trying to put into words the reality of internecine black politics when the memory of the clearest statement of it is the memory of leaving your wife and kids at the mercy of some crazy who's going to come with guns and fire. Now imagine trying to write it, in English, so that neither melodrama nor readers' scepticisms colour it irrevocably. Today I would not have left her; that night it was the thing to do.

In order to talk about the hugely encompassing idea of mind-self-society of George Herbert Mead (something like Harry Stack Sullivan's "self system" put into its full anthropological context), Paul Pfeutze coined the term the social self. With it he compared Mead with the I-thou of Martin Buber. This is the self I am concerned with, this social self. It cannot exist without its own history; it cannot exist without the history of its others. Even to say exist is
but a figure of speech. Better to say The Self is not sensible without its historicity. The Self (any self) has not got to where it is without its Others having got to 'where' they are. Lacan calls the Other simply the rest of the system in which the subject is involved, and the "discourse of the Other" is the unconscious subject, the subject which poses the question of the subject's being. The problem for anyone interested in the social construction of the self is to learn to glimpse its construction materials just as soon after they appear as he can. One of the commonly accepted drawbacks of anthropological research, or at least of that staple usually called 'ethnographic experience' is that the ethnographer does not get to learn all that he comes to know in the same way the members of the society do, having been gradually socialized since their childhood. But the corollary of this is not so commonly accepted being, as it is, hardly recognized: the ethnographer has a tremendous opportunity by virtue of his adulthood to observe himself in the process of becoming a self that (usually) no other adult human being has ever before become—not even the members of the very society he enters!

Do Islanders remember the first time they are called "Islanders"? (Who knows? I never asked, not ever being able to figure out a neutral way of asking; and I never heard of anyone else asking.) Do the Mérim people remember, each of them, the first time they were called Mérim people? (I do. But I began as not-Mérim, a beginning they cannot have.) Do they remember the first time a Mérim man deigned to signal to them his admittance of them at least to the first outer circle of knowledge, in the way Jay did me by finally not making me continue saying 'Torres Strait Islanders' 'Torres Strait Islanders' like some dumb honky refrain and letting me know at least that the mob I was going to study had a way of reckoning themselves, a way important enough to make sure I got the message on my first day on the job? —Of course not. They get to learn "Mérim people" first and then figure out that white maps mark them down as the geographical descendants of Captain Torres's discovery. For finding out what being one of the "Mérim people" means, the best method is
to find one—as I found Jay—and apprentice yourself to him. But for finding out what becoming one of these people means, for that you've got to find an anthropologist. You have to find someone willing to begin to act in terms of a 'discourse of the Other'—that is, to begin to construct a self—for an Other (Lacan: "the rest of the system") never before encountered.

Fortunately the human kind is a sense-maker par excellence. Without, say, unavoidable psychological pressure or chemically induced sensory perturbations, making sense of another culture is not intrinsically any more difficult than making sense of an alarm clock ringing: plunk any sample of Homo sapiens down into the room where the other culture is and he will immediately begin making sense of it. Of course, when that bell rings out "Meriam people" he may hear that as an alternative to the exoteric label he took in, and register it 'merely' as another way of saying "Torres Strait Islander". He makes thereby the same mistake as the sense-making organism does when it 'hears' the wake-up alarm as merely another telephone call or dreams a remembered bell. (The anthropologist's problem is that even armed with illustrations such as this one, he has never encountered any Islander 'bells'...so his dreams are as untrustworthy as his wakeful senses, providing not even those nocturnal wrongnesses which help keep the days right.)

So I apprenticed myself, without telling him, to this brown Jay Gatsby. And he took me on, without (I was to find out later) telling me. And, as it turned out, he had taken me on for the same reasons that I had 'apprenticed' myself to him, that hot day in Townsville. "A brown Jay Gatsby—not black and with a head that would never be white." That's what Hunter Thompson wrote of Muhammad Ali; it serves my Jay also. Why did he take me on? Beyond the fact that I am what is known as a 'quick-study', I'm still not sure. The only clue I have rests on the Meriam idea of education, the idea behind Chapter 4, and which I return to below.
Whatever the reason, or for no reason at all, he became the agent and agency of my inculcation. Are all Island men courageous? Yes, I think so. At least by my sense of common Anglo standards of risk and the taking of 'reasonable chances' they are. But am I to know? I think all United States Marines are courageous, and all anthropologists are (so I obviously reckon courage action-in-spite-of-fear rather than fearlessness). Maybe every single Island man I ever met is measured against the first entry into the discourse of my Island Other, this scrapper who would never be white. "Us and the Maori!" he used to tell me. "Us and the Maori—the only Island people never conquered by the white man."

Some people write their novels and others roll high enough to live them and some fools try to do both—but Ali can barely read, much less write, so he came to that fork in the road long ago and he had the rare instinct to find that one seam in the defense that let him opt for a third choice: he could get rid of words altogether and live his own movie.

(Thompson again.) So there we were in his movie, me with this 12-inch blade strapped to my leg, checking the release snap at the same time as I'm wondering if I really want to get to the point of having to stick some black fool just because I'm apprenticed to the wrong movie (but knowing withal that I will err on the side of my own survival if we do get caught).

A Content of Self

The 'motion of self' which this chapter is concerned with is mine. And it is, by extension (but, I hasten to add, an extension made only by my reader on his grounds) the motion of self of others who have either changed selves or changed contexts of self. Shortly before the Indians-circling-the-wagons incident I had occasion to receive the ultimate acceptance into the life of the Meriam people.

(Had I not, or had it not been hardly a week old, or had it not been this very man whom I accompanied half as brother and half as bodyguard, or had not the memory of the relief at finally having no
more worries at all about some Islander pulling the research rug out from under me—Kemo Sabe, look like you speak with whiteman fork tongue after all. Adios.—or had it been a month or two later, after I had been accused by a member of government of single handedly causing the rift between the Islanders and the Aborigines, or after I had dropped off an Afro-and-dashiki bedecked southern Black Power-type at the airport and been immediately picked up by the police on one of those 'well...uh...dope. That's it: Dope! Maybe you're...uh...smuggling dope' unofficial arrests. ...or this, or that, or who knows?...I may have been not so quick to get armed and into the thick of it.)

But as I said, who knows? This is exactly the problem of paying strict attention to the facts of consciousness while knowing full well that it is, as Lacan says, the subconscious which poses the very questions of the conscious subject. In any case, I had been finally accepted.

We had been sitting in a coffee shop, Jay and I. We had remained seated at the table in a kind of unbelieving aftershock, though not so much a shock as a new after-feeling. Some of the leading men from the islands of Saibai, Badu, and Mabuiag had just left to go on about their business. All six of us had had a long lunch talking about problems facing the Islander community as a whole. There had been no rancour, no secret sneering between the toasted cheese and curried egg sandwiches; nothing whatsoever of the endemic Eastern-Western conflict had raised its head. By the time coffee was served they were comparing stories of their first visits to each others' island groups as boys on pearling luggers or IIB supply boats, tossing into the conversation words and phrases of each others' languages, and even comparing notes on genealogies by mentioning their dually-related in-laws (the ones who are invariably referred to on less salutary occasions as traitors to their island group). And I'm trying to not fail to laugh when Meriam laughter is called for (but trying to avoid being caught joining in the laughing when the only ones laughing had
been there back in the old days—I being the one Islandman without any but the most recent of 'old days').

I am trying so hard to participate that I forget to observe. It fails to dawn on me that I have been allowed to stay for a meeting of island leaders when it is a meeting attended only by leaders(!). Not only am I distracted by having to avoid permitting these gracious men to embarrass themselves by having me turn out to be not nearly so competent in their languages and graces as their generous (not to say optimisitic, even inflated) assessment of me, but also I am still suffering that peculiar feeling of having been cast adrift which comes on us when we commit one of those social gaffs whose context makes them especially unbelievable. Like the Army public relations officer who leaves the reception for survivors of Pearl Harbor on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Japanese attack saying, in an attempt for just the right mix of soldierly comraderie and civilian élan, "Well, men. Sayonara!", I had, not two weeks before this historic meeting, managed to address a group of my fellow Islandmen in Aboriginal pidgin! (I could have picked any other lingo for my faux pas but that one...like my Army PR-man who could at least have said "Ciao" if he couldn't be satisfied with Good-bye.) Everything had come to a screeching halt that night while they sorted out whether or not a gross error in judgment had been made in respect of my entry into the community. And I was still waiting on pins and needles to see if the 'fellow' had dropped out of "my fellow Islandmen" before I had even got used to it rolling off my tongue.

So they have left and I, thinking back on that day, must have been as little present as that first day I met Jay, waiting to see if I was to be shown the door, shut out of Islander ethnography at this hopeless stage—seven months plus into the fieldwork—of too much invested to turn my back on it and too little to do anything with.

"Good meeting," I said to Jay.

"Mm." he nodded. We sat some more. "Prapa Islandman, dempla," he said after a while, musing, surprised as ever to find that out about the men of the Western islands (Real Islandmen, those guys).
I was thrilled, beside myself with investigative glee. I had announced in a pre-fieldwork seminar at the national university an interest in changing social forms and in "the domains of cooperation and conflict(!) among Islanders in town". I had proposed to investigate an earlier suggestion that Islanders were adopting a Torres Strait Islander identity in favour of that of home islands, particularly in light of Jan-Petter Blom's notion of the organization of ethnic identities depending not "on cultural diversity per se, as generally assumed in anthropology, but rather on the assignment of particular social meanings to a limited set of acts".

And here it all was. In a coffee shop in a Townsville arcade the casual lunch among menfolk, heretofore reserved for groups restricted to those of same-island origin, or at least to same island group (and even then mostly restricted even so to relations from those other islands of the group), had become an all-Torres Strait event! This is what Simmel meant by life being both more-life and more-than-life.

By saying that life is more-life, Simmel declares life to be a process. Life is a motion; specifically it is a motion which constantly reproduces itself, pushes beyond itself. "The present of life consists of its transcending the present." This sense of motion is a real motion, each moment dissolving into the next. It is compatible with my sense of motion of self, a sense in which the self 'moves' from one identity to the next (or to none), from one context to the next. And the self, seen now from its former context, now from its current one, is more-than-life, having become one of the objects which life creates by virtue of the formal principles implicit in experience. Whether we consider contents only as they are shaped in experience, whether we focus upon an ideal world that is implicitly generated by experience, or whether we attend to a human work as a material embodiment of experience, the structure in question "possesses its own meaning, a logical coherence, some kind of validity or stability, independent of its having been produced and being borne along by life."
I have said something of my sense of meaning, of meaning as the next-thing in a situation. Here is Simmel's sense of meaning—a coherent validity independent of its having been produced by life—one which has informed my own thoughts on this matter (though I cannot recall how my thinking followed my reading of his), and which I now read to fit with my own: the coherent validity is the next-thing, the meaning, so long as someone is there to make the meaningful connection (or so long as the situation can be remembered in order that the meaning be construed as the next-thing, though its 'nextness' may stretch far beyond our normal reckoning of contiguity as continuity).

For the meeting in the coffee shop, the potency of making a meaningful association of All-Torres Strait was tangible. But it was, I think (that is, I thought so then, and upon reflection shortly thereafter, and later upon analytical reflection), only tangible for me. That they did proceed to a form for All-Torres Strait social action which came to be called Islandmeeting is part of the next-thing after that casual lunch in the Permanent Arcade. (It is that sense of "meaning" where someone asks, 'What was the meaning of those Westerners and Easterners at the same table that day in June of 1978?', and the answer follows, 'What it meant was that they could have a second lunch when they needed to in order to figure out how to get all the Island people together to try to stop all the health and housing and legal support services being taken over by Aborigines who would lock the Islanders out. That lunch meant they could have the Islandmeetings!) And that was part of their retrospectively assigned meaning (in the way that subsequence is designated after the fact), nominating or discovering the prior which permitted the event in question to be 'next'thing. At least one of them said, rather bemusedly after a particularly successful Islandmeeting called to present the Island people's case to some visiting officers of the Commonwealth's Office of Community Relations, something about how this "all-Torres Strait business emi stat pastime lo dat Coffee Spot".
So all of this generally meaningful community activity is proceeding ("produced and being borne along by life" as Simmel put it). But so too is the less commonly attended to sociology of the construction of a social self. In particular, the self of the one person at that lunch almost squirming in distinctly un-Islandman fashion (no one, East or West, squirms when they eat) at the prospect of finding himself one day to have been present at the kernel of a new ethnic group. The Westerners depart, Jay and I exchange our "Good meeting", "Mm. Prapa Islandman, dempla." Then, when I'm still leaping into the imagined future of somehow all Islanders getting together and forgetting that the Westerners can't stand the mincing pedantic picky-ness of the Eastern This-and-thats (Able-able: from Méram mir ablé—THIS or THAT—which Western Islanders hear as every other word out of the Easterners' always-overspecifying mouths) and the Easterners can't stomach their huge counterparts from the Western reaches whom they call The Slobs (Gom lé: which they say means 'body people', or 'eaters of bad food', but which is merely a corruption of the name of the people of Gumulaga for themselves and their island), I forget my Islandman self that my ethnographer self ought to let my anthropologist self monitor during construction.

"God," I say, as it finally dawns on me that I have just been present at a lunch attended by, and only by, island head men, "I can't believe it. Jay, I have been sitting here with all these prapa au-lé."

Ever so slowly, but the slowness of tiny fits and jerks of unbelieving realization dawning and being rejected and pressing despite the rejection, Jay begins to raise his head. His disbelief makes him play with the handle of his coffee cup, squint a little as if peering at the person he thought I was until the moment I opened my mouth with that, ducking the moment when his eyes will raise all the way and he'll have to see me as the person I am now/have just become/reverted to for a moment?—and (this is the frightening one)—have always been. It's this last possibility which really slows him down: What if this Lare, whose very name has been
predicated upon his having inculcated Island content, what if he turns out right now? is turning out right before Jay's very eyes? turns out to have always been despite every trust and teaching and counsel... what if he turns out to be after all only Larry, half-anthropologist half-kole? How could anyone but some half-assed white kole-man say that? HOW COULD I HAVE JUST PRESENTED HIM TO THESE IMPORTANT MEN AS A PRAPA ISLANDMAN HIMSELF? AS NOT JUST AN ISLANDMAN BUT AS MÉRIAM Lé, A COUNTRYMAN TO BE RECKONED WITH, A MAN OF MÉR?!? I HAVE JUST INVITED TO MY TABLE THE TOP MEN FROM THE THREE MAIN WESTERN ISLANDS KNOWING THAT THEY WILL TAKE MY SILENCE REGARDING LARE AS WARRANTING HIS PRESENCE HERE AND HE SAYS WHEN IT'S ALL OVER THAT HE CAN'T BELIEVE IT!? WHO DOES HE THINK HE IS? WHO IS HE?

He raises his head, finally. And even though he has taken what I realized later was an interminable time about it, I am only just starting to get the feeling that something is wrong. His fingers leave the coffee cup handle, his squinting and relaxing stops. He raises his head the rest of the way and fixes me with this look, of which the questions in caps above are the best translation I can render in English. It begins to dawn on me, as I fumble around for something to say in a time where nothing will do, that the contents of my island self are seriously on trial, not only my Aboriginal pidgin gaff but now this one. And I still don't know what this one is.

A Precision of a Different Kind

I have offered the reflective questions in ALL-CAPS as a 'translation' of the look I got from Jay. The problems inherent in making ethnography—in making on paper with discursive prose what were the facts of a life lived in its audial and olfactory and visual presence—are extraordinarily exacerbated by any unwillingness to ignore any of the contents of the experiences which were the substance and the process of the ethnographic research. I offer these capitalized questions as the content of Jay's look, in the same
way that I offered the impressions and vignettes of the preceding section as something of the content of my self, a self which 'moved' from half-anthropologist half-kolé to Islandman, to Meriam le; and which, as I left the coffee shop story, threatened to move right back again.

I use CAPS in the same way students of communication use CAPS for the glosses of the signs in sign language, or the glosses linguists assign to native vocabulary, or the way in which initial-codes become acronyms (like Anzac, and Nato, and George Lucas's Star Wars robot "Artoo Detoo" [R2D2]). Do I intend that these be read, uncritically, as Jay's? No. I intend them, like any other kind of gloss, as my best reading, rendered in the language of presentation (in this case English), of the content of the experience of receiving that baleful look.

This is a use of language which is different from the normal scientific use of language. Scientific language is posited upon the idea of tertium quid, the third thing, the thing which stands apart from the writer and the reader—from the laboratory worker and the audience to whom he is reporting, or from the experimenter and those planning on duplicating the experiment, or from the laboratory worker and the audience to whom he is reporting, or from the experimenter and those planning on duplicating the experiment, or from the surgeon and those who would learn his technique—and which may be related to the text by absolute one-to-one correspondence with the words from the text. In this use of language, the language may be taken to serve as the tertium quid because the text is taken to be a perfect map. And it may be that matters having to do with the contents of persons, and with their formal expressions, and with the changes from context to context and ensuing alterations in content which I have called 'motions of self', will be someday dealt with in formal scientific language, when the possible differences between one person's 'Island-self' and another person's 'Island-self' are negligible, and the idea of a 'Such-and-such self' is old hat, part
of the everyday lingo of the social reality construction of persons, like id, and ego, and sub-conscious.

This is not yet the case. We have learned in the anthropology of communication to be reluctant about taking any map to be such a perfect stand-in for its territory. Lao-tzu and his the way which can be told is not the true way (Tao te Ching) begins to have more practical application that even early Western afficianadoes once thought. If I say, using the upper- and lower-case of normal prose, that those were Jay's thoughts as he looked at me, I am on shaky ground. Not only am I liable to the kind of amateur epistemology (How do you know that? I suppose you can get in people's heads?) that is rife in post-Schutz social science, but also I do myself a double disservice. That is, I make two errors of a discursive nature. In the first error, I permit the reading that I am presuming to render private thoughts, assigning them like a novelist would in order to make my story come out as I wish. In the second I risk the interpretation that I am using language in a scientific manner, and that I expect the reader to take the words I write as the words he reads, and to take both of them as a correspondence with the reality they describe.

It is this second error which is the less easily handled (the first has been dealt with merely by my insisting that I have used a glossing method signaled by capital letters). In part, my insistence on discussing my sense of what constitutes meaning is meant to inform this possibility for error: if meaning is, as I maintain, the next-thing in any human situation, then the meaning of what I have written is in the reader (first it is in me, as I am my own first reader, insofar as I am capable of that very difficult endeavour). When this happens, all such blather as this page and a half just gets in the way of reading on to see what I have to say next. But when one of the humanities, in this case anthropology, becomes tainted with the brush of 'social science', then it is no longer easy to justify laying any and all misreadings at the feet of the reader. For those readers who understood that I was not presuming to render the
thoughts of my brown Gatsby, they may skip to the next page. But for those who did not, these formal remarks proffer a caution. Scientific language has not yet established a convention for mapping one-to-one correspondences in respect of the very real social facts of our construction of ourselves as persons by 'reading' others' reactions to us, and actions pursuant to those reactions, and so forth. We are, therefore, unable to avail ourselves of such conventions (and, moreover, I suspect that as soon as any get established, human beings will begin reconstructing social epistemologies of personhood on the grounds of the new psychological establishmentia, just as we have inculcated Freudian theory as the basis for post-ego psychologies).

What we must do, if we wish to convey the bases of the actions whose constituent events informed changes in persons, is to make those events on the page. And we do not have the however attractive option of acting as if there is some vocabulary that we may use which will ensure our blamelessness as anthropological writers, permit the smug response to the mis-reader, 'Go get yourself a dictionary if you don't know what I mean'. In particular, we must work to be as true to that which we take to be the premises of the actions of our subject peoples as we can, admitting all the while (though I think not, in the future, with the explicit attention I have felt myself obligated to in the present work) that we are constrained by cross-modal transpositions, translation, glossing, and so forth. I have been true to what I call Island idiom. I am suspicious of efforts to analyze communication which take as their notional goal some cause for which observed communication is an effect. My guess is that communication, equipped with a memory able to recall past communications, has nothing more than, or less than, or different from, communication at its base. And it is this which keeps us to Lao-tsu's "middle way": if the reality of communication and, thence, of the social beings we are made, is one which has at its root the construance of meaning, then ethnographies must report events from which the reader can construe the right meanings.
The alternative, the scientific way of positing verities with which positive correspondences are made in order to pose some ethnographic scene for the reader's perusal, leaves us trapped between positivism and the poseur: unable to put how it really was we are obliged to pretend that it was how we posit it, locking us into an unending cycle of dictionary-making, always arguing over the way to posit the tertium quid to get it closer to reality, prevented forever from using the one reality which we have at hand, the living natural language which we share with our readers. So when I write that rendition of my reading of that look which promised, over a coffee shop table in Townsville, that all of my work at making myself into an acceptable Islandman was about to go for nought, the meaning of what I write is in the reader's reading of that half-paragraph as an account of a look which promised that the poor young anthropologist was in imminent danger of having all his work on making himself into an acceptable participant in order to observe such goings on as the first ever meeting of Eastern and Western Island leaders naturally-occurring in the urban Mainland scene about to be erased.

It may be that the reader will make an interpretation that that young anthropologist ought to have been paying attention to the form of his own interacting and not to the changing content of inter-Island relations. Such an interpretation accords with my own. But both are interpretations, mine based on memory and having been there and the reader's on an exegesis of my text. In any case, there ought to be agreement possible on the text in respect of which readings and interpretations may or may not agree. For a writer writing about his own self (as ethnographers who would discuss the social construction of another social self must), the fork between posing and positivism is acute. The only hope is that put by Lacan:

It is not a question of knowing whether I am speaking about myself in conformity with what I am, but rather that of knowing whether, when I speak of it, I am the same as that of which I speak. 77
The saving grace of a view of communicational reality which hinges on the primacy response—of hearing over speaking, reading over writing, 'reading' a received look over giving someone a look—lies in the trusting the reader to give a full and honest reading to the written text: Trusting him to pick up any nuance of posing, to reject any implicit wheedling, to make his own assessment of the events presented. Of course this requires us to write the events themselves and not our interpretations of them. It also requires us to write as fully as we can, putting down enough information about who we were as participants as we do about who and what we saw as observers. Only in this way can the reader have at hand the wherewithal to make the readings we must trust him to make. And, again, because we are bent (in ethnography, though not always in ethnology or in anthropology) on doing things with our language rather than about it, we have to be as precise as we can.

Hamlet, Horatio, and Marcellus walk upon the castle platform awaiting midnight and Hamlet's father's ghost. Hamlet says, "The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold," and Horatio answers, "It is a nipping and an eager air."

So writes William Gass in his essay on "fiction and the figures of life", "Life in Terms of the Toenail".

Hamlet and Horatio do not think of it as cold, simply. The dog of air's around them, shrewd and eager, running at heels... The nature of the weather is conveyed to us with marvelous exactitude and ease, in remarks made by the way, far from the center of action; so that we find ourselves with knowledge of it in just the off-hand way we would if, bent on meeting a king's ghost, we too went through the sharp wind.

"If," as Professor Geertz likes to quote Northrop Frye, "we go to see Macbeth to learn what a man feels like after he has gained a kingdom and lost his soul, Balinese," he tells us at the end of his essay on The Cockfight, "go to cockfights to find out what a man, usually composed, aloof, almost obsessively self-absorbed feels like when, attacked, tormented, challenged, insulted, and driven in result to the extremes of fury, he has totally triumphed or been brought totally low."

78
But if, I should like to add, we read The Cockfight in order to find out what a people do take to be real when, as we read in Geertz's opening paragraph, they "deal with people not part of their life who yet press themselves upon them as though we [the Geertz's] were not there...nonpersons, specters, invisible men", then we might read Hamlet to hear our own forbears account for the weather "in just the off-hand way we would if we too went through the sharp wind." As Gass says,

If we knew the temperature was ten degrees and the wind force five, we might imagine rather well how cold the wind would feel... Perhaps one can say that the scientist works always through a quantitatively abstract system, and that his purpose seems to be to find ways to represent the vague and informal qualitative content of experience within a rationally well-ordered formal scheme. ...Shakespeare has introduced an altogether novel set of concepts; novel, that is, with respect to the idea of weather as such; and it is through these concepts that we understand the kind of wind and cold we're in, just as, through the mathematical, the scientist tries to understand the experienced weather too.

But the difference is that ten degrees and force five only support an understanding if both the scientist and whomever it is he is describing the weather to have already been in such a wind and assigned this particular tertium quid—10°/Force 5—to that experience. The difference is the absence of assignation. Hamlet and Horatio can, with only the words they leave us witness, as Gass puts it, "give us the dog of the air itself". "And," he continues, "I think it will be obvious to anyone who fairly examines the meaning of Shakespeare's language that it renders the weather with a precision quite equal to the precision of the scientific, although the scientific precision is of a different kind."

The Motion of the Contentious Self

For us, here, the 'dog of the air itself' is the beast we have come to call the Self. My suggestion is that we take the observed reality that persons change who they are and, in the light of the twentieth century discoveries of the social, communicational, interactional
nature of these things we call persons, bring to bear upon them Georg Simmel's distinction between form and content. In this way may we speak of persons who, still taken to be who they once were, begin to change into who they will be taken for. Charles H. Cooley said, "The imaginations people have of one another are the solid facts of society." Consider the gape-jawed eighteen-year-old Islander who I surprised in Canberra once by having a white face and talking Torres Strait Pidgin at the same time. He said, when he finally regained himself, that he never imagined a white person talking his language.

That was a case where the formal self (white and no-Pidgin) changed to the new formal self (white and Pidgin) in short order. Nevertheless, there was a time when, in respect of this one Island boy, I might not have been able to sustain my Island-self. In a more sophisticated millieu he might well have used the stereotypical response of les Français to the honking anglophone struggling (however fluently in actuality) with the French tongue who finally is interrupted by, "My good fellow, do you mind terribly if we use English?" In such a scenario the French self (or my Island self) has simply no expression. According to my proposed form and content distinction, the French self has no form. This does not mean that the anglophone can't speak French, nor does it deny that he is somehow able to understand French and even wander around the cafés and pâtisseries. What it means is that all of these capacities are denied formal presence and must remain as content: they are part of the contentious self.

This notion of a contentious self permits a handling of a unitary human nature without insisting upon observed similarities among human beings. In his theory of the self, Roberto Unger writes,

In the tradition of our culture, three topics have dominated the study of human nature. The first is the problem of the connection between human nature and history. The second is the choice between the essentialist and the relational view of humanity. The third is the question of the place the individual occupies in the species. A theory of the self can be defined by the position it takes on these three issues.
With some of the flavour of Simmel's more-life and more-than-life, Unger writes of human nature as

a universal that exists through its particular embodiments, always moves beyond any one of them, and changes through their sequence. Each person and each form of social life represents a novel interpretation of humanity, and each new interpretation transforms what humanity is.

More than this, an idea of the content of self lets us reckon persons as they change their forms of social life, recognizing that for the rest of the contents of that person no change is being undertaken. We can also attend to the very contents that are changing, sometimes faster than the general social reality in which the new embodiment becomes embedded, sometimes slower. In his story "Cassius", Sam Toperoff brings Cassius from the boy in "a rickety second-floor gym over the toughest poolroom in the colored section of Louisville" to Muhammad Ali refusing to take the Army oath of induction—"During the administration of the oath, when the inductees were asked to take one step forward, Mr Clay—or Mr Ali, as he prefers to be called—refused, and at that moment he became liable to prosecution..." (Lt. Col. Pidgeon, Publicity Officer). Hunter Thompson writing of The Champ and his entourage three weeks after the unexpected defeat at the hands of Leon Spinks said of Bundini Brown ("Ali's alter ego and court wizard...the man who came up with 'Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee'") and executive spokesman Hal Conrad, "They have been around for so long that they had once called the boss 'Cassius', or even 'Cash'."

All of this is evidence that Cassius became Ali...that someone who was called, called himself, "Cassius" has disappeared into history. The self of those contents, the contents called by that formal name, is gone; in its place is a different self. But this new self went through a time of being a contentious self, as Cassius/Muhammad moved from Clay to Ali.

"The car is what you'd call borrowed. An' the registration jus' ain't here right now."

Ali has been pulled over by a Southern police officer. His license
has expired. There is no registration in the glove compartment.

"You know I saw your last fight on the tevee, an' I just wants to say it don't matter a lick to me what you calls yourself, you're the gaddamned best I ever have seen. 'An I saw Joe Louis when he was in his prime." 31

Muhammad Ali starred in a play which flopped some time after announcing his allegiance to the Nation of Islam. The billboards read:

Muhammad Ali (A/K/A Cassius Clay)
in a new musical
BUCK WHITE

The William Cayton documentary film AKA Cassius Clay took its title from that billboard. the narrator of the film says, "Black Muslimism changed more than his name. His draft classification was changed from 1y to 1a." Muhammad said,

"The draft that's another thing tha's against mah religious beliefs." He said, "I took that step back because I'm a Muslim."

My intent here is to record the motion of the contentious self of a known person, a figure who made that motion public (only a few weeks passed between his joining of the Black Muslims before the Sonny Liston title fight and his announcement of his allegiance to The Nation of Islam on the morning after the fight). 'Contentious' is more than simply a reminder that the action of the construction of self is, during contentious motion, action proceeding on the contents of that changing self; it is also a mnemonic for the contentiousness which attends many of those changes, many of which are formally contested by the society of the person's former self. In a sense, a fighter like Ali or a would-be Islander like Laré contends with the society who are his Others, sometimes flowing with their acceptance of his new identity sometimes waiting with bated breath to see if they take him to jail or ask him for his autograph. And all of this time the Others have to be taking counsel on whether this new content of self ought to be formally recognized, with all of
the ensuing changes in the social fabric which such formal establishment may entail.

This was Jay's problem as he raised his grotesque stare to my slowly-realizing eyes. He was trying out any kind of interpretation which might make my 'I can't believe I was here' sound like anything but that naïve utterance so tainted with spectatorship that there is no way around the fact of its own admission of having been not there at all...at least, not present at the reality of what had just occurred. (And, too, it may have taken him by surprise, he having been just as desirous of savouring the first-time-ness of it all, and being rudely brought down to earth by this 'I can't believe it'-fool across the table.

"...Of course you were here," he said, with an almost plaintive exhalation. All of a sudden the first glimmer of the reason for the hard look took me.

"No. No, I didn't mean—uh—I mean—uh, not me being here but just it happening at all. The meeting."

"—Mm," he said, not quite relaxed but clutching at anything.

My earlier faux pas with the enemy pidgin leapt to mind, as had all my earlier gaffs and errors. I knew that I had slipped, had failed to attend to my presentation of self in the excitement that my ongoing but informal anthropologist-self had had to contend with. So I went on to talk—to babble, really—about East-West relations—and about poor opinions of one another, showing my general grasp of the historical situation, and loading my 'conversation' with as much evidence of good solid Islander education as I could muster.

Jay relaxed, taking (I guess: we never ever talked about this, and I can't wait until he reads this account) my unbelievable utterance as having emerged from that earlier, white, university self which was by definition full of unbelievable contents. And as I saw him relax my life passed before my eyes, but in reverse of the normal doomed man's backward movie. The motion of my contentious self played then and for days afterward.
I recalled that first day, when I first heard "Meriam people"..."as we say". And the first dinner at a brother's house, where his wife greeted mine with "Welcome, Sisi", neither having seen the other before; and we were greeted with "meriba meta", Our house where the 'our' includes those spoken to. We were so moved. But my contentious motion oscillated between these rich moments of understanding and participating and being just too slow: Once I had been showing off my smattering of Meriam mir, demurring with what must have been utterly transparent false modesty when someone gave me what I took to be the enormous compliment,

"Yu prapa Island boy now."

I batted my eyelashes, or whatever gesture I thought back then passed for 'Aw, shucks', and said

"Kebi-kebi", using the Meriam mir reduplicative for 'little', meaning that I thought I was doing pretty good myself.

It turned out that they had been making a small and wholly appropriate compliment that I was at least a boy now, in my Islander content, and that was, while a far cry from being a man, still not to be ashamed of (providing, of course, that it didn't go on too long). And what I succeeded in doing was disproving the premise of their compliment by articulating the obvious (what else would an Island boy be but a 'little-bit' of an Islander!); I also succeeded in offending them by presuming to correct their utterance, a formal action reserved for those better spoken and more educated.

But things were not alway so bad, though for a very long time they seemed to be two steps forward, one or two steps back. The trauma of that luncheon passed with Jay, still worried, but having replaced his uncomprehending distress with a kind of comprehending exasperation, saying

"Of course you were here! You were accepted long ago as a learner of the Meriam tonar. Now you know meriba way." He shook his head, still not absolutely sure some terrible mistake hadn't been made. "WHY DID YOU THINK WE LET YOU
In the end, the transition from Meriam—the label Jay had used to tell me what his 'we' were called by those who, though 'they', Others, were yet worthy enough to know at least that—to meriba (the "us" that means all of us, as opposed to the 'us-not-you' of Meriam mir keriba) was made after the fact. And, as usual, it was in a situation where I could not jump up and down with the glee I felt, nor shake my head with emotion.

A visitor had arrived from Torres Strait, one of the first of the springtime passers-through, en route to the west to see relatives or find work before the heat of summer sets in. I knew him by name, and that he was a cousin-brother to me through Jay. He'd been away from the Townsville family for a number of years, and the tears were flowing freely evening after evening as we all gathered at the brother's house. The first evening was limited to maik-lé, that curious group to which each Meriam lé belongs, composed of siblings and in-laws and cousins and friends; but not all siblings, and by no means all cousins or in-laws, and, for some maik-lé, more friends and friends' spouses than blood relatives. This group is the be-all and end-all of Meriam life. It is the group that men get weepy at the thought of such wonderful loyalty and support; the group that women may give up their babies to, if one of their maik-lé should be childless. Sometimes it reminds me of Jules Henry's description, "a kind of community Self, generating Self-substance for everybody". It is the one group where no member goes wanting, and no leader lacks support, even for unanimously disliked projects. It was the last group that I knew about (long after I figured out families, and extended families, and adopted families, and tribal groups, and tribal affiliations and alliances, and island groups). It was the last group I could name. It was, finally, the last group to which I was admitted.
Jay took me up to meet his cousin-brother, spying him and calling out his name and grabbing me and saying "There he is" all at once. He was so excited. Everybody was. We went up and before I could figure out what to do Jay said,

"Laré, this one," pushing me forward. "Emi prapa Islandman. Meriam lé." Our cousin-brother started to smile. Then Jay turned to me and said, "Meriba maik-lé."

And that was all I remembered for a very long time. By his announcement that we were all maik-lé I became maik-lé to all. I was speechless (though I kept speaking, automatically.) For the first time, and forever—maik-lé is for all time, those whose homes are always meriba meta (like Robert Frost's "The Hired Hand" for whom home is, when you go there, they have to let you in), those whose maik-lé are maik-lé to you—I became said to be maik-lé. The contentious motion could finally stop, having arrived at a self whose identity couldn't be removed. And I had been the one addressed!

Almost a year later, when Cherie and I had returned to Canberra and Jay and his wife visited us there, we were driving a sightseeing slow route home from the airport. As we passed the university and approached O'Connor, the suburb just off campus where we lived, I explained that this was the suburb where a lot of CSIRO people lived (they worked at the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation on nearby Black Mountain), and of course quite a few university people. And, I said, there were some public servants and a lot of government houses—

"And one Mériam meta," Jay said, delighted and proud that the presence of the Mériam lé had spread all this way.

But even that, with its formal confirmation of my Island self could not match that evening in Townsville when my Island self stopped contending for every inch of recognition, where the contentious motion stopped.
"Never trust the teller, trust the tale," said Lawrence.
Susan Sontag,
Against Interpretation

CONCLUSION

STORYTIME: Toward an Anthropology of Idiom

Anthropology has long been marked by its predicative preoccupations. Not content with the older ways of history and philosophy, early anthropologists sought new objects for their ethnologies, objects who became the subjects of the new ethnographies. Practising anthropologists who are sensitive to their own praxis have, for some time I think, become increasingly uneasy at this flip-flop of subject and object. Subject and object have lost so much mutual contradistinction that the difference between the seminar which opens, 'The subject of my study was the Yahoo belief in the divine nature of poetry...', and the one which opens, 'The object of my study was the Yahoo belief in the divine nature of poetry...', is a difference at its most charitable reading of speaker's style and more probably merely one of whim. In any case, it is a distinction once born of grammar which no longer serves even those ethnological theorists whose own structuralisms are in debt to the linguists.

My own guess regarding this fuzzing of a once strict exclusiveness is that it is evidence of a more general realization that the real stuff of a world no longer even ostensibly anglophonic is not, not surprisingly, best got at using an anglophonic epistemology. Much of this realization has come with the growth of anthropology. But it is a realization which may have its growth stunted if the anthropology which fed it falters on the idealist liberalist imagined import of the question of whether those we study are subjects or objects. The resolution to this problem is as simple as the imagined problem is simplistic: if those persons whom we study remain Others they are
doomed to remain subjects AND objects, always Others; but if they are permitted to come alive with us in our studies then the us-ness of Us will strain and stretch and take them in.

But to say the resolution is simple is not to say a simple solution. It is no mean task to bring the studied Others to life. For that matter, it is no mean task to bring anyone to life on the printed page. Nor is it necessarily the task of anthropological writers to dissect (as I have done here) their own attempts to breathe the life literately into their subjects. But it is very much the task of the anthropological reader to read life into those objects. It is for this reason that I complained at the outset of the absence of a genre. It is commonly thought that a genre is a vein of writing. This is wrong. What a genre is is a vein of reading. Works found in the same genre (pornography, say, or ethnography as soon as we get it) are found there by virtue of being read in the same vein. The genre of science fiction—to say nothing of the new one of 'speculative fiction'—was not born until the second scientific fiction was read and thought to be in the same vein as 'that other funny book'. The genre known as the New Journalism was decades behind Terry Southern (and the writers selected as the stars of this new genre by Tom Wolfe are wondering at being put into the same boar as each other and who the hell made Tom Wolfe the Dean, anyway?83) decades in which a growing readership was just waiting for someone to name all that stuff they were reading that was 'just like a novel'.

So what would a genre of ethnography look like? I don't know. These 'what is so-an-so like?' questions always remind me of the scene in the bar in Hal Ashby's film Coming Home where the Marine captain on R and R is asked, "What's it like?" and answers from very near the edge of terror, or perhaps lonely senselessness, "I can't tell you what it's LIKE...I ONLY KNOW HOW IT IS." —Of course he was wrong in his presumption that anyone cared what Vietnam WAS...his social construction of reality was operating from a flawed epistemology which held that referents are real, that what is said is somehow equated with what is known...and later, unable to locate
Vietnam (locate is, remember, a transitive verb in reality construction, in matters of the mind) unable to locate Vietnam outside of the Demilitarized Zone which was his self, he put that self to rest. (I might add, forcing a little a fit with the epigraph for this conclusion, that the Captain who Bruce Dern played for us found himself to be the only teller of his tale of Vietnam, and it was a teller he could not trust: the solid part of the tale he did leave behind, to be told by the others who told it to him, the thing he could trust to go into Vietnam and come out again. He left the uniform of the United States Marine Corps hanging neatly on the beach where he drowned.) What we can expect is that the genre will look like its first one or two entries. The task is to assign them and thereby the genre.

I think, then, that a genre of ethnography would have to recognize a kind of notional reversal of the traditional ethnological trust in words. That is, traditionally ethnologists have trusted their writings to a literate community presumed to share the language of the ethnography. This does not seem in retrospect at all untoward of them. Historians, psychoanalysts, physicists and philosophers all did the same. And when they had to name a concept unheard of, they simply did so, with some attention to tradition (to the tradition of naming, that is, not to the tradition of creative language), and then defined it. And everyone was party to this playing fast and loose with definition (the inherent contradiction between calling the records of previous usages which follow dictionary entries by the same name as the explications of meanings which followed these new concepts), probably because they figured that, like Bruce Dern's uniform, the language, the stuff this content was wrapped in, would always be there. But the language will only 'be there' as long as it is there and no longer. This is something that we have learned since Schleiermacher and his fellow hermeneuticians and since the translators from Wilhelm von Humboldt to George Steiner have kept reminding us. The language will be there only as long as somebody can do something with it.
What this means is that spoken language will be there as long as someone can hear it. (The implication is intended: one surviving speaker of an aboriginal language can only be a source of idiolect, for he only hears himself in the same way we all do when we subvocalize the 'dialogues' in the stories we are constantly telling ourselves to and about ourselves.) Written language will be there only as long as somebody can read it. (This is the crucial methodological point for the ethnographer, the reason he has to be his own reader in the fact of the full knowledge that he always risks reading what he meant instead of what he wrote.) The problem with the Saussurian distinction between langue and parole is not that it is a false distinction, but that it promotes a false epistemology by suggesting in proposing a universal distinction that this is a distinction which takes everything into account (accounts for the entire universe of speech and language) rather than one which simply proposes that it may be everywhere made (universally applicable).

When it is not kept in mind that such distinctions as langue and parole and subject and object and emic and etic are only possible because there is a third presence, someone to somehow see or hear the difference, then the very practice of ethnography—of history, of psychoanalysis, of physics and philosophy for that matter—is reduced to some kind of two-party jabber. The distinction between who are the objects of the study (the aboriginal people studied or the colleagues countermanded) and who are the subjects of the study (the natives or the disciplinary forbears) becomes necessarily fuzzed. And the very real problem of untangling who and what the subject and object may be is reduced from the real and engaging praxis of reading to the officious hauteur of opining. Those of us who inhabit language, who write in order that we may written to, can but concur with Paul Goodman on one of the effects of the recent suzerainty of this idea that reading demands a direct object which might be not the actual tale read but some systematic thing like language...mistaking practice for code.
My own reading of the problems of philosophy has been that philosophers of the past were not abused by language. They used the language and conceptions of their times and twisted them to say their own say; when I think away their old-fashioned formulations, as I usually can, I have almost always found that there remains a puzzling problem to wrestle with, that they did wrestle with and suggest a solution to restate in our own terms. I have not been impressed by any number of pseudo-problems that have been liquidated by merely linguistic analysis. Some have just been swept under the rug; others... tend to treat equally excellent intellects of the past as if they were little better than idiots who were caught in verbal traps, not wrestling with living experience.

The point of including this here is to illustrate a few distinctions between reading and opining and to be able to refer to this neat encapsulation while doing so. The import of doing so for those of us who would essay things anthropological is the burden of Clifford Geertz's advice to do ethnography by penetrating a culture as we would a literary text. In the excerpt above, Goodman says something of what strikes him upon penetrating the texts of modern linguists and philosophers of language apropos his reading of the past philosophers whom they criticize. As such it is a lesson in reading. The untutored reader of the excerpt might think that I had put it here in support of a position obviously concurrent with Goodman's own. (Though it would be unfair of me to write any reader familiar with Goodman into such a scenario of the untutored, at least any reader familiar enough to recall Goodman's admonitions against the 'truth' of literature and its use as 'evidence'.) On the contrary, having found myself having taken up a position recognizably Goodman-esque, I suspected him of being one of the authorities—one of my authors—of that current of thought which has brought me to my present position. That being my abduction, I reread him and, upon rereading, found the passage which I have reproduced here.

One of the notions extant among those au courant with the rise in what I might call sociolinguistic consciousness in the social sciences over the past two decades is an idea of a general nonspecific determinism which operates from language upon speakers.
A kind of twisted 'the limits of my language are the limits of my world' transitized to dictate: language limits my world. It is one thing to say with Charles Bally that the listener "is on the side of the language, it is with the language that he interprets speech".\textsuperscript{87} it is quite another thing to say that the language makes the speaker or the hearer. As Goodman says, once he 'thinks away' the old-fashioned formulations, it doesn't accord with his reading that those past philosophers were "abused by language".

This is not meant to be some fiat for the eradication of language as formative. It is meant to distinguish between formatives and formulations, between determinations and determinisms. I have suggested, earlier from Norman O. Brown and again just there in the paragraph above the preceding one, that there are those writers who are my authorities—and that they are my authors for they have, in writing things, writ me. A small case in point is Paul Goodman's phrase "to say their own say". 'Say their say', 'I say my say', 'to say my own say': all of these have become part of my habit. We have some notion of "habit" as unconscious repetition. This kind of uncritical colloquial acquiescence serves as long as we stay away from the sorts of things nuns wear or the philosophy of Hegel or the writing of Borges or the anthropology of Bourdieu.\textsuperscript{88} But once we let these people in, we have to reckon with what they say. To do otherwise, to insist, for instance, on the limits of the colloquial, is to make all nuns into clones, walking around in the same interchangeable habits of whoever it was who first put those things on without thinking. This is, of course, not a very good reading of nuns' clothing. Readings \textit{ad homina} are never very good: They are either, strictly speaking, misnamed \textit{ad hominem} (How can there be readings at all without the language of prior speakers?), or the useless "perfections of a fool".\textsuperscript{89}

The fool makes perfect utterances only by virtue of the readings such utterances are given. Only the reader can put in the perfection. This does not mean that the speaker or writer (or painter or sculptor, for that matter) must eschew those things which
he knowns cannot be read. But it does require him to have found all
other ways of saying his say to be wanting (Jacques Derrida saying,
for example, that not only was Kroeber right to suspect the
'fashionable attractiveness' of the word "structure" applied to
society all of a sudden but also we have to know why eidos and complex
and form and "Idea" and system were no longer sufficient—see the
seventh entry under Notes to the Preface). And if he then must use
things which cannot yet be read, we can but hope that he will teach us
how to read them.

I think it is this last which will most likely stand in the way of
my proposal for an anthropology of idiom. Particularly it stands in
the way of those who would not have me bring Borges to bear on
anthropology. Perhaps the best I can do here is to make my case. It
is a case not so much for bringing to bear on the language of
ethnography the writings of them who, though sensitive to other
peoples and cultures, write mostly to and of their own; but more a
case for explicit censorship. The censor who would have no Borges
must now contend with me, must reckon with my saying here that the
process of ethnography, which is in its 'second half' so much a
literary process, is richer when it makes for its reader more than a
sort of alien anacoluthon, words with no means of connection.

The Schedule of the Means

This view then frees us from bondage either to past or
future. We are neither creatures of the necessity of an
irrevocable past, nor of any vision given on the Mount.
Our history and our prognostications will be sympathetic
with the undertakings within which we live and move and
have our being. Our values lie in the present, and past
and future give us only the schedule of the means, and the
plans of campaign, for their realization.

These are the words of George Herbert Mead, taken from the same Carus
Lecture with which I opened and closed Chapter 2. The argument I am
making for a genre called ethnography wherein to engage an
anthropology of idiom is an argument for permission to include the
'schedule of the means'—the past and future of the language of
ethnographic reporting—in our present undertakings. The permission
that is required is specific permission to write ethnography in the
idiom of the ethnographer. It is no less than this. For the three or
four readers who read each of the thousands of anthropological
doctoral theses written these days this is an unimportant argument
(though it may, as it argues for a change in the future of the means,
be important to those writing those theses). But for the many more
readers who read the several ethnographies which capture the
readership of the discipline each year or two the argument for
idiomatic presentation is important, for it requires a general
assent a priori, an assent which may entail those who would be
generally up with their discipline acquiring reading styles which
they need otherwise not bother accommodating. In any event, the
requisite general assent must rest on a new recognition possible only
within a community of discourse permissive of these reflexive
demand-and-response processes while nonetheless fully cognizant of
the coming and going of its members.

Mead's words, quoted above, capacitate our distinction between
the means and the schedule of the means. But in the case of the
ethnographic genre this must be a distinction of reading. The
'schedule of the means' is the language, language which is made up of
past readings. Which is, in turn, to say that the language is never
'there', but has always been there 'up until a second ago'. Of
course, when our sources are dictionaries or other published works
(ethnographies of speaking, say), this 'second' may have already
stretched to years by the time we consult it for the most immediately
past reading (or hearing) we can get. For instance, with the general
decrease in the frequency of Meriam mir use in public talk in town in
favour of Torres Strait Pidgin, I expect that the Meriam mir pakarar,
with which I illustrated at the end of Chapter 1 one of those
'Pluto-jumps' which make up the ethnographer's 'blinks' from his old
culture to his new one, will have gone by now. When I say gone I do
not mean gone from the face of the earth. In fact, I mean gone from
the common hearing of Islander town talk. But when I say something
like 'gone from the hearing' I am already moving from the schedule of
the means toward the means, or, from the past usages which are language to the present ones which are speech.

Anthony Burgess has suggested, "It is best to regard the language as a growing corpus of words and structures which nobody can know entirely but upon which anybody can draw at any time—a sort of unlimited bank account." This is the kind of 'bank account' notion of language which has held sway for some time now, and it works just so long as we pretend that nobody ever says anything new. Burgess goes on, in the next sentence, to say, "It is not just the sum total of what has been spoken and written' it is also what can be spoken and written." It may be that this latter is all right for imagining potential acts of speaking the language, of saying new words like brillig, or like the arpworthy and focklespoff of Burgess's own family ("we are," he says, "entitled to regard these as part of English...they certainly belong to no other language, and yet they are recognizable linguistic forms"); and of regarding them, once said, as part of the English language. But it is in this 'once said' that lies the rub. With the common collusion of speaker-and-hearer—indeed, if such assumption of commonplace collusion were not warranted there wouldn't be anything getting done with words anyway—we shift from the passive word-verb of "said" into the active reckoning of saying as how whatever was said got said.

This is an unwarranted shift. Everything that is said does not get into the language. Most of what babies say as they are piddling around with speech is forgotten, as is much of what ethnographers say as they cope with learning the new tongue of the people they study. In fact, the reason that little of this gets into the language is because so little if any of it is taken to say anything: What's Baby saying?—Nothing. What'd Cromwell say? [Wan emi spik? ]—Nating. Nothing was said. Part of the question, then, is what would be the difference between Baby Burgess saying focklespoff along with all the other ficks and poofs of learning how to talk and later coining this new word which has its currency in the Burgess family idiom?
Part of the difference lies in the constraint of information, part in the expectation or anticipation of meaning. Both of these are capacities of the hearer. While Baby is still a baby not even a language freak like Anthony Burgess expects meaning, or the fine balance between saying one thing and not another that provides constraints.

Stephen Tyler has put it thus:

> Every act of saying is a momentary intersection of the "said" and the "unsaid". Because it is surrounded by an aureola of the unsaid, an utterance speaks of more than it says, mediates between past and future, transcends the speaker's conscious thought, passes beyond his manipulative control, and creates in the mind of the hearer worlds unanticipated. From within the infinity of the "unsaid", the speaker and hearer, by a joint act of will, bring into being what was "said". (1978:459)

As soon as we know Baby is saying a focklepoff which is not fick-n-poof then the joint act of will makes a "said" of focklepoff. Once taken as something said, it must be reckoned with...accepted into the family idiom or censored. Burgess says, "A speaker speaks a word; a hearer hears it. If he understands the word he has stepped into the same area of sense as the speaker." 92

In every act of saying is, as Tyler holds it to be, a momentary intersection between "said" and "unsaid", then it is the hearer who makes the intersection. Only the hearer can put in the 'more' when "an utterance speaks of more than it says". I was once successful in stopping the talk of sixteen assembled Islandmen by not saying something meaningful. I was just beginning to trust my rudimentary command of Torres Strait Pidgin enough to push myself into speaking from my feet in Island meetings. I pushed myself to my feet a little too soon and ended up with one of them in my mouth. I said, using the you-plural to refer to something the assembled company had done before my arrival, yufla bi du dat wanem... The silence was almost instantaneous. Maybe five conversations going on among thirteen or fourteen people just up and stopped. It was not quite the split second knife edge of the silence of immanent danger; but it was
almost that fast, as if they had all heard something that sounded like a footstep.

Telling the story now I am tempted to really set the stage for the telling and say, "...something that sounded like the footstep of an Aboriginal at the door", for that was what it turned out to be. Only I was the Aboriginal...or if not exactly the nigger in the woodpile then at least tainted by past association with him. I had used a pronunciation not possible among my would-be close associates at the meeting. I had put /f/ for /p/. Fricative. Only Aborigines have, by the definition of the group then assembled, fricatives in their second-person plurals. I was so pleased at having actually remembered to use the Pidgin wanem instead of the pseudo-pidgin "t'ing" that I really thought there was something outside the door and I just hadn't heard the noise. I stood there like a dummy, listening. What I could not 'hear' was my excision from the consociation. I was being moved by my hearers into limbo, and it was a limbo straining towards the enemy, held only by my ties to one man. It was to him that the others turned, as I watched from my little capsule where I stood, still, mute as a thing.

"Wis we emi spik?" [How did he say that?]

"Wanem?", said my one tie to the world. In this case, something like 'Huh?'. I couldn't believe it. My one tie to the world as we know it and he wasn't listening. I was doomed. I had, however, learned one or two lessons on Island style: When the shit hits the fan, pretend you knew it was going to. If any gets on you, pretend you don't notice it. If you can't do that, pretend you don't care. (If you're really good, convince everybody you wanted it to...offer them some.) Most important of all, without speaking, by standing still and tall and frowning slightly—but no more than men might when attending to anything which they have perfectly under control—you must make them believe it's not your shit. This is what I did. Standing there in my little cocoon I acted as if I was quite prepared to wait until they ironed out their little problem and then proceed with my talk.
"Emi spik diskain: YUFLA."

"—(?)", said my man by his uncomprehending face.

"FLA, FLA. Olaem age." (By his persistence I marked this newcomer, newcomer at least as far as I was concerned, as something less than a new friend.) I had heard enough of the stories, even by this evening in March (I had arrived in November), to imagine much more vividly than anyone who knew all the stories what happens to THOSE WHO SCREW UP. There was a guy who had beat up his cousin in Winton, the last railway spur line before nowhere. Nobody talked to him since. And that had happened in 1963. There was the now-old man who, decades before that, had uncautiously blurted out some secret knowledge that he was learning as a boy-beginning-to-become-a-man. They still called him "Boy", with all the vituperation of a signal lack of control over his own bodily functions, like his mouth.

My man caught my eyes, flick, like a snake's tongue, and I knew that he had just caught on, and that I was right: we were in trouble. My only hope was that we would get out of it...that he would get me out of it.

"—." His face changed languages. The uncomprehending flat stare of the Pidgin speaker waiting to see what has gone on was replaced with the nothing-given-away flat look of the Educated Man of Mir. The expression did not change; this new look was fixed on his interlocutor.

"Wea em bi lerne abra agera mir?" the newcomer persisted. [Where'd he learn to speak Aboriginal?]

Whew? I thought. Home free? My knees jellied a little, then jelled again. The only response to the hard look in Miram mir is to remove the problem. Actually to solve the problem, though in this case the definition of possible enemy—me—required a solution of removal, either of removing the enemy or of removing the Islandman. So the belligerent newcomer had either to put up or shut up...to expel me or to leave himself. There was no room for talk. Especially there was no room for Pidgin-talk. (Probably he knew this, and that was why he chose the Miram mir abra agera mir [his aboriginal talk]
over the Pidgin words diskain [this kind of] and oslem age [like an abo] to refer to my wrong speech. I say probably, but I never got to ask him about that: My impression proved pretty much right, and he remained somewhat less than a friend throughout my stay.

I relaxed a bit, took a little vicarious credit for putting him down, fielded a terse boy-you-just-about-fucked-me-up-with-my-people look from my man (which wiped all vicarious credit and most of my relaxation away), and stood there, trying to keep my feelings (Am I finished!? Is it all over?! Fieldwork down the tube; nothing to do about it but beg some new grants and start over somewhere else.) off my face (trying its hardest to project, Are you finished? All over? I may resume?).

Talk about the footstep of the enemy sounding as your own foot enters your own mouth? I still get chills when I think of that. While I had been accounted for by my man at the meeting, his account with his fellows was on credit. And it took weeks of him sort of explaining that I had spent some time years before hanging around the Top End and probably some of that Aboriginal English they speak up there had rubbed off after all the boy is an anthropologist for god's sake and you can't expect them to not pay attention to other cultures, I mean it's not as if he was tutored by the abos or anything like that. Just a slip of the tongue.

There had been no question that what I had meant was to refer to the you-plural of the assembled company—yupla—when my talk, hardly listened to as it was (I would have said nobody was listening if the hush had not occurred), came crashing to a halt under the weight of the unsaid. It was an intersection, not to say a collision, between "said: and "unsaid", but only the hearers witnessed the collision. I could only reconstruct it afterward, treating it as a performance of speaking-and-hearing rather than being engaged in the talk. Paul Goodman wrote of exactly this kind of tension:

Like all behaviour, speaking operates creatively not only from what the speaker has (the inherited code) but toward the end-in-view (what needs to be said in the situation. And the hearer creatively adjusts to what is going on. Thus, I have defined language as the tension between the
inherited code and what needs to be said, and between the speaker and the hearer. (1973:131)

The cause of the tension in the story of FLA was my breach of the idiom. The reason this is clear is because it is in the idiom that the "unsaid" lives. And because, in the idiom, the "unsaid" is a living presence of alternatives and alterities, cases of the Other both possible and impossible, it is only in the idiom that people may speak freely, secure that the "unsaid" is taken care of by the one eye everyone keeps on it. People may speak the idiom freely (and here 'speak' has to be in quotes, since speak=speaking permits by virtue of its capacity as a word in a language the alternities of paralinguistic communication, kinesics, the communication of silence and the specific silent logos of Apollonius,\(^9\) all of which are part of 'speech' as I mean it; the quotes that 'speak' sits in are, therefore, not the bracketing quotes of the phenomenological epoche, but the real written quotes of a discursive language, born of a literary process of engaging a living idiom on a printed page). People may speak their idiom freely because they need not fear intrusion. The terrible threat of my near-fatal fricative was in its threat to community.

A Community of Idiom

In moving from the schedule of the means to a community of persons we are moving from language toward idiom. This is the idea of motion which I presented, with some exploration, in Chapter 7. In presenting this motion I was bringing into being a discursive idiom, one which might serve my making sense to my reader. If this happens, if the reader, as Burgess put it, "steps into the same area of sense", then my 'motion' may be said to be meaningful, to have meaning. If, in addition to this "step" of my reader (and note how easily others have found the motion metaphor to talk about what people do when they make sense to one another, and how easily we can move from this single step of Burgess to the Steps of Gregory Bateson which are a theory of a whole system of my 'motion' ), the reader uses
"motion" to talk about the 'movement' of persons into a new persona, or into a new context of situation, and uses it unselfconsciously, or with the merest reference to my first use, a reference not as one refers to the so-called authority of a dictionary but as one may refer to the real author, then the discursive idiom which I have proposed and successfully used may become the idiom of a community of discourse. And, while I do not mean to make here a definition of community as constitutive of three persons, I do mean to make three the required minimum.

Two people may communicate in any number of ways. They may speak the same language and simply converse their communication. But they need not. Immigrants and tourists commonly communicate without any common tongue, without even the shade of common gesture. Still do we manage to make sense to one another. But this sense we make as we go about the business of trying words or gestures or faces that we know to see if they trigger a response (and then trying a response to see if, by the one triggered by that one in return, our guess about the first one striking home was accurate), this is a way of making sense using what we may think of as positive 'terms'. That is, we and the tourist we are trying to help both know that the information universe is restricted to what one of us can posit and the other posit in response. There is no need for a common language, and if there were a common language there would be no need for these peregrinations. Ferdinand de Saussure wrote:

> Everything that has been said boils down to this: in language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences without positive terms.94

It is in light of these differences, and of the distinction suggested by Sauassure, that idiom comes most clearly into the light. Assuming that people speak a language when they speak (contra, e.g., speaking in gibberish or in tongues), what they do when they speak is to use the differences in the inherited code, the language (the 'schedule') to restrict the meanings their hearers take. But when
people are operating in their idiom they have the advantage of a communicative milieu in which the meanings are already limited. The disadvantage is for individuals at the expense of community. If an individual does not know the idiomatic way of saying what he wants to say, then he cannot. And his only choice is to propose to move the conversation from the idiom or not have his say.

When my belligerent friend said, "Wea em bi lerne abra agera mir?" the unsaid proposal was to move out of the idiom, a proposal signaled by his attempt at formal Meriam mir and the use of a full sentence. It was a kind of way of saying 'Can't we talk about this?'. And if it had been the case that the context of situation was one of language (in the North Queensland towns of the Islandmen the language would then have to have been the lingua franca, Torres Strait Pidgin), the only improprieties which I could see would be the impolite use of mir from his native Meriam mir when the Pidgin langgus would do fine (and since he was not proposing a difference encoded in the choice of mir over langgus) and the more fundamental error of using abra instead of either bl'em or langgus emi spik. (The second error would be the more fundamental for its increase of culpability: in saying abra, with the ambiguity of intention versus happenstance which English "his" has, he avoided making the choice required by pidgin between the relatively innocuous langgus emi spik [Wea em bi lerne diskain age langgus emi spik?—Where did he learn those Aboriginal words he's saying?] and the putting-your-money-where-your-mouth-is confrontation of bl'em, as in 'Wea emi get dat age langgus bl'em?' [Where'd he get that Aboriginal language of his?] with all the weight of possession, of that language belonging to him.

But it was not the case that the context of situation was language. The context of situation was idiom. And in the idiom, as I have already said, he had two choices: leave or make me leave. Since I was not there of my own accord (my presence was licensed, literally, by my man), the belligerent persister had to go through my man to get me out. And he knew this. Nobody knew he knew this until he said Wea em bi lerne abra agera mir? Then we all knew; a posteriori
we could reason what he had realized. The writing was on the wall when my man turned to fix this nuisance with that look. But the 'wall' the writing was on was the wall of that face, and we had to wait to see if he had read it. He had.

Now, in language there is simply no way to have such an exchange. The reason for this is that the situation has always to be societal if the context of situation is language. If the context is idiom, then the situation is communal. Language is of society; idiom is of community. It is the absence of this distinction in the discourse on ethnography of speaking and other anthropologies of communication which has contributed both to a certain reticence among social anthropologists to use the context of situation in sociolinguistic research and a general absence of critical purchase on what the speakers in ethnographies of speaking are doing as they move among the means at their disposal. The modest suggestion of my title of this concluding chapter is that a move in the direction of doing anthropology of idiom will be a step toward rectification. Not the least of such steps will be back in the direction of community.

This is where the most anthropological value is in even such tiny vignettes as my FLA story: If we can learn to read those little 'stories' in their idiom (which is the only way they can be read), we have some purchase on the constitution of community. My belligerent friend tried to skyhook into language in order to pull himself out of the situation he'd got himself into without having to cross my man or take himself away. No one had any doubt about what he was trying to do; they all just sat and watched the play unfold. All they needed was a few bags of popcorn to make it clear to even the utterly naïve observer that what was going on had become a performance. By invoking language over idiom he was bringing society down on community. Sometimes this would be fraught with peril, as it was when I, with a slip of the lip, made an f, and the whisper of the enemy turned talk into language. But my man had said, with his look, that he would be accountable for my actions. And they all knew, had always known, that when all the Islandmen were dead and gone,
subsumed by churches and cultures and all manner of foreign things, the black Jay Gatsby would still be there, a community of one, telling the tales of the Islandmen.

So it was on his head. They did not have to rally to the defense of their community this time. So they all sat back and watched the movie. There wasn't much to watch; they knew that. But still they checked each other's eyes for a twinkle here and there, getting ready to watch Mister Belligerence squirm a little, at least. And maybe, if they were lucky, he would stomp out with the pathetic but gutsy gesture which couldn't help but make a tempest in a very small teapot. If they were real lucky, he would throw me out! But nobody is that lucky. So there was little chance of seeing the belligerence lambasted out of him for the double breach of ignoring my man's acknowledgement of accountability and going directly after me without confronting my man first. (They were, of course, much surer of the dim prospects for a good lambasting eventuating; and I misread their glimmers of hope in the face of such dim prospects for hints of the imminence of just such an eventuality, thus the jelly in my knees which I now know was unnecessary.)

The beligerent's mistake was in not waiting for the response to his

"Emi spik diskain: YUFLA"

an utterance which was obviously a repetition of his first question, and one which elaborated, in case the elaboration was needed, the cause of the question about how I was talking in the first place. His interlocutor said,

"----(?)"

which I could translate into an American idiom of the southeast, say rural Alabama, as a kind of slack-jawed Hahh?, or into the Rocky Mountain idiom of my childhood, a plain, flat Huh?, but which in the idiom of the Torres Strait Mainland is a straight-lipped full face with focused eyes and a slight frown. The blank could have been filled in by short-term memory in a second or two as the "...YUFLA"
registered. But our belligerent buddy just couldn't wait. Whether he was after me or siezing a chance to pink my man while his guard was down, I don't know. Whatever, his greed got the better of him and he rode roughshod over the silence of a respectful querying look to go

"FLA, FLA..."

and if that weren't enough, to add the Aboriginal identification by now obvious to everyone

"...Olsem age."

Right here was when I started, unnecessarily, to get watery knees, and everyone else started passing the popcorn. The greed was out, and nobody gets away with riding roughshod over a silence. But still, for the two interlocutors and for me as an interested party sans voice, we were in the idiom. When my man changed his look, a 'change' marked only by his turning slightly to fix me with his eyes and then back to his adversary, he did not change anything on his face. The pidgin look for respectful query is the same face as the buck-stops-here look of the Educated Mériam lé. If you know the idiom it is easy to confirm this 'change', what I called "his face changed languages" in the story. The respectful query in pidgin is held either until more information from the speaker clears up the question or until the addressee figures out what's been going on. Once contact (eye contact or the notional contact of the aimed face) is broken the look stops; it can not be used twice without having the second be a burlesqued pidgin-query look. So when my man turned back to his adversary it could only have been in order to respond (if he had not yet prepared a response everything would have been held as it was until he had finished preparing one). And respond he did. Still in the idiom.

But in the idiom a change to native language out of Pidgin in response to an attack constitutes an escalation. It raises the stakes. (Mister Belligerence was a fool to push my man into escalating since it is part of the very being of this community that my man is the accomplished past master of Mériam mir on the whole
mainland.) By responding in a way which said nothing my man made it perfectly clear that he considered being called to account a serious matter, serious enough for the mir. (It might be possible to invent a biography for some Central Islander with one Eastern parent and one Western parent who had equal purchase on both native Torres Strait languages, in which case he would have to signal whether the silent response was a silence in Meriam mir or in a dialect of the West, but in this case, there being no doubt that the adversary had been engaged and no possible silent response after an initial silent response in Pidgin, and no way in hell that my man is going to kowtow to this hyena whom he finally realizes is intent on nipping at his heels and not at all concerned any longer about what I may or may not have said, he quietly ups the ante.) And we are still in the idiom. I am still in my cocoon. People are starting to smile (and I don't know why). There is a very long pause on the part of the belligerent (and I don't know why, but I want to, since I know that now is when he has to drop me or go). And we are still in the idiom.

And then Mister Belligerence says

"W..."

AND WE ARE OUT OF THE IDIOM. That quickly. Did not even matter what he said, what he was about to say. He spoke without moving when the only responses which had any meaning at all were movement: eject me or exit. My knees did their jelly-to-jelled reaction even as he was finishing

"...ea em bi lerné abra agera mir?"

He had called an Educated Man to account, by itself an act promising much courage, and couldn't go through with it. (Later, in much the same sort of scenario but over larger stakes, our belligerent friend did exit, stage left, and was not seen for three months.) The only meaningful responses were too costly for him. So he tried clutching at the straw of language, found it to be only a straw, and went down, meaningless by his own account.
And I, I who had been the blamable cause of all this (I was to 'grow out' of the rightful blameworthiness of my man as I became a better learner of the tonar, but the righteous blame of my belligerent friend stayed between us, him and me, to this day, as wrongful blame is wont to do), could but wait to see if the community at large would take my man's account for my misspeech (in effect, letting him 'carry me' until I established an 'account' of my own). They did; but I was not to know this for more than two months, and even then only by dint of one of those fortunate coincidences where the unsaid gets said in a kind of shocked Sure we forgot that little slip—Didn't I tell you I'm sure I must have told you...Didn't I?(!)? And all the while I'm saying 'Sure' with one or two open palm wrist-turnings and lower lip juttings (all the idiomatic gestures I can think of)—anything to keep him from catching himself up short with You mean you didn't know until NOW that it was OK? and giving me that inward look where he's not looking at me at all but trying to figure out how he could have been so wrong about me, thinking I was bright enough to keep my end up and now all of a sudden it's obvious that I haven't even noticed that they're still letting me hand around—but inside I'm right back with the Am I finished!? Is it all over?! Fieldwork down the tube thoughts of two months ago. I finally get to answer them: I'M OK? IT'S NOT OVER! FIELDWORK IS SAVED!

Finally, in the same coffee shop where part of the story of the bar kak mir was played (Chapter 5), I got to write closure on the night of the infamous fricative (and on all the intervening fretting). What I had been given was not only a release from my worry (a release which was effectively an erasure of the incident: though my f had been different from the p it ought to have been—the p of the Islander community's idiom—and although it had made a difference that night, it was not adjudged to have been one of those differences which make a difference to the community; as such, its value was nil, but a value ascribed a posteriori), but a concomitant confirmation of community membership, a confirmation found in the fact that he genuinely could not remember having allayed my fears within a day or
two of the incident, a forgetfulness which signaled (to me, which is why I was so worried that it might become a signal to him) that the community was no longer monitoring who told Cromwell what ... so, if he didn't tell me everything was all right, some other member of the community would; and if they didn't either, then when it came up it would be already over and done with because I would have figured out for myself that everything was all right (which is why I was doing all I could to keep 'Oh, sure. Not to worry.' on my face and not the dead giveaway of OhGodOhGodYouMeanIt'sOKandIgettostay?!).

The community to which I received this after-the-fact and welcome entree was a community of idiom. Which is to say that the communicative milieu of this community was an idiom. Neither community nor idiom has priority, nor is the relation between a community and its idiom causal. While members of a speech community may be able to talk to one another without concern for whether or not each will understand what the other says, members of a community of idiom communicate without worrying about what each other means. My guess is that this is because it is in the idiom that the real work of organizing for community action and maintaining the human relationship which are the bounds of community is done. Because relationship, once created, are predicated upon their continuance (that is, that whatever happens next the relationship will still be there), and because community action demands ipso facto that something happen, idiom serves the work of its community. The name of this work is predication.

On the Predication of a Genre

I have argued, at times quite polemically, for the establishment of a genre which we might call ethnography. The argument is intended to promote the authority of readers over the ambiguity of editors, publishing houses, university presses, and social science journals who hold that things written about 'foreign', especially 'tribal' (which is not—or, not to put too fine an edge on it, not any
more—to say 'native') peoples are ethnography. It is intended to eradicate the fear, a fear grounded not in well-founded concern for possible failings of scholarship but in bureaucratically-founded terror at prospective loss of prestige and position, that the payment of critical attention to this genre of writing which is the basis of anthropology might, in tossing out a poor ethnographer here or admitting a really interesting journalist there, bring the whole enterprise crashing down upon a base turned to air.

This is nonsense. But whether or not it shall prove to be true that the science of anthropology is founded on 'air', the specific gain pursuant to the recognition of a genre shall be the advantage of being able to see just what the community of discourse of anthropologists is founded upon. There is a double entendre in the "predication of a genre" which sits astride this section. The genre of ethnography which I propose is a genre which shall be predicated upon a certain kind of knowledge gained through a particular endeavor most usually prepared for and informed by a special discipline. The discipline is anthropology; the particular endeavour is the gaining of entry into a strange community to see what life there is (the "passing through" of Chapter 1). And if this were all there were to ethnography there would be no reason to make such a to-do here about a 'genre', especially at the risk of irritating not only practising ethnographers with a feel for their craft but also those with various vested interests in ethnographies which might arguably constitute the status quo ante (as long as the debate is not engaged) and about which there ought be no argument so long as these criticisms are not permitted to render the ante. But this is not the case; this is not all there is to ethnography. There is, as I have said, the 'second half', the graph-half.

The graph-half is certainly predicated upon the endeavour which is this discovery and exploration of some native community and on the discipline which embodies the information about, and preparation for, such an endeavour. This is one of the double meanings of the 'predication of a genre': that the genre itself, the writing which
constitutes it, be predicated upon the knowledge gained from being prepared to enter and explore an alien community and the endeavour which is that exploration. But to say that ethnography be so predicated is to propose hardly a difference from the notional appreciation of the status quo; who would argue that ethnography is based on ethnographic research? Thus does my proposition hinge on the shifty label "the knowledge gained", even more on the whole injunction, be predicated upon the knowledge gained. And this is the second of the meanings of 'predication of a genre', a programmatic one: that the knowledge which the writings are based on be knowledge of how the alien community carries out the work of predication.

The first meaning suggests that writings more properly placed in the category of ethnology or anthropology (writings such as the present work) have been loosely referred to as 'ethnographies' simply because they have been about some native tribe or other. This is the kind of error which would place Gerard K. O'Neill's The High Frontier in the genre science fiction because it is about "human colonies in space". Since O'Neill's work is the presentation of an argument for, and program for, the establishment of real colonies of real humans in the near future, it is an error no one would make. And it is an error whose hinge is workable in written discourse: about The High Frontier is most certainly about human colonies in space. It even includes a 'letter from space' and a diary of a trip among the asteroids (an entry which reads very much like some of Robert Heinlein's science 'fiction'). O'Neill uses some fictional devices to present a realistic view of life on real space colonies perhaps as soon as 1990-2005. But his is not a work of fiction, and would not be considered to be (even those who dislike the inclusion of fictional letters would ground their dislike in the shared knowledge that the fictional bits have no business in a work of science). It is not fiction, does not belong in a genre of fiction, because it is about real people...he simply has a problem because some of the real people who will do the colony building may not be born yet, and anyway
haven't built any yet, so he has them send letters that are like the letters that may someday be sent back to earth.

The difference between this work and the work of Heinlein or some other writer of fiction is that the characters in a work of fiction are real people (so the letters sent are real letters), and the work is about something else (often about political philosophy and ethics in Robert Heinlein's case). It is, of course, unfair shorthand for me to say generally that the characters in fiction are real people. Lots of fiction writers fail to make their characters come alive; and many more readers fail to make the people they read live. How do I mean that those characters are real? Simply because their entire existence is on the page. All we have to be able to do is read and if the writer has done his job (which is only the job of making characters readable people) we have enough in front of us to make them come alive. This is expressly not the case with non-fiction characters (as a rule, that is, though a rule which excepts many of the characters in the writings of the New Journalists). Most of the time the writers of non-fiction fail to give anything at all like the information required by the reader if he is to bring this supposedly 'real' person to life. So we are left in a position of having to either take the writer's word that such-and-such person was 'the kind of person who would do blah', or that 'when so-and-so blahed no one thought anything of it', etcetera, or to disregard the propositions based on such imputations altogether.

The same has been true for much of so-called ethnography. It has been as if the genre somehow conferred upon the ethnographer a warrant of reality for his characters, thus absolving him of any obligation to bring them to the page alive. The common objection to such incomplete accounts of the characters who people some of these ethnographies has been couched in terms of 'evidence'. The common law theory of ethnography. That somehow if enough exhibits are brought for both the prosecution (anthropological theory and the like) and the defense (the unique native society), the reader will be able to act as a duly constituted court of appeal sitting to confirm
(so hopes the ethnographer) the judgment of the ethnographer. The judgment we are likely to be asked to confirm is on the order of, 'these people studied are like such-and-such', or 'these people have the x-type of social organization'. The problem with coming to judgments in this legalistic way is that there are no rules of evidence. And, to reduce the analogy to its absurd conclusion, the ethnographer is both prosecutor and judge in the first instance. So, as a matter of course, he is going to select 'evidence' and a mode of presentation which will guarantee the assessment of social types or kinship categories or whatever he, sitting as judge, found on reflecting upon his ethnographic data.

Playing at ethnography this way is playing with a stacked deck. The problem is not that the deck is stacked in anyone's favour...how could it matter if the ethnographer or the theoretically-committed reader 'won'? No, the problem is that the 'deck' is all the data we have—'cards' on who the ethnographer met, what he saw, what they did, when they did it, and so on—and much of the information in that 'deck' is in the very arrangement of the 'cards'. When the 'deck' is stacked by the ethnographer shifting around this fact and that bit of 'evidence' for presentation in an ethnography, all of the information inherent in the order of those cards vis-à-vis one another is lost forever.

These metaphorical comments on 'evidence' and 'decks' are meant only to point up the problems with using interactional governance in written discourse. Writing about human actions as if these observed acts are the ethnographic 'evidence' for some ethnological 'judgment' is to confuse evidence with testimony (and thereby to misapply the legal metaphor). And to reckon on the need for evidence at all is to presume the legalism of the discourse which entails writer and reader, a presumption doubly flawed: once for its mistaken assumption that legal methods may somehow ensure a judgment in respect of evidence over which there are no rules in a domain over which presides no judge, and twice for its misapplication of the interactional analog of a living courtroom with prosecutors and
witnesses and judge present to the discursive exchange in which only the reader is alive and present.

My urgings, then, for the predication of a genre hark back, in part, to much the same sort of urgency felt by early European salvage ethnologists and by Franz Boas and his American cohorts. I am concerned that modern ethnography, much of which constitutes the selfsame saving of societies now known but fast disappearing or dissipating, avoid the pitfalls inherent in mistaking interpretations for versions. What I have been constrained to do throughout this work is to render my versions of Islander life on the Australian mainland, versions couched in discrete essayings of the modes and codes of the idiom of the Torres Strait Mainland; and to render details of my own idiom in order that the reader may make his or her own interpretation of my version. (One wag called this surrounding of several ethnographic chapters with two pair of ethnologically interpretive ones the 'method of the essay sandwich'. An apt tag, I thought, and a fitting one: It is a tag that works—predicates, does the work of our community of discourse—as long as everyone in the community commands the sandwich idiom.)

Toward the Anthropology of Idiom

I have suggested that the business of ethnography ought to be the accounting for the studied community's 'predicates', both what sorts of things the members of the community reckon their knowledge is predicated on (origin myths, custom, political hierarchy and social organization extant, and the like) and how it is that the work of the community—as I have called it, predication—gets done. My general proposition is that the entities of foreign worlds are fairly straightforward. We know pretty quickly that there are men and women, children; that there are abodes; that there are places, and usually places distinguished by general and restricted access; that there are tools, historical relics, artefacts, effigies, icons, clothing, animals, plants, and so forth. Every once in a while we are
thrown by what a thing is or is for, but these occasions are infrequent and invariably noticeable for their curiosity. What we do not know nearly as quickly, as we insinuate ourselves into another society, are two things in respect of these quickly noted entities: One, we do not know how they are each accounted for by the community; two, we do not know how each is used in order to carry out the work of the community. Which is to say that we pretty quickly recognize the subjects and objects of our new community, and that we spend the rest of our time figuring out the predicates.

For instance, it was known before I left for North Queensland that the Islanders I would find there had an English-based pidgin from the islands. So this pidgin could be safely anticipated as one of the entities (objects) of the community I would seek to join. And more than that, the native Islander interest in language per se, in the commonness of Islanders speaking more than one, in the general knowledge of two or three languages existing in their own Strait islands, in the fact of their all being immigrants in a land not of their own tongues, all of these supported the expectation that the pidgin, like the other languages, might be one of the subjects of the community, a thing action taken in respect of or knowledge held in respect of. And it was. Both object and subject. What was not known (by me) was that it was a language predicated upon a set of phonemes which did not include /f/. And I did not know that Aborigines were also objects in Islander reality, objects who were predicated upon saying /f/. Nor did I know that being Aboriginal was a subject par excellence in the mainland Island idiom, and that differences between Islander and Aborigine were everyday knowledge upon which actions in respect of raising good Islander children and protecting Islander integrity were predicated. It was not that I was unprepared in regards the difference between /f/ and /p/ as made sounds. It was that I was unprepared for the response to my /f/ which signalled not that I had merely misspoken but that I, and maybe my man himself, had been guilty of a grave misrepresentation.
My contention is that predication is accomplished in the idiom of any community (and that the existence of idiom is prima facie evidence for community). Briefly, idiom is what most children learn as a first speech. Thus idiom is not created by virtue of a grammar working on words in the construction of sentences. Idiom is created by children trying to make sense by making themselves heard. Hearing comes first. Idiom is a construction in sounds in respect of a hearing. Much later come the words into which sounds of sense may be broken. Much, much later, and usually never, comes the grammar. For grammar, too, is a product of hearing, not of speaking, a product commonly interpreted by the linguists and other grammarians who hear it, but rarely by others and never by very many speakers.

In this regard the anthropologist is truly much like the children being raised in the community he joins. He listens for all he's worth just to hear one or two differences which, he sees from ensuing action, are meaningful differences in this new community in which talk sounds like this. If he's really venturesome he might try making one or two of those sounds to see if they make, coming from him, the differences they make when members of the community say them to one another. (This was exactly where I screwed up. While I did not make the utter mistake of failing to notice that no one ever said /f/—in fact, people did, and I knew they did—I spoke too soon, before I had cottoned on to the extent to which I had been already assigned to my maik le, a group of Eastern Islanders, Meriam le, who wouldn't be caught dead saying /f/ out of respect for their native tongue, the higher mir of the island of Mer. Thus I effed myself right into limbo where I was either an Aborigine somebody was trying to pass off as an Islandman, or I had been caught saying /f/ and not dead.)

Since the work of Austin, and Searle, and the advent of sociolinguistics and especially Dell Hymes' ethnography of speaking, this is just the sort of thing which sociologists and anthropologists and linguists have begun paying attention to, and reporting. It was in this investigative milieu that I prepared myself to go and do
fieldwork among the urban Islandmen. What I found was that there was little available preparation for how to go and listen: there was lots of stuff on speaking but nothing on hearing; a number of things had been written on how to do things with words (in the vein of Austin's lectures) but little on how to figure out what you're supposed to do when the words are to get you to do something.

Of course, there is little need for such programmatic writings. How to listen is the first requirement of any ethnography; and no ethnography gets anywhere with its research unless the ethnographer starts hearing and understanding. In fact, not only is there little need for such elementary considerations in ethnography, also they get positively in the way of the reader trying to read ethnographies. But this is not to say that ethnological treatises such as this one may not find room for just such elementary disquisitions on how ethnography happens.

I have characterized genre as the written counterpart of idiom. And I have proposed the recognition of a genre which we might agree to call ethnography. It would be the genre in which the work of predication in the communities studies by fieldworkers would be put into words. The words which each fieldworker used would be the best he could use in order to put his version of the idiom of that community. The criterion for best use would be how well he could do at making the sense that he gained, present as he was at the telling, be the sense read by his readers. When the community is the community of the ethnographer, and one in which there is a community of writing, much of the ethnographer's task is to construct a reading of readings, to show his reader how his studied community makes sense of written matter and predicates community action upon it. But when, as is yet most often the case, the community studies is not literate (or has no written idiom despite the general presence of a written language, a language which may be a national, artificial, colonial, or other outside language), the problem for the ethnographer is complicated by his not only having to present ethnographic accounts based on translations or glosses of native words but also to render
in writing events which took place in person. This is precisely wherein lies the reason for a genre in which we might do this.

A genre is constituted by writings which readers recognize as being of a piece, belonging to one another. Writings in the same genre do not belong to one another by virtue of shared form. Essays, for instance, are formally similar in that their content is also an evaluation of their content, but they are found generically in politics, jurisprudence, literary criticism, and biology. Rather, writing shares a genre by virtue of what the readers of that writing know in respect of it. And this is where genre, governed by discursive laws rather than by linguistic ones, may be juxtaposed with idiom. Genre is constituted by readers, idiom by hearers. The genre science fiction did not exist so very long ago. New Journalism is even younger. (New Ethnography is younger still, but probably was not a genre, its constituents linked by content, that is, by something the authors all knew rather than by something the readers did.) Science fiction and the New Journalism both came into being, as genres, because of their respective readerships. And because the early writers in each were read by prospective writers who emulated something of their style and shared some of their same concerns and interests, the genre was perpetrated. And because there exists a genre, readers may argue about who is or is not 'in' the genre (and these arguments may continue perfectly oblivious of whether or not the writer himself under discussion considers himself typical or not). Again, the reason this is possible is because the reality of the genre is in the reading.

Thus is the argument for the predication—the establishment by recognition—of a genre based on the same primacy of response upon which the studies of human communication which shall be found to constitute that genre shall be predicated. The anthropology of idiom will be facilitated by those studies in human social interaction which expose the idiom of the communities in which the actions which are that interaction take place. (And it must be remembered that the language of reporting is often the idiom of some community or other,
sometimes taken lock, stock, and barrel into the language of the society of that community of idiom, sometimes simply translated into the writing of the ethnographer unawares—such as my use here of 'lock, stock, and barrel', a saying which dates from a time when those three things were not only parts of a rifle but also separate parts whose enumeration was required by anyone in that community of idiom wanting to tell another that the whole damn gun had been taken. But all kinds of people use that saying nowadays who know nothing of what those three things are, but who know perfectly well that no one will mistake them on hearing to mean 'the whole bloody thing', whatever the thing. Contrast this with my use of 'take place' in the preceding sentence about the anthropology of idiom being based on ethnographies of communication which expose the idiom of communities in which the actions of social interaction take place. This is one of those phrases once generated in an idiom which has moved right into written English [and Spanish: tener lugar; and French: avoir lieu], where it is so comfortable that there is no problem of how to punctuate it [no punctuation separating the two elements of the phrase] nor of how to decline the entire phrase [took place, taking place, would have to have been taking place; i.e. decline take in the singular and never use plural place(s)], and none of the problems of moving it from spoken English into written and back again as there is for 'lock, stock, and barrel'—we never quite know whether to write it lock, stock and barrel, or use the extra comma for lock, stock, and barrel, or try to pretend to write it as it is said, all of a piece: lock-stock-and-barrel, lockstockandbarrel. Nevertheless, 'take place' is a predicate which has little to do with taking—except in the circuitous logic of saying that a robbery took place, as if in taking the money some place was taken too—and nothing at all to do with place. And as long as we do not attend too closely to the words, as long as we do not spend our time as I have done here, we can get by with saying, and hearing, that human interaction takes place.)
This leaves us with the glaring question of what these ethnographies of idiom shall themselves be predicated upon. I suggested earlier that they should be predicated upon the knowledge gained. By that I meant the knowledge that the ethnographer gains from, and while, being among the people he studies. This is, it seems to me, the solution to the problem of the black box, the problem that we do not know what happens between the words and phrases going into the brain-mind-body and the words and phrases and actions emitted in response to, or in respect of, those bits of information that went in. I suggested that what we, as ethnographers, do is move into the minds of the peoples we study. And as long as we do not pay too close attention to 'move' (or as long as we are willing to adopt the definition I outlined in Chapter 7), then this can be said to be what we do. Nor, it seems to me, are we obliged to at all apologize for thus engaging in such mindful activity without being able to chart what happens to the electrons and neurons and synapses and chemicals which do the work of the black box.

Which is to say that we need not, I would argue, feel any obligation to deny that what we do is make sense of human actions which were theretofore senseless though we cannot describe or explain the inner workings of the brain. For what we can do is explain much of the sense-making of the human mind. It is just that it turns out to be not any such thing as the human mind, but rather such things as countless human minds, some of which we are part of ('our' mind is part of) as we attend to undergraduate education and training for anthropological research, and some others of which we become part of as we engage those alien persons who turn out to be members of very different communities and parts of very strange human minds. What we do know about the black box is that it participates in making sense. We have one very active century, backed up by many long centuries of scattered occasions, of ethnographic research, of proof positive that human beings can leave their own society bent precisely upon making sense of alien societies among whom they have chosen to go and live and make sense of. In addition to this, we have the
apparently universal human ability to distinguish between knowledge and suspicion (between 'I know this' and 'I suspect that such and such is the case'), to distinguish what we know we know from those reckonings which we say we know when there is no need to pay attention to their predication.

This last problem bespeaks the difference between the playwright and the reporter of conversation. The playwright makes the players converse so that their meanings are clear to the third person who is the audience. The reporter of conversation is obliged to report the conversation as said, as the speakers were making sense to one another. This is the dilemma of the anthropologist who, as fieldworker, listens to his people make sense to one another and then, as ethnographer, must make them speak so as to make their meanings sensible to the audience. In the simplest sense this requires him to either gloss the native tongue or use native words with definitions in the language of reporting. It matters not to the current discussion which of these methods the ethnographer uses (I myself have used both, and various hybrids, throughout this thesis); what does matter is whether or not the ethnographer knows whereof he writes. This is what is crucial to the predication of a genre on the knowledge of the ethnographer: that the ethnographer only writes events when he knows what is going on.¹⁰⁴

Still, having said that it matters not whether the ethnographer reports conversation verbatim or glosses native words to render those conversations in the English of the ethnography, and having said further that what does matter is that the ethnographer knows what he's doing, let me propose that here is exactly where lies the need for a genre. We might have said that it matters very much that the conversation is reported verbatim if the readers are conversational analysts, or that the native conversations must be glossed because the readers read only English. But these one-to-one matchings of ethnography-and-reader would require a ridiculous multiplication of versions. And in the end, with the plethora of versions thus produced in hand, we would discover that versions are
the work of a single woman or man; that each version would in turn
spawn a different singular version as it was read by each new reader.
And that each two readers, discussing what they had read, would
produce in discussion a further version. And so on.

Once a genre is established many of these problems disappear.
Because, as J.P. Stern put it in his discussion of Lichtenberg and
the genre of the aphorism,

in assigning the word "genre" to certain large or small,
common or rare collocations of words we are tracing out a
certain similarity of reactions on our—the
reader's—part: a distinct feeling and understanding,

and any such assignation, in respect of genres known, such as
aphorism, or proposed, such as ethnography, has as its premise
the conviction that the categories of literature are not
empty names signifying nothing, but meaningful
designations of distinct kinds of literary expression: and
hence also representations of distinct ways of responding
to the world.  

My proposition is that ethnography is a distinct way of being in
the world, a way of penetrating another society in order to inhabit
the web of meaning there for the purpose of returning and writing
down a version of that web. The requirement of idiom is that there be
something there according to which that web is meaningful. In this
view, there can be no evidence put by the ethnographer onto his page;
there can be only the words and context of his discursive prose;
there can be only the prose of his version. And his version must be a
version of the meanings of his people; the version on the page can
not be their version; the version on the page can not be the reader's
version. All he can do is put for the reader the particulars of his
own 'movement' in coming to terms with these people. And if he fully
comprehends that the version which stands will be, in the end, the
version read, he will use his own language to the full in order that
the reader may read even more of the path taken than the ethnographer
might intend or be aware.

It is this last which is the simplest of my propositions and which
may prove the most difficult to entertain generally. And it has a
little to do with my brief mention of the problem of the black box.
Every ethnographer has as his central piece of sense-making equipment the so-called black box of the impenetrable workings of the human brain. Much of the 'making of versions' is black box work, as is the garnering of the information with which the ethnographic versions are constructed. But what we do know about human beings (and I shall limit myself here, broadly, to communication), is that they glance at many more things than they watch, they look at much more than they see, they see much more than they notice; they hear much more than they listen to, they listen to much more than they recognize; they read much more than they write.

What this means is that it is much more humanly possible to recognize than it is to constitute. We are much better at recognizing the right 'look', most of us, than we are at creating our own fashions. We are much better at recognizing just the word we are looking for than we are at selecting it in speech. We are much better recognizing just the word we need when writing than we are at writing the right word in the first place. (Lichtenberg: In our fashionable poets it is so easy to see how the work has begotten the thought; in Milton and Shakespeare the thought always begets the word. 106) So it is not my contention that ethnographers are somehow better equipped than mere mortals for their journey (though they ought to be better prepared, by virtue of their education). But it is my contention that they will be much better equipped, having been there, to say what is and is not the right word or phrase or film or activity to use to say how life is in that other web of meanings.

If it were thus the case that the ethnographer needed but to sit around selecting among various possible descriptions of that alien life, his job would be not only considerably less fraught, but the resulting product would be considerably better, picked over and honed until only just the right words were used for each alien description. Since this is not the case, and since ethnography is most often the work of one who has been a singular visitor to that other society, the ethnographer is stuck with trying to be both student of his studied society and its presenter. But with the
recognition of a genre suited to just such an activity, the apparent—heretofore, assumed—contradiction drops out. Ethnography becomes a genre by which its readers recognize in themselves similar appreciations upon reading the writings characteristic of the genre, writings which are characteristically ethnography and nothing else. Ethnography becomes the literary genre of those whose way of being in the world is to go and inhabit an alien web of meanings and construct that journey in writing. It shall be recognized by the writings produced, by their attention to the idioms according to which those webs are constructed (and construed).

This way of writing and reading, this way of being in the world, which we might call ethnography, shall make itself known by an especial requirement on writer and reader. In part, it shall be (accepting for the purpose of this description my definition of ethnography as the capture of idiom) possible for the reader of ethnography to gain purchase on both the ethos 'graphed' and on the ethnographer, a possibility inherent in a journey of 'capture' whose journeyman recognizes that just as the people whom he studies live not so much by way of their language but in it—surrounded by and steeped in the worlds which it holds for them—just so do he and his reader live in and surrounded by the language of the ethnography. This knowledge, coupled with his sure knowledge that the reader is always better than the writer at finding the right word, may free him to use his language to the full in trying to make sense of that strange other world which cannot yet be held in his language since no one before him could have put it there, but which will stand as long as his account is read.

The requirement shall be on the reader to permit the writer some freeway in his words, having to stretch them as he does around meanings which they have never had; on the writer to permit the reader some considerable purchase on the mind of the writer, knowing that he is the only link, however tenuous, between the alien mind which he has inhabited and the mind of the reader. As Stern says in
the course of his literary definition of the aphorism, first we define the literary analogue—in his case, for Lichtenberg, the aphorism; in this case the ethnography—to "a certain disposition of mind", and then

our definition established, we should be able to turn back to the originative mind, to see what consequences are implied in the definition for it; what that mind has also to be like if the definition is to retain the validity it originally appeared to possess; and whether the mind really is like that. We are thus trying to find out not "what people generally mean" but what one who had given some thought to the matter would have to mean in order to draw the utmost coherent meaning from the word he used. And it is not to linguistic usage but to the insights into experience (literary and other) arising in the course of this examination that we shall appeal to sanction our undertaking.

In particular what we want to establish is a genre in which it is to be taken for granted that the presentation of that other web of meanings—the web of other meanings—shall be in terms of what one who had given some thought to the matter would have to mean in order to draw the utmost coherent meaning from the words he uses. In the few tales which pop up from time to time in the present work I have used, at different times, capitalization, punctuation marks, idiomatic expressions from American and Australian and anthropological slang, idiomatic phrases from Torres Strait Pidgin, a word or two from Meriam mir. (And because this has been, in toto, a work about ethnography and not ethnography itself, I have been free to 'sandwich' ethnographic chapters between considerations of the alterity by which words do the work of language, and the alternatives of word choice and punctuation and sentence style among which any ethnographer selects in order to make sense. Such considerations ought to have no place in ethnography proper.) If these selections have not made sense (—if they have been by turns too evocative of stylistics or of metaphysics—)it is because I have not trod that middle path between 'sarcasm as the condition of truth' and running naked through the streets to announce my findings...between acute dissociation and obtuse enthusiasm.

And, too, it may be that ethnology cannot be a middle way. Perhaps
ethnology is always oscillating between the poles of tale and teller, paying attention as it must to both the content of the ethnography with which it treats, and to the substance of the ethnographer who wrote it. (Thus my general restriction herein to my own essays, since I may present myself as writer without fear or misreading and be answerable only to me in case I am wrong.)

STORYTIME: Tale and Teller

"Never trust the teller, trust the tale," said Lawrence. So wrote Susan Sontag in the essay with which I introduced the present work. "Interpretation," she wrote (and she is very much against it, though not in the sense in which Nietzsche, rightly for her, says, 'There are no facts, only interpretations'), "amounts to the philistine refusal to leave the work of art alone. Real art has the capacity to make us nervous. By reducing the work of art to its content and then interpreting that, one tames the work of art." Sontag needn't have restricted herself to works of art. Native cultures too have the capacity to make us nervous. Though it has certainly been the case that many ethnographers, working not only during the heyday of cultural relativism, have sought to make native ways harmless by showing us their inherent logic. But saying that such ways make a kind of sense to those who practice them is not to make them make sense to us. And interpreting them only serves to make of the interpretation a tertium quid—like language is for most linguists, like culture became for Boas, like works of language art are for most literary critics—thus guaranteeing a logic, wrested from some alien behaviour and seized in a moment of ethnographic present, where there might have been the messy noisy behaviour itself, described as well as the ethnographer could and presented with the anthropo-logic by which the noise and mess might be seen to make sense, to have come to make sense to the ethnographer.
So I have advocated using language to the full, and have used a few tricks here and there. This is not to say that ethnography should be like novels... Rather, it is to say that there ought be no disciplinary prohibition against ethnography being like novels (see Tom Wolfe on "Just Like a Novel" regarding New Journalism), but that ethnographies ought not be novels. Novels are marked by a teller telling a tale. The teller, the novelist, knows the tale because he is writing it. He may not know where he is going with it (where it is going with him), but wherever it ends up it will do so only by virtue of the teller telling his reader the tale. D.H. Lawrence, who was both a novelist and critic (who was both a teller of tales which were novel and a teller of tales about other works of art), told us to never trust the teller. He also said we could trust the tale. And we have some very good proof of his truthfulness in his own most untrustworthy Kangaroo. A.D. Hope, the Australian poet and literary critic wrote, "Even admirers of D.H. Lawrence have not had much to say in favour of Kangaroo."¹¹⁰

Professor Hope counts himself a "hostile witness who thinks Lawrence an extremely overrated writer". He makes it clear that, in any case, "Lawrence had little chance even to know what he was talking about", but says "the shoddiness of his 'Australian setting' reveals itself on almost every page":

when we find Australians on the east coast in easy reach of the bush lighting their fires expensively with 'chunks of jarrah' or when the village war memorial is surmounted by the effigy of a 'Tommy standing at ease'—though Lawrence knew the term 'Digger' and used it in the book—the carelessness is of the same order that makes Somers say he will sound his muezzin, or tell a story about white ants eating a litter of puppies, or take the blue-bottles on the New South Wales beach for some kind of octopus.

Lawrence was not in Australia long, saw little while he was here, and wrote, a few days before he left the country, "We haven't known a single soul here—which is really a relief". This is exactly why we do not trust the teller.
In the same way we must be careful of trusting Professor A.D. Hope, who says Lawrence's white ants and blue-bottles are "more than mistakes excusable in a tourist; they are symptomatic of a sloppy attitude to his craft"; who introduces himself as a "hostile witness". Again, we cannot trust this teller to tell us a tale we can trust about D.H. Lawrence and the writing of Kangaroo. What we can trust in each case is the tale.

We can trust Kangaroo to weave exactly the tale it does, a kind of boring and mediocre psychodrama full of stereotypes which are in their turn full of errors. Our reading of Kangaroo cannot only show us the errors of fact (providing we read in possession of the facts of blue-bottles and white ants), but can support our own predication of trustworthiness...in the case of Professor Hope's reading none at all. We can trust A.D. Hope's essay to weave with but a few strands the warp and weft of Lawrence's time in Australia and Lawrence's writing of Kangaroo, and to show us a picture of a pitifully inattentive writer with an aggrandized reputation caring hardly at all for his subject country or its people; and to damn him in closing with the very faintest praise,

...Lawrence, at the best, was only a minor Blake.

And there is me: you can trust me only on the page in front of you. As for my tale of tellers and tales here—this very short one of Lawrence and Hope and Kangaroo—I think much more highly of Lawrence as a writer than does the A.D. Hope of this essay-tale, and I think much more highly of A.D. Hope as an Australian than I do of Lawrence as one. When the subject at hand is the Australian idiom, Hope is right: Lawrence was awful. When the subject is brilliant and evocative writing, then Lawrence is good. (He is better in fact than Hope is at writing against Lawrence's depiction...but then that is my tale). But, as Hope reminds us, and this holds just as much for any ethnography as it does for a novel (and even more so for those places where the idiom is incomprehensible without a close reading of locale):
One might reply that the book was not written for Australians; but an author who sets a novel in a country unfamiliar to his readers has a responsibility to them which goes further than simply building up an atmosphere of the foreign or the exotic.

And yet, can we make these comments on novels and plays speak to the problems of ethnography? I think we can, of course; but I think so only in respect of some subtle distinctions. Where Hope rightly chides the novelist for not doing anything more than 'building up an atmosphere of the foreign or the exotic', most ethnographers have their hands full trying to make the exotic seem mundane (as it is for him when he's there in that exotic world). And yet the techniques for using words are the same, though the preferred outcome (the reading) be different. When Ursula LeGuin wants to establish her Earthsea Trilogy in 'an atmosphere of the foreign or the exotic' she uses a device used by other science fiction writers, a sort of anthropologese where the boy's aunt is introduced into the story thus,

A sister of his dead mother lived in the village redolent of the African mother's brother and the corollary that some uncles were much more than just uncles (as this mother's sister turns out to be so much more than just another aunty). She also uses words such as

She kept busy those two days making dry wheatcakes for the voyagers to carry, and wrapping up dried fish and meat and other such provender to stock their boat, until Ged told her to stop, for he did not plan to sail clear to Selidor without a halt

'dry wheatcakes' (she couldn't have put 'crackers', obviously, without loss of exotica—but how can wheatcakes be drier than other wheatcakes, and what might a wheatcake be that couldn't be called something else?); 'voyagers' ('travelers' wouldn't do?); 'provender' (almost as recognizably exotic by virtue of same-culture-different-era as 'vittles'); 'without a halt' (no one would risk the transitivity of 'halt' when 'stop' or 'rest' would do).
But what if, unlike our cohorts in anthropologese the science fiction writers, we want to render sensible a real world which we have visited and which is truly alien; foreign; exotic? What if this world has people who eat dry wheatcakes—do we translate them as 'crackers' so as to make the foreign familiar? What if this world has, as does the world of Torres Strait, voyagers (people who just travel, by canoe in the old days, and by pearling lugger, and nowadays by train and plane and car)—do we call them 'travelers', and in making their journeys seem familiar do them the injustice of going from one place to another instead of always heading off for the next place? What if in this world 'stop' is what you do when you stay overnight with relatives or when you live somewhere for a time; and 'rest' is almost exclusively reserved for old people who have no stamina; and 'stay' is something said only of another, as to those who have been your hosts when, as you leave, you say, politely, as a way of announcing your impending departure, "Well, you—all stay now"—how far this world can we ever use halt and claim for it any meaning at all (as we can claim no meaning for it in the world of Torres Strait Pidgin where these 'stop' and 'stay' and 'rest' are)?

No, to do this 'reverse' of what novelists do to make foreign countries foreign and science fiction writers do to make imaginary worlds alien would be to make the strangely mundane inconsequentially prosaic. Better, I think, to use the words—dry wheatcakes, voyagers—which convey something of the strangeness, of the alien differentness of that other place. But best of all would be simply not to censor. If 'dry wheatcakes' presents itself to the ethnographer whose people make some kind of unleavened stone-ground baps, then dry wheatcakes it is. While we may not know the intricacies of the literary process by which words come and are linked and whose linkages in turn cause other words and emendations and so forth, there is no cause for thinking the process to be different—less accurate, less trustworthy—for those who would put their language to work describing the real strange places of the real world from those who describe the unreal worlds of strange places.
To construct a difference such as the one rejected here would be to commit to a difference of process which is simply not true. Moreover, it would be to propose a difference of product. And this is not true either: all writers produce writings. There is no difference of product between the book filled with printed words and maps and pictures of 'Earthsea' and the book filled with printed words and maps and pictures of Torres Strait. The difference is in what is known beforehand.112

While the novelist has to learn to listen closely and well to his tale, as it spins out of him and spins him along, the ethnographer has to listen to the tales of others. This is the difference. Novelists are the authority for the tales they tell (they must be, they are the very authors of them); ethnographers at best only have authority for the tales they tell. And while the novelist, if he wants to be good, must learn to 'listen' to his tales, the ethnographer must learn to listen to the tales of others. And while the novelist cannot help but be there while his tale spins out (though there is some question about whether the 'he' that spins the tale has any kind of reality beyond that tale's telling), the special commitment of the ethnographer is that he be there at the telling. Only the ethnographer who is there at the telling, who has learned the idiom of the community and can bring his extraordinary human powers of discernment to bear, only he can distinguish the teller from the tale.

STORYTIME is my gloss for that aspect of situations when the context of situation is the idiom and the content is a story. My inclination so long ago when I began this thesis was to put STORY in caps, too, as a kind of notionally translatable or comparable thing. But what I have found is that stories, simple plots of characters doing things to one another in pursuit of something, stories quite as we generally understand them, exist everywhere I have looked. And these stories are not things. They are little processes-in-language, each one different in the telling. They are different in the telling each time not because the teller invariably
makes some little error, or inevitably introduces some little variation; not because of some metaphor or esoteric dictum that 'you can't tell the same tale twice'. They are different even if they are written down, even if they are inscribed in printer's ink or chipped into stone. Their difference lies in the hearing. I think that stories may well exist among every people because I have heard them among those peoples with whom I have lived and travelled. (I also think that stories may be the closest thing in conscious awareness to how minds work...a predisposition which ought to be a cautionary one for those who would trust my tale without 'listening' to it for themselves.\footnote{193}

In my introduction I spoke of stories as idiom. What I want to make clear now is that while I may use stories (or, strictly speaking, STORY using the caps of glossed sign-language gestures, or of poetry where the glosses are not meant as translations but just as emotive approximations, or of THOUGHTS, where, as in my f-story above, I had to represent the thoughts that were part of the situation but which were not subvocalized and therefore technically not translatable into words but transposed into glosses) in a restricted idiom in order to present the salient features of mechanisms of communicative competence, I do not mean that stories ought to be taken yet to be universal. Nor, for that matter, do I yet propose to take idioms as human universals (though I think we must work toward that question).\footnote{194} What I do want to take as a universal is the universal problem of speaking as conduct, as habit,\footnote{195} and of how this comes to be so...not in the speciously 'universal' of Universal Man Acquires Idiom—the headline catchphrase which an account such as mine might otherwise wear—but in the suspiciously prevalent, and therefore suspectedly universal, practice of real men just about everywhere being able to handle an apparent babble of languages spoken, written, called, signed, and invented. The codes and modes and metaphors which are, and are in, those languages, and in metalanguages in respect of them, are themselves handled meaningfully.
In respect of this problem, I offer a few steps toward the anthropology of idiom. This is an anthropology which will have as its meat the ethnographies which seek to make discursive sense of how the infinite universe of alterity which is Language is constrained in and by the world of each idiom in respect of its language universe. STORYTIME is the times and situations when learners of the idiom are taught the restraints of alterity. It is in STORYTIME that speakers learn, among all they have learned to say, what they may mean. In the community of Torres Strait Islander idiom, STORYTIME takes place in islandtaim: any tale of clocks, of hours and minutes...any tale with these are suspect, tales which could not have happened in islandtaim and whose tellers are not to be trusted. In islandtaim the first thing may have happened a century ago and the thing which come apta, the next thing in that 'story', may happen tomorrow.

(You been watchin' that Morgan-girl?, one old Islandman asked his countryman in a pub one day in April of 1978. Yep, said the other, loose; really loose. Uh, agreed the first, turning to look out into the stark white of the Townsville street. He turned back to his countryman with a thought, That family of hers better be careful... them Morgan boys..., he mused, not unconcerned, You remember what happened to that Mary Anne—. His companion nodded over his beer, having already caught the other's drift, Been thinkin' 'bout that myself. Both men returned to their beers, playing out in their minds whatever the scenario was their unpleasant reckoning had turned up. I drank mine, killing time until the first could introduce me to his countryman, which was why we came into the pub. In July or August I finally found out what that conversation was: the seventeen-year old Morgan lass had been shaking her tail in a wide enough swirl to be talked about; Morgans were relations of both men in the pub; sometime around a hundred and ten years ago, give or take, a girl in the same tribal group as the Morgans and these two blokes had shaken her tail once too often; the menfolk of her family, sad at the loss of a sister but not about to leave the problem uncorrected, bashed her nearly to
death and then buried alive what was left. BEAT HER UP AND BURIED HER ALIVE! And the place is known. Was it true? Who knows; they say it is. Would they condone such a thing today? I think, having lived amongst 'em, they truly would. And when they said, You remember such-and-such to each other, they never distinguished between yesterday and eighteen sixty. Nor did they ever distinguish between what we would call a story or a legend or a tale and what we would call history or biography. No one said, 'Hey, you remember that story about Mary Anne—', and I could never get anyone to understand me when I tried to distinguish that Mary Anne from that story. The only question ever was was it Island tonar...was it in the Island way.)

So, STORYTIME is my gloss for when Islanders are learning how to be Islanders—and for those rare times when one or the other of us who were not born Islanders are admitted to the learning. Education to the tonar always takes place in STORYTIME, even when it is the STORYTIME of the young boy unobserved observing his father tie his lava-lava. (And, education in the white Australian schools never consists of STORYTIME, even though judgments by Island parents in respect of that education does, generating untold turmoil in some Island kids, turmoil which, since it could not have been a result of education in the tonar, has no purchase on the STORYTIME which can be its only possible alleviation.) STORYTIME is, too, the time of expulsion, when the old story of sarup gets told in its modern version (a weakened one, where the 'returnee' doesn't get killed any more, and may not even get bashed if he stays long enough away before returning). And STORYTIME is the times when the young white American anthropologist gets access to the stories of the tonar—that version of what he calls 'mind'—and receives the warrant for telling his version.

In Torres Strait Pidgin there are lots of little bits of stories, the constant comparing and joining of East and West which is the business of a lingua franca as its community is being constituted. But most of STORYTIME is still conducted in the traditional
tongues—for me, in the mir of my maik-le—and polite adjournment to island-group caucus is still common as Eastern and Western groups retreat to come to terms among themselves before negotiating a new conjoint reality in the Pidgin. And while STORYTIME in both East and West accommodates each other's presence in Torres Strait, (and, grudgingly at times, for each other's ways), except for a seaman or two, and a boat-builder, and a few Japanese pearlers and the anthropologist Jeremy Beckett, nobody has ever gained presence throughout the Strait except a few Islandmen, heroes from the ancestors' time.

There are, then, no shared ways yet for acquiring skills in respect of joint presence. (There is no STORYTIME for Pidgin, no measure of meanings for how to be silent or inactive in mixed groups, not even a glossary in Pidgin for excusing momentary traditional speech.) There are no shared ways for whites and Islanders (STORYTIME whites are ill-mannered and lacking in respect); there are no shared ways for Aborigines and Islanders (STORYTIME Aborigines have no culture at all [this, despite their famous 'Dreamtime'] and do not even understand the meaning of respect). Finally, there are no provisions for shared tellings, for those with mainland experience at dealing with men from other islands and other cultures to participate in modifying the tales of the tonar. In the STORYTIME there are only the traditional tellers, and only they, who inherit this authority, may be the authors of the new tonar. In this book only one man did the telling. Every story in this STORYTIME was told by one man, the head of his family, head of my maik-le, and one-time heir apparent to the whole of the Torres Strait; a man so feared that his opponents refused to let him come home to his island...not even to see his dying father, not even to bury him.

This has been an ethnological weighing. I have weighed the proposition of studying idiom by weighing my versions of this man's tales. In the end, only he may tell the tales of the Meriam lé, and I may tell only versions of his tales. Only in this way may we not cheat the idiom and, for us, its warrant in bar kak mir.
Notes to the Preface

page 4 "...might live BOTH on my pages AND in their Australian towns." The capitalized BOTH/AND is a reference to Anthony Wilden's objection to EITHER/OR thinking about organisms and modes of existence. See Wilden 1972:222, 227n22.

page 5 "Because it proves that things both can and cannot be" is from William Butler Yeats' poem "The Curse of Cromwell", a poem redolent of Anthony Wilden's cybernetic BOTH/AND, and the dualism of Bateson, in the tradition of R.G. Collingwood, and William Blake, and Samuel Butler, a poem about living minds in service to dead bodies (viz. line 22: "That I am still their servant though all are underground.")

page 5 "The Case of the Planet Pluto" is section 3 of Chapter III Multiple Versions of the World, on pages 70 and 71 of Mind and Nature. Gregory Bateson died on July 4th, 1980.

page 6 "And after a few such retroductive exercises..." Retroduction, also called abduction, was Charles S. Peirce's addition to the conventional reasonings known as deduction and induction, in which the importance of hypothesis to generate explanation was stressed, especially for cases in which the same explanations, once generated, could be used to reason other phenomena. (See Philip P. Wiener, Values in a Universe of Chance: Selected Writings of Charles S. Peirce, pp.230 and 368-373 esp. 372-3; Justus Buchler, The Philosophy of Peirce, pp.56, 150-156, 304-305; see also Israel Scheffler, Four Pragmatists: A Critical Introduction to Peirce, James, Mead and Dewey, pp.13-82 esp. 58-75.) In Mind and Nature (p.139), Bateson characterizes abduction as "seeking other cases which will be analogous in the sense of belonging under the same rule", and (p.84) says we can flesh out explanation "by the process which the American logician, C.S. Peirce called abduction, that is, by finding other relevant phenomena and arguing that these, too, are cases under our rule and can be mapped onto the same tautology." In a short section entitled Abduction (pp.142-4) he writes, "The very possibility of abduction is a little uncanny, and the phenomenon is enormously more widespread than he or she might, at first thought, have supposed. Metaphor, dream, parable, allegory, the whole of art, the whole of science, the whole of religion, the whole of poetry, totemism, the organization of facts in comparative anatomy—all these are instances or aggregates of instances of abduction, within the human mental sphere."

page 7 "...condemned to see all practice as spectacle..." These words are borrowed from Husserl, actually from Pierre Bourdieu who borrowed them from Husserl for the opening of (the Richard Nice translation of) his Outline of a Theory of Practice, which begins (p.1): "The practical privilege in which all scientific activity arises never more subtly governs that activity than when, unrecognized as a privilege, it leads to
an implicit theory of practice which is the corollary of neglect of the social conditions in which science is possible. The anthropologist's particular relation to the object of his study contains the makings of a theoretical distortion inasmuch as his situation as an observer, excluded from the real play of social activities by the fact he has no place (except by choice or by way of a game) in the system observed and has no need to make a place for himself there, inclines him to a hermeneutic representation of practices, leading him to reduce all social relations to communicative relations and, more precisely, to decoding operations. And exaltation of the virtues of the distance secured by externality simply transmutes into an epistemological choice the anthropologist's objective situation, that of the "impartial spectator", as Husserl puts it, condemned to see all practice as a spectacle."

page 7 "...away from the analogues...toward the dialogues..." is a direct reference to the distinction made, and the programmatic position taken in regard of that distinction, by Dennis Tedlock in the Harvey Lecture for 1979, "The Analogical Tradition and the Emergence of a Dialogical Anthropology".

page 7 "...'a very great company, both living and dead: my authorities, my authors'." is from the dedication to Love's Body by Norman O. Brown, and is the precise confluence of author and authority which informs the present work.

page 7 "...shadowy dramas moving in the background of awareness." I.A. Richards opens Chapter Eleven of How to Read a Page, which is entitled "Mind, Thought, Idea, Knowledge" with these words, particularly pointed to my remarks on trying to use language to the full (as opposed to pretending that all words mean the same thing to everybody, thus neatly abrogating the responsibility of readership which sits so squarely on the shoulders of even the most scientific writer): "We now take up a group of words of which we may safely say that understanding them is understanding their interconnections. The senses of these words are so sensitive to one another that even to read them over in different orders is to set shadowy dramas moving in the background of our awareness. What we have to attempt is to bring these dramas—these interactions—forward, slow them down, and simplify them till we can follow them." To make the same point, anthropologists may be more familiar with A.L. Kroeber's (1948:325), "'Structure' appears to be just a yielding to a word that has a perfectly good meaning but suddenly becomes fashionably attractive for a decade or so—like 'streamlining'—and during its vogue tends to be applied indiscriminately because of the pleasurable connotations of its sound." Whether or not Kroeber's abduction, that it is the sound, is right, something is going on. Jacques Derrida (1978:301n2) comments on this very sentence of Kroeber's: "To grasp the profound necessity hidden beneath the incontestable phenomenon of fashion, it is first necessary to operate negatively: the choice of words is first an ensemble—a structural ensemble, of course—of exclusions. To know why one says "structure" is to know why one no longer wishes to say eidos, "essence," form, Gestalt, "ensemble," "Idea," "organism," "state," "system," etc. One must understand not only why each of these words showed itself to be insufficient but also why the notion of structure continues..."
to borrow some implicit signification from them and to be inhabited by them."

...all of what we are is what we are" is from the concluding sentences to Richard Poirier's essay, "Rock of Ages": "Social evolution now depends on the older generation's willingness to try out new styles, new tones, new movements of mind learned from the younger generation it is also teaching, and on a corresponding capacity of technologically sophisticated societies to learn from the technologically primitive ones to whom it can bring the benefit of tools and machines. Everyone must study himself in those who otherwise seem alien. All of what we are is what we are."

(Notes to pp. 23-41)

2. Franz Boas 1904:472.
7. Roy Wagner, The Invention of Culture, see pp.156-7 especially and passim.
10. Or see Chapter 12 in Hacking, op. cit., "Donald Davidson's Truth", and Hacking's own comments on such as Davidson and Grice therein.
11. Gilbert Lewis, 1980:221. Lewis's sentence reads in full "Here the main stresses in my argument on understanding and interpretation are, first, that the anthropologist is not free to speculate according to his fancies on the meaning of the rites, for then he may tell about himself and his preoccupations rather than those of the people he would wish to understand, and secondly, since 'meaning' is a word of such easy virtue (see Cherry 1966, pp.114-17; Leech 1974, pp.1-27), we would do well to be wary of its temptations."—As I discuss further along in the text, I have a couple of exceptions to take to this proscription of Lewis's, but would rather do it in the lesser arena of the footnote: May I propose a countersuggestion that there is nothing about anthropology which limits the 'freedom to speculate', and that speculation which is not "according to fancies" often the only educated guesses we can get about some culture or other; therefore, let us limit our speculation to the unfanciful and make sure that we always let the reader know when we are speculating. Let me also suggest that, as is evident in
Lewis's own absorbing and engaging study, the anthropologist always tells about himself...there is little else he has to tell about. The caution ought to be directed not at those who 'tell about themselves' but at those who, telling about themselves as we all do, don't know it yet.


14. I'll stick this elaboration into a footnote in order to lessen the risk of occasioning just what Montague warns of: Promising to 'pay attention to what I write' is not a promise to write well (though it hurts to find later that some piece could have been written so much better), but rather a promise to be watchful on the reader's behalf. Because C.E. Montague's essay on "Easy Reading, Hard Writing" came to mind, I'll quote here the passage which did.

Some of these uncivil writers are prone to aggravate their offence by the sophisitical plea that matter is more important than manner, and that if your heart be sound you need not mind how you splutter it out. They feel they are so wise or so good that they need not be urbane.

The better-bred writer begins and goes in the faith that this is a free country, where no adult need read a line that he feels to be dull; every sentence of every page is, to the writer's prescient mind, a place at which one of another reader may take his spectacles off and protest that these are no sort of victuals to offer to a free white man. A godly fear of such incidents makes him treat every sentence he writes as a possible occasion for tedium. (P.137 of the chapter "Easy Reading, Hard Writing", pp.135-148 of C.E. Montague, A Writer's Notes on his Trade, Great Britain: A Pelican Book 1949.)


18. This comment is from the Postscript to Farmer's book, written by Theodore Sturgeon, which opens, "'So you're writing pornography now?' Thus spake one of the acquaintances of Philip Jose Farmer recently. The question seems simple and straightforward. It was, obviously, asked by a man who honestly felt he could define his own terms, and probably that the terms he used were so self-evident that they didn't need defining." The next paragraph, which I quote subsequently in the text, begins, "there is a vast number of honestly simple-minded people..." I
have quoted rather more than I might have here not only in order to maintain a full enough sense of context for this eloquent statement on behalf of his friend and cohort, which makes the feel of a genre by those inside it (and which compares, even by so much as a list, two exclusive genres), but also because I could not resist, when looking for a brief but fully sensible example, Sturgeon's explicit use of "terms". I also borrow Sturgeon's use of "Labeler", which I use a couple pages hence, from the conclusion to that paragraph quoted:

These are the Labelers, and they are without exception the most lethal and destructive force ever faced by an species on this or any other planet, and I shall tell you clearly and simply why.

19. The quotations are from "Summary of This Book", the first section of his Notes for a Defense of Poetry which closes Speaking and Language, the last book he wrote before he died; see pp.226-7.


21. Goodman's assertion has been responded to by one of those linguists: D. Terence Langendoen, "The Problem of Linguistic Theory in Relation to Language Behavior: A Tribute and Reply to Paul Goodman", Daedalus 102(3): 195-201. Several years later (the fieldwork intervened) I was moved in response to Langendoen to write a short article with a long title (ms. rejected by Language and Society May 17, 1979) "The Problem of Linguists and Language: A Tribute to Paul Goodman and Reply to Terence Langendoen" (photocopy; available from the author).

22. This consideration is of Comte and the positivists, notably Carnap (The Logical Syntax of Language, Testability and Meaning), found on pp.107-118 of Speaking and Language. The quotation which follows is from p.117.

23. A detailed consideration of the problems of language, speaking, ethnographic writing, and the like, as they converge in any piece of (written) anthropology is in process. The working title of the book is Cloven Fiction, a short treatment, in three parts, of the problems of speaking considered as idiom, writing considered as genre, and the notion of vernacular which has the capacity to conjoin the two. The finished first third of the manuscript is entitled "Why, then, does language matter to ethnography?", after the title of Ian Hacking's delightful consideration of the 'motion' of philosophy out of Hobbes' 'mental discourse' toward, according to Hacking, the "sentential knowledge" of today (Why Does Language Matter to Philosophy?, Cambridge University Press, 1975). My working title is from William Blake's rejection of the split world of mind v. body, of Descartes, which he called "Two Horn'd Reasoning, Cloven Fiction"; which I mention here to hook up Needham's and Borges's real imagination with Geertz and especially Goodman ("Suddenly, the line of dissent of Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley, William Morris the symbolists and surrealists no longer seems to be the nostalgic romanticism of a vanishing minority, but the intense realism of a vanguard" [Goodman 1973:231].) The play on ethnography as 'fiction' (but cloven, cleaved both to fiction and from it, in that lovely genius English has for saying two things at once and making the said more than the sum of the parts) is a reference to Geertz's
(1973:15) definition of anthropological writings: "they are, thus, fictions; fictions, in the sense that they are "something made", "something fashioned"—the original meaning of fictio—not that they are false, unfactual, or merely 'as if' thought experiments."

24. Richard Poirier, The Performing Self (NY: O.U.P. 1971); from the Preface: "By performance I mean, in part, any self-discovering, self-watching, finally self-pleasuring response to the pressures and difficulties I've been describing. Literature and the ways of reading it proposed in this book can be an object lesson for other more distinctly political or social performance." (See also pp. 76-85, 173, 186.)

25. (Whether I am right or wrong in my epistemology, I think it is crucial that my reader understand what I mean by meaning. I think meaning is real, that it is one of those 'differences that makes a difference'. Meaning is expressly not interpretation: "Meaning is not conveyed by speech or pointed to by speech; it is speaker and hearer making sense to one another in a situation" [Goodman 1973:34]. So there is no question of the speaker's meaning when he says close the door. He means for the door to close, to get closed. And the person he is speaking to is his means of closing the door. If the hearer doesn't want to do the speaker's bidding, then some other next-thing may occur: resentment; argument; acquiescence. In this case the speaker's meaning changes not, but the meaning of the exchange is different than it might otherwise have been—if the hearer simply closed the door; in any case, argument or resentment or reluctant acquiescence only happen, and typically they do, because the speaker and hearer made sense to one another in that situation. For any further meaning to become part of the discourse the discourse has to be expanded. If the speaker is a psychoanalyst and the door-closer is his patient then they might expand their own discourse to talk about (to try to make sense of) the resentment occasioned by the command. If there is some observer, the observer may establish or enter some discourse of his own in order to make an analysis of the 'underlying meaning' of the witnessed exchange. Or it may be, as is the case, that some writer may make it all up in order, within his established discourse, in order to employ "metalingual operations with words or syntactic structures [which] permit us to overcome Leonard Bloomfield's forebodings in his endeavors to incorporate meaning into the science of language" [Jakobson 1956]. In any case the meaning is the next-thing. This is why epigraphs establish risks and why doing such anthropological things as ethnographies of speaking is a risky business: taking words out of their situation to make written meanings.)

26. In another work in process, one which has lain in abeyance during the tenure of this current research, I am exploring a theory of mind and self, commensurate with the one expressed herein but in more systematic detail. The title is Homo inabilis. Designed to reflect a true dualism of mind and body in Homo sapiens, a dualism between mind which is social, emergent, non-individual, differentiatable, non-localizable, and body which is individuated organism, species-specific, localizable, existent, the title 'Unable Man', signals a real difference between human behaviour which is a posteriori,
grounded in received notions, understood (and, thence, anterior) meanings, and human behaviour which is postulative and predicative, which seeks to make things and change things and discover. The thesis is that it is those things which we cannot do which are our motivations; that because we are human beings equipped with the capacity to sense alterity, that is is always to the Other that we are driven. The onus on students of human society and culture is, from this, to seek out what the extant alternatives are in any society, in any scene or setting or situation, in order to analyze the behaviour. The distinction is between the analysis of how something came to be (which we can guess at) and how someone is trying to make some other something come into being (which we, as ethnographers can participate in and observe and experience).

27. Bateson opens Chapter IV of Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity, "This chapter is an attempt to make a list of criteria such that if any aggregate of phenomena, any system, satisfies all the criteria listed, I shall unhesitatingly say that the aggregate is a mind and shall expect that, if I am to understand that aggregate, I shall need sorts of explanation different from those which would suffice to explain the characteristics of its smaller parts." The list is,

1. A mind is an aggregate of interacting parts or components.
2. The interaction between parts of mind is triggered by difference, and difference is a nonsubstantial phenomenon not located in space or time; difference is related to negentropy and entropy rather than to energy.
3. Mental process requires collateral energy.
4. Mental process requires circular (or more complex) chains of determination.
5. In mental process, the effects of difference are to be regarded as transforms (i.e., coded versions) of events which preceded them. The rules of such transformation must be comparatively stable (i.e., more stable than the content) but are themselves subject to transformation.
6. The description and classification of these processes of transformation disclose a hierarchy of logical types immanent in the phenomena.

"This list," he wrote, "is the cornerstone of the whole book. The book must stand or fall, not by the particular content of my list, but by the validity of the idea that some structuring of epistemology, evolution, and epigenesis is possible. I propose that the mind-body problem is soluble along lines similar to those here outlined." ("Criteria of Mental Process", pp.91-92).

This is the spirit in which I have paraphrased from numbers 1 and 2, and I concur with the proposition.

28. "non-ordinary reality" is used by Castañeda in The Teachings of Don Juan; see also in A Separate Reality.

29. The quote is from Mind and Nature, p.117. In Chapter 2 of that book, in the section 13 entitled "Logic is a Poor Model of Cause and Effect", Bateson spells out the workings of a simple buzzer, say the circuit of a common doorbell. "The buzzer circuit is so rigged that...

If contact is made at A, then the magnet is activated.
If the magnet is activated, then the contact at A is broken.
If contact at A is broken, then the magnet is inactivated.
If magnet is inactivated, then contact is made.

This sequence is perfectly satisfactory provided it is clearly understood that the if . . . then junctures are causal. But the bad pun that could move the ifs and thens over to the world of logic will create havoc:

If the contact is made, then the contact is broken.
If P, then not P.

The if . . . then of causality contains time, but the if . . . then of logic is timeless. If follows that logic is an incomplete model of causality" (pp.58-9).

Later, in the section in which he considers the paradox of Epimenides (pp.116-7), he writes, "When we ask, "Could Epimenides be telling the truth?" the answer is: "If yes, then no," and "If no, then yes." Norbert Wiener used to point out that if you present the Epimenides paradox to a computer, the answer will come out YES . . . NO . . . YES . . . NO . . . until the computer runs out of energy or encounters some other ceiling. As I noted in Chapter 2, section 16, logic cannot model causal systems, and paradox is generated when time is ignored."

On this matter, see also Anthony Wilden's discussion, prompted by his conversations with Bateson at the Oceanic Institute at Waimanalo (Hawaii) in the nineteen sixties, of the cybernetic "BOTH-AND" (Wilden 1972:217, 222-227).

30. Speaking and Language, p.109. This is apropos his discussion of Carnap and the positivists, and begins "So, against Carnap, I do not think there can be a rule..."

31. But see Geertz's discussion in the Cockfight essay (1973:412-453): "If, to quote Northrop Frye again, we go to see Macbeth to learn what a man feels like after he has gained a kingdom and lost his soul, Balinese go to cockfights to find out what a man, usually composed, aloof, almost obsessively self-absorbed, a kind of moral autocosm, feels like when, attacked, tormented, challenged, insulted, and driven in result to the extremes of fury, he has totally triumphed or been brought totally low." (From p.450 quoting Frye, The Educated Imagination pp.63-4.)


33. Feedforward ("the reciprocal, the necessary condition of what the cybernetics and automation people call 'feedback'") is from I.A. Richards, 'The Secret of "Feedforward"', Saturday Review Feb. 3, 1968, pp.14-17; reprinted in Complementarities pp.246-253 (the quotations are found on p.247). "The point is", Richards writes, "that feedback is a needed prescription or plan for a feedback, to which the actual feedback may or may not conform."

34. Hegel uses 'habit' in a sense retaining inherent creativity; and the stretching of 'habit' to 'habitat'—the striving of a human self to inhabit its environment—can be felt in Borges's Preface to In Praise of Darkness ("...that mysterious habit of mine, Buenos Aires").
35. Poirier holds,

Literary study can thus be made relevant to life not as a mere supplier of images or visions, but as an activity' it can create capacities through exercise with the language of literature that can then be applied to the language of politics and power, the language of daily life. It's simply terribly hard to do this, however—to make this shift of muscularity of mind and spirit from one allegedly elevated mode of expression, where muscles can be most conveniently developed, to another mode of expression both more inaccessible and considered so ordinary, so natural as to be beyond inquiry. And yet in this transfer of activity, and in the reciprocations that would follow from it, is the promise of some genuine interplay between different and multiplying cultural traditions.

This is from his essay, "What Is English Studies, and If You Know What That Is, What Is English Literature?", pp.83-4, which appears in his collection The Performing Self (pp.65-85; the inspiration for the title is Gertrude Stein's question, "What is poetry, and if you know what poetry is, what is prose?", a vein in which each anthropologist must ask, what is ethnography?) Poirier begins this collection in light of the contemporary energy of dis-order and the fear of that energy, which "make the literary and academic issues I shall be discussing inseparable from larger cultural and political ones", and ends it saying that before he makes any recommendations generated by his studies of the intercourse between literary and larger cultural issues, he "would want to investigate the degree to which, despite any claims to higher culture, most men brutishly do not feel the burdens of complicity and brotherhood." He closes,

We must get to know the mystery of our incapacity to care enough even when forced to care more than maybe we ever can or should have been asked to. It is a time not only for pity but, I suspect, for self-pity, for a new anthropology and a new curriculum.

36. See Steiner After Babel, p.222 and subsequent pages, also pp.414-470; see also Derrida "Violence and Metaphysics" (1978:79-153, 314n.36, 316n.47) and Emmanuel Levinas Totality and Infinity (1969) on alterite; also cf. Douglas Hofstadter's (Gödel, Escher, Bach) mention of Steiner on "alterntiy", with a subjunctive slant (one for which it seems to me he has not the warrant he claims) and his discussion of the human penchant for subjunctives (1980:642-3; 633-43 passim).


38. Quoted by Ernest Becker, "Sketch for a Critical History of Anthropology" (1971:99), from Herskovits, Franz Boas
1953:121-122.

39. Bronislaw Malinowski, "Whither Anthropology?", p.212-213, in A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays 1944:211-221. The ellipses replace the sentence "It is still in the fighting stage, engaged in the bellum omnium contra omnes so characteristic of early disciplines."

40. Liam Hudson, p.12 of the Preamble to The Cult of the Fact.

41. Ibid., p.13.

42. My orthography is my own, but I have derived it almost entirely from the orthography of Edward Koiki Mabo. Mabo's orthography is derived from an orthography developed by his mother and other Meriam le who pioneered much of written Meriam mir in the 1930's. The characters are all English letters and comprise a phonetically-derived alphabet of 21 Meriam mir letters [the English letters C F H Q V X are unrepresented, and the Meriam sound /ɛ/ is represented by the marked E: É,é]. Punctuation marks are not systematically stable in written Meriam mir yet. Commonly, punctuation has been marked by periods (full stops) only. Semicolons are never used; colons are coming to be used more frequently as Meriam mir is written more. There are no hyphenated Meriam compound words; and double words, which are usually written hyphenated, are usually nominalizations of adjectival modifiers, such as kebi = little which doubles to kabi-kebi to signify a little bit, or small quantity or number. Exclamation points are rarely used, though lately I have seen them used in the writing (usually reporting) of dialogue. Question marks are not used; they are superfluous to the question-marking word Aka which is the initial word in a question.

43. "Bislama" is the phonetic spelling of the name of the bêche de mer fish as it is pronounced in Torres Strait Creole, and particularly as it is pronounced by older first- and second-generation immigrants to the Torres Strait from the New Hebrides, Solomons, and other Pacific Islands. I do not mean to indicate a native historical linguistics which posits this language as either different from or prior to the modern pidgin or creole. Rather I am indicating that, whatever its name (then or now), a pidgin language is known to have arrived with the boats and crews of the Pacific bêche de mer hunt in the time of contemporary Islanders' grandparents and great-grandparents.

44. Western Torres Strait traditional language is most commonly known in the Western Islands by the specific island origin of its speakers. I have refrained here from choosing a single reference in order to avoid the implication of general acceptability or universality of any such artificially generic term. Western Language is called Aitalaig-ya on Saibai, Badu-ya on Badu, Gomulgau-ya on Mabuiag; and it is known by different names even among native speakers on each of those islands. I learned to refer to it as Gomulgau-ya when I was among Mabuiag Islanders, as Aitalaig-ya among Saibai Islanders, and variously as Western Language, Western langgus [:creole], and the colloquial Yagar-yagar.
45. There may be grounds for suggestions that such words as the pidgin (and subsequently creolized) bas ['boss'] have become Meriam words. While it is the case that the word bas appears in otherwise Meriam mir conversations, it is marked by its known domain of origin as a foreign word. It is not taken in isolation to be a Meriam mir, nor is it declined in speech. Most telling, it does not occur in Meriam mir having to do with matters of import. That is, it is the rare position of bas which is an important position in Meriam tonar. It may matter, in important discussions, that a bas of a particular railway gang or cane-cutting crew is one man rather than another; but it would be of no particular import that his position is that of bas.

46. The exemplary case here may be Torres Strait Pidgin. This creole language is rarely written. There are no Pidgin dictionaries, nor lecturers in Pidgin. The only grounds for interruption in order to correct a creole speaker is awful mispronunciation or factual error. The authority of the interruptor is post facto: if his 'corrected' or 'preferred' word is taken to be more correct or more preferable, then his interruption is authorized. He may be ignored, or his interruption dismissed. Interruptions are rare for other than reasons of fact. And only those with established and known expertise in a subject-area, or familiarity with a specialized vocabulary may 'monitor' creole speech. The easy analytical conjecture to be made—and one which is not belied by any kind of evidence from the mainland scenes—is that the creole mir has no wider and encompassing 'Pidgin-tonar' wherein monitors might be enfranchised.

47. The unvoiced plosive /t/ in Meriam mir is normally more dental than alveolar, closer to an Initial t sound in Irish or French or Russian.

48. Perhaps the most common pronunciation uses an initial combination of /p/ and /f/, much as in the German pfennig. (But cf. the story in the concluding chapter of my near-terminal confusion of these two sounds which are, at times, heard as mutually exclusively distinct.)

49. Kolera tonar = whiteman's culture, but a notion of whiteman which has changed from the Scots and Irishmen and Englishmen and others who first arrived in the Torres Strait to the Australian culture of today. Initially the bache-de-mer and pearling boats arrived with (it is said) entirely black crews of South Sea islanders and a single white man. There were no words for white man, and the word for light skin colour was already in use as a reference to those Torres Strait Islanders who were lighter coloured. The white man who arrived alone on the boat was seen to be always standing in the stern of the boat. Meriam mir for stern is kor, and the single white man was always seen "korem" [lit: sternward] or "korge" [in the stern]. And it is common among modern Meriam le to ascribe to their forefathers a lack of knowledge that white men were human beings. Whether or not that was so at the time of the arrival of these fishing and trading boars, the man in the stern became known as a "korle" [stern man], and later as a characteristic type of man, a white man,
known as "korlé", a term for all whitemen which has come down to the present as kolé.

50. The exception to the customs of social drinking as those of koléra tonar are the habits and practices of the Australian Aborigines known to Torres Strait Islanders, which are seen as very different from those of the kolé.

51. Koléra, as in koléra tonar, signifies a custom or practice of, or belonging to, or from, the kolé. In "kolé drinking tonar" I have used the colloquial English "drinking" to indicate the drinking of alcoholic beverages because this word has no Meriam mir. In this phrase, were 'drinking' a Meriam word, it would be clear that koléra, modifying tonar, must become kolé in order to indicate a type of (what would be in Meriam mir) 'drinkingra tonar'. In contrast, a putative 'drinking kolera tonar' would refer to some yet unknown kolé culture which was wholly centered around the consumption of alcohol.

52. These disputes over my errors in speaking were never more than mildly antagonistic. The principal reason for this was that I, as a near non-speaker, could not be taken to be meaningful. For instance, no one engaged in a dispute over corrections to my errors ever asked me what it was that I had meant. In monitoring my speech they watched that words were said correctly, not whether or not I had said something of reduced meaningfulness: I was not yet authorized to mean things. Later, shortly after being authorized to mean things I said a wrong thing which very nearly meant I had to leave the community (see Note 7, above, and the Conclusion, STORYTIME).

53. Incidentally, until I learned this doctrine of final consequence, I was occasionally at pains to discern which of the proposed corrections of my error was the correct one. Amid, sometimes, four or five correctors, the last one to speak prior to the head-nod of the language monitor had uttered the correct correction, and it took me some time after learning the vocabulary of nods to learn their consequences.

54. There is a sense in which a hierarchy of de jure language monitors exists (or once existed) in the Islands. It is possible for a language monitor's dispute with another speaker, even a dispute which has escalated to confrontation, to be mediated by a de jure monitor who is the peer or superior of the disputing monitor. In exceptional cases it may have been that even the intercession of the superior monitor resulted in confrontation with the speaker, which in turn generated an intercession by a superior monitor. I have no knowledge of such disputes having occurred, though they are logically acceptable (if traumatic).

55. The language monitor may even keep silent when a challenge begins to be made. This is normally due to his desire to disallow very important business to be deferred by requisite talk-adjudication which is, in his opinion, both less important than the business at hand and not involving more than fleeting and incidental errors of speech.
56. A direct inference from this regarding situations in which both Islanders and non-Islanders are participating may be accurately made. For example, the whiteman at an Island event who keeps talking through a post-judgemental silence—even in 'private' dialogue with the person seated next to him—is taken to be at least crude and impolite when it is realized that his whiteness exempts him from being taken to have challenged the language monitor.

57. These silences usually vary from less than a second to as long as 3 or 4 seconds. It is possible, following confrontations over matters of severe import, for the silence between the challenger and the language monitor to be effectively ad infinitum. This rare silence ad infinitum occurs only when the two are still not talking to one another (or to anyone) at the conclusion of the event at which the confrontation occurred. These silences must be conspicuously and explicitly broken, but the breaking of the silence may not happen for several days or even weeks. Such silences, when they occur, are dire and fretful things for everyone, and are taken by others to be unfortunate in their continuance (though not, usually, in their initiation). (See Chapter 6 The License of Silence, next.)

58. It is worth noting, I think, that he may never be ashamed. Shame is a manner of children, and is not a Meriam way. Even if he is privately regretful, he may not be ashamed of himself for his outburst. Nor may he ever mention the challenge except at the risk of invoking the entire context, and consequences, of the transgression. He may never apologize, nor is apology of any sort ever required, not by the monitor nor by the audience of the time. There is no Meriam tonar for the sorry man, nor is there mir for expressing him.

59. The generic term for the leaders of the Torres Strait cults, which went into decline after the arrival of Christian missionaries in the latter half of the nineteenth century, is the same as the generic term for legendary men of prowess or skill or knowledge in particular areas of hunting, fishing, dance, songs: all are referred to as 'educated men'. The term has, then, a holy and sacred connotation in addition to its meaning of skill and demonstrated knowledge, and is not a term used lightly; nor is it heard but rarely on the mainland.

60. Extreme cases of logically-inferrable intent from actions might be those of someone who had been recently beat-up, or knocked down by a car, and who obviously approaches for succour. Cases of logical but less inferable intent might be those of the approach of a uniformed policeman or a wandering drunk. In the latter cases, it is not unreasonable that policemen or drunks approach doorways, although the reasonableness of their specific intentions awaits determination.

61. The case of singing is a special one, for the footsteps outside the building may not be heard until the intruder has entered. The silence which first greets him depends on where he is; i.e. as long as he is unseen and his footsteps therefore disembodied the silence will be immanent. But if his footsteps do not herald his appearance, the silence which greets his entry may be what I call consequent silence.
This pidgin utterance translates 'Why didn't you call out? You made me really frightened!'. The more common pronunciation of the pidgin word for 'fright' (or 'scare', 'fear') is prait \[/praXt/, with optional initial /p/ and heavily plosive final /t/]. This speaker habitually pronounces pidgin words which have existing English initial /f/ according to their English pronunciation.

From Bauman (1974:149), quoting Farnsworth 1663:9; Bauman notes (p.458, note 8): "This text, from I Peter 4.11, was a basic and oft-quoted charter for the Quaker ministry."

Bauman quotes Turford 1807-32-3 and (cf.) Fox 1657:103.

The perceptual Gestalten of the largely academic school of psychology known as Gestaltist, or Gestalt (cf., e.g., Ellis' A Source Book of Gestalt Psychology) have found currency among psychotherapists since the publication of Fritz Perls' theoretical statement in Gestalt Therapy (Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman) in America in 1951 (for later refinements, see Perls' Gestalt Therapy Verbatim [1969] and Fagan and Shepherd, Gestalt Therapy Now [1970]). While there is no strict convention governing the use of the borrowed German word, I use "gestalts" here to distinguish the perceptual-cognitive and affective 'wholes' which are characteristic of awareness in the view of the gestalt therapists who borrowed figure/ground, unfinished situation, and Gestalten from Gestalt psychology. "Awareness is characterized by contact, by sensing, by excitement and by Gestalt formation....Contact as such is possible without awareness, but for awareness contact is indispensable. The crucial question is: with what is one in contact?...Sensing determines the nature of awareness....Excitement...covers the physiological excitation as well as the undifferentiated emotions....Gestalt formation always accompanies awareness. We do not see three isolated points, we make a triangle out of them....Only the completed Gestalt can be organized as an automatically functioning unit (reflex) in the total organism. Any incomplete Gestalt represents an 'unfinished situation' that clamours for attention and interferes with the formation of any novel, vital Gestalt" (Gestalt Therapy, p.15). One of the problems in looking at silence, and at silent (i.e. not-talking and/or not-acting) persons is the analysis of figure/ground where the principal actor, the figure of the analyst, is as silent as the ground of the group. The authors of Gestalt Therapy suggest that "the Gestalt psychologists themselves have not, on the whole, been sufficiently interested in the meaning of the ground"; they not that "in the figure/ground what is included in figure and what in ground does not remain static, but changes in the course of a dynamic development" (p.85). This merging and emerging of figure and ground has an affinity with the form and content of Georg Simmel's formal sociology, from which my developed use of form and content derives: "the category of form and content form one of the most relative and subjective in the entire area of thought. What is form in one respect is content in another; and, upon closer scrutiny, the conceptual antithesis between the two dissolves into a merely gradual [opposition], having a determinateness which is between the general and the specific" (Weingartner 1959:34; quoting Simmel 1911: vol.II, p.309. Cf. also Wolff's The Sociology of Georg Simmel, and Simmel's "The Problem of Sociology" [tr. Wolff]
which appears in Wolff 1959 along with the Weingartner article on form and content. I have, throughout, distinguished figure/ground where personal mental states are informative, though I have not identified them according to their analytical identification as such, and have simply reported the state itself as expressed or inferred. My critical formal caution is that, in analyzing silence, and more so in naming categories of exemplary congruence, I am designating as a figure in my gestalt what is explicitly a ground for Islander actors perceiving the same situation. The critical distinction lies in contact, and in (after Simmel) the content of contact: "Contact, the work that results in assimilation and growth, is the forming of a figure of interest against a ground or context of the organism/environment field" (Gestalt Therapy, p.277; original emphasis). Simply, for example, in my immanent silence the (normal) figure of the Islanders is the action about-to-engage (action which holds the promise of closure of the unfinished gestalt), while my figure is the noiselessness of their readiness against the ground of all Islander silences. [See Perls 1969 for an easily readable discussion of the gestalt therapy ideas of contact (e.g. pp.117-124), figure-ground (e.g. pp.65-67) and closure (e.g. pp.92-94).]

66. An interesting exceptional occurrence is the occasional consequent silence of even an adult Islander in responding to his mother or father, particularly where the mother or father has been a lifelong educator as well as parent. These occasions are never public, and only occur when the aging parent and adult child share each other's best interests and welfare. But they do happen, and may happen to an adult offspring who is in all other situations a significant person whose silence is unlikely to be commanded by others.

67. Prohibition (and proscription) of solicitation has problematic ramifications for the cross-cultural interactions on the mainland which involve Islanders with non-islanders, ramifications which are often remarked by Islanders distressed at their inability to figure out what these non-islanders are trying to do.

68. While I assert that this potential extreme dissociation is present in every such offensive confrontation, I should not like to give the impression that members of consociate Islander groups are ever actually cast out. To my knowledge, no one has been expelled from a given consociation for a very long time (and those who have dissociated themselves, or have been dissociated, from consociations of term-membership have done so invariably upon the mutual consent/dissent of themselves and the group, at least with after-the-fact mutuality if not during the dissociative incident). It is instructive, I think, that the stories in the cultural corpus which exemplify the errors of permanent dissociation are stories which usually conclude with the death of the permanently dissociated at the hands of the senior male members of the group. Given consociate groups (clans, families, villages) are unable (by their givenness) to render a posteriori 'redefinitions' that the transgressor 'wasn't really a member'. The very being of the group is besmirched (at least) by the transgression of one who is still free to announce or claim group affiliation. My analytical guess is that members of given consociate groups who are left free to spread their heresies or to continue their heretical
behaviour risk the very continuance of the group as a serious consociation in the eyes and tales of all Islanders. In one legendary story (see Chapter 7 Meriam to Meriba, next), a sister who fails to contain her indiscreet sexual pecadilloes is solemnly and privately put to death by her brothers. They are acutely sad at the loss of their beloved sister; but their sadness they may live with, while their loss of reality they may not. An unreal life is not a life. When I say that the possibility of death always in the offing is an "analytical guess", my 'analytical' refers to individual situated awareness of potentials. That such stories from an actual corpus are readily invoked is not a guess. Men who discuss transgressions which promise to develop into intolerable habits often do so in terms of fables. And their manner in doing so is invocation rather than evocation. That is, they do not say to one another, in the style of modern Western judicial proceedings, 'Isn't this like the case of the girl in that legend?; What they say is, "Well...you know what happened to So-and-so when her brothers found out..." The onus is clearly on the transgressor, for the prospective death-dealers have no leeway. Which is to say that, while punishment is education, death is eradication.

69. In "Poetry and Abstract Thought" (from The Art of Poetry, tr. Denise Folliot), Paul Veléry wrote,

> I apologize for thus revealing myself to you; but in my opinion it is more useful to speak of what one has experienced than to pretend a knowledge that is entirely impersonal, an observation with no observer. In fact there is no theory that is not a fragment, carefully prepared, of some autobiography.

He closed this essay thus,

> I apologize for having chosen my examples from my own little story: but I could hardly have taken them elsewhere.

70. See Lacan 1957, 1966; and Wilden 1968:309 on Lacan's other as simply "the rest of the system in which the subject is involved"; also Wilden 1968:183. In essence, then, for Lacan, the conscious cognito is supplemented by an unconscious subject who may be the subject saying "I think" or "I am", but never both at once, since the question of the subject's being is posed at the level of the unconscious.

71. Hunter S. Thompson, "Last Tango in Vegas: Fear and Loathing in the Far Room" (Part II), Rolling Stone No.265 (May 18, 1978) pp.35-46. This and the subsequent quotations are from p.46.

72. Or as Popper and Eccles put it in their discussions at the end of The Self and Its Brain, by the time even the least conscious focus enters our awareness it has been interpreted and reinterpreted tens or hundreds or thousands of times by the sensory-brain-mind system. Or as Wilder Penfield put it (1954:297), "It is obvious that nerve impulse is somehow converted into thought and that thought can be converted into nerve impulse. And yet this all throws no light on the nature of that strange conversion" (cf. also Penfield 1974).
73. The suggestion was made by Duncan and Kehl in their "Survey of Torres Strait Islanders resident in Townsville", in Fisk, Duncan and Kehl 1974.

74. Jan-Petter Blom 1969:74. The seminar to which I refer was presented to the Department of Anthropology, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 26 October 1977, entitled "Preparatory research on the Torres Strait Islanders in Townsville: An urbanizing ethnic minority".

75. Rudolph Weingartner 1959:36; and quoting (ibid:37) Simmel, Lebensanschauung. Vier metaphysische Kapitel, 1922:10; "more-life" and "more-than-life" (Mehr-Leben and Mehr-als-Leben) op.cit.:20.

76. Weingartner 1959:53; including quotation of Simmel, Lebensanschauung, p.23.


82. Jules Henry, Culture Against Man, p.279.

83. The reference here is to the collection of representative New Journalists by Tom Wolfe and E.W. Johnson (Wolfe and Johnson, The New Journalism) and the subsequent comments by some of those 'collected' who were piqued at being (1) included at all (2) included with some or all of those 'other journalists' (3) included by Tom Wolfe—Who does he think he is!?—(4) included as members of a journalistic class when their brand of journalism was obviously in a class by itself; see, e.g., Wolfe quoting Jimmy Breslin ("There's no such thing as New Journalism, there's only boutique journalism and real journalism."]) and Hunter S. Thompson ("I wouldn't touch New Journalism with a ten-foot pole. I'm a gonzo journalist."]) and other recruits to his "raggedy battalion" in 1980 interview.


85. Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight" (1973:412-453), pp.416-7, 443-453; "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" (1973:3-30), pp.9-12, 15-16, 18-20. See also, for example, "From the Native's Point of View" (Geertz 1976).

86. The two which come to mind are,

Philosophers are mistaken to quote literary texts as if they provided another line of proof, a special kind of evidence. As a writer, I do not judge that I provide evidence. But I do go through the literary process to produce the text.

and,
On the other hand, though I follow the sense, I am not intent on conveying any truth or message, but just the beginning, middle, and end of a whole literary work. I will strike whatever impedes or detracts from the whole, regardless of the "truth".

These passages are from pages 164 and 238 of Speaking and Language. They point up exactly the problem with proposing, as I do, a genre which uses living language to do ethnography, for it means that such a genre could not be at all counted on to confer some sort of automatic warrant of authenticity on those works adjudged its constituent members. And it would require authenticity to be the province of the reader in his reading and not that of some disciplinary warrant. This is, of course, all that "truth" ever consists in, and ought to prove no great burden to ethnographers who are not constrained by the dogmatic strictures of the anthropological bureaucrats who may well cut them off at their purse strings. And in any case ethnographers ought to be aware of the arbitrary distinction made between writers and social scientists (again the words are Goodman's).

Like everybody else, a writer has a day-to-day life; but unlike any scientist or almost any professional, a writer's daily life and course of life are relevant to his special work and may at any time appear in his sentences. He may say, "My experience has been that ..." or "For instance, yesterday I had a quarrel with my daughter and ...". I can think of only pastoral theology and psychotherapy as professions where this would not be out of place, since they deal face-to-face with their clients and speak ad hominem. If a social scientist uses such sentences, he is at once identified as a writer (and dismissed). (Speaking and Language, p.159)

Dismissed? Perhaps. Think of how common it is to hear how of Clifford Geertz has attained his position of respect in his discipline in spite of his skillful and engaging writing? (as if the reality is the crats who man the bureaus and the craftsmen are expectably notorious.) Note the opening sentence to the Balinese Cockfight essay (cited in Note 3 above): "Early in April of 1958, my wife and I arrived, malarial and diffident, in a Balinese village we intended, as anthropologists, to study." In one sentence we have Goodman's "daily life and course of life", people "face-to-face" who "speak ad hominem"; yet how long did (now Professor) Geertz labour under threat of dismissal? (He is still being dismissed by those who would not read him.)


88. The references, some of which I have made elsewhere already, are to: the colloquial name for the clothing worn by sisters of Holy Orders ("nun's habit"); B.W.F. Hegel who wrote of "habit as dexterity" in his Phenomenology of Mind (a use which I was again reminded of rereading Pierre Bourdieu's Outline of a Theory of Practice [see Bourdieu 1977;218n47]): Jorge Luis Borges' Preface to In Praise of Darkness [Elogio de la sombra] which
begins, "Without set purpose as the beginning, I have devoted by
now long life to literature; to teaching' to idleness; to the
quiet adventures of conversation' to philology, of which I know
but little; to that mysterious habit of mine, Buenos Aires..."
(consider, too, how much less easily led into the ignorance of
uncritical reading we are by the original version of that same
last phrase: ...al misterioso hábito de Buenos Aires..., with
its promise of 'habitat', even 'habitation'); the hinge of
Bourdieu's Outline which is the habitus, "systems of durable,
transposable dispositions (having the feel of "a way of being, a
habitual state" as well as "a predisposition, tendency,
propensity, or inclination"—1977:214n1)...predisposed to
function as...principles of the generation and structuring of
practices and representations" (1977:72).

89. The reference is to William Blake,
The errors of the wise man make your rule
Rather than the perfections of a fool.

90. Anthony Burgess, Language Made Plain, p.27.

91. Brillig is a word in Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky", a nonsense
word but backed by "Carroll's disturbing assertion that
nonsense languages, however esoteric, would be totally
understandable to 'a perfectly balanced mind'" (see George
Steiner, After Babel, pp.187ff). Burgess gives arpworthy and
focklepoff as invented family words; the words and the claim are
quoted from p.27 of Language Made Plain.

92. Burgess, "Words", Chapter 8 of Language Made Plain, p.105.

93. See the epigraph to Chapter 6 The License of Silence, above.
The quotation from Philostratus appears on p.256 of Norman 0.
Brown's Love's Body, for which his citation reads, "Cf.
Philostratus, Life of Apollonius, 1,1,19".

94. Ferdinand de Saussure, Cours, p.120 of the Baskin translation
(1959).

95. This is not meant to be unduly harsh on my colleagues who are
ethnographers of speaking, and certainly not meant to judge
them in the light of a hindsight made possible only through
their efforts. The spirit of my criticism is in the sense of
'true determinants' in this quotation from Dell Hymes'
contribution to the 1969 Conference on Social Anthropology and
Language at which he was a guest of the ASA:

...sociolinguistics has a contribution to make to
what Wright Mills called the task of sociological
imagination, that of enabling men to understand their
lives adequately in terms of the true determinants of
them; here the perspective provided by ethnographic
and comparative studies, although of little
engineering pertinence, may be of great intellectual
importance. We have yet to gain the cross-cultural
perspective on speech that we have on child-rearing,
sex, religion. Both in linguistics and in social
science, the roles of language in human life usually
are assumed or asserted. Research that seeks the
actual ranges and kinds of meaning that speaking and
languages have, and the conditions that support or
frustrate each, has hardly begun. ("Sociolinguistics
and the Ethnography of Speaking", in the volume of
the Conference, ASA 10, edited by Edwin Ardener,
pp.47-93; the quotation is found on p.49, and Hymes
refers there to Lefebre (1966, esp.Ch.8), Barthes'
notion of l'écriture (Barthes 1953), Bernstein
(1964), and Hymes (1961, 1966), among others.)

My contention is that such "true determinants" of which
Hymes here speaks, and to which he refers us in the work of
others, are to be found in the idiom, for it is in the context of
the idiom that such things as who may speak and when and to whom
are clear, and it is the rules of the idiom which command the
uses of both language and silence. It is no longer the case that
"research that seeks the actual ranges and kinds of meaning that
speaking and languages have" has "hardly begun". It is well
underway. What has hardly begun, and what the present work
seeks to be part of a beginning of, is research which seeks the
range of meaning, speaking and language, but research wherein
"range" is the range of Home, home on the range, or of the
shooting range, and not tied to some map of scale or graph of
spectrum. The 'range of meaning' is not at all an open range.
It is a place where alterinity is constrained (which is to say,where language is restrained), where exegesis is banned, and
where interpretation is severely restricted. It is a place
where people can be silent and not say what they mean if they
wish, but it is the place where they must mean what they say. It
is the place in the Rocky Mountain West where "What do you
mean?" means What did you say? and "What did you say?" means Do
you wanta fight? It is the 'place' on the Torres Strait Mainland
where a look can mean hit me, hit him, or get out and a spoken
answer is of no account. In the Rockies, such a 'place' is found
on school playgrounds, and in shitkicker bars, and in Elks
Clubs; on the Torres Strait Mainland it is in Aboriginal and
Islander pubs, on the steps of the railway station, and in
formal meetings. In either case, the place becomes such a
'place' only when a community of idiom is assembled. You can
bet on there being a community of Western idiom assembled in any
Rocky Mountain shitkicker bar, just as you can bet on a
community of Islandmen assembled in an Islander pub in
Townsville. But even such sure bets are only bets, and you will
have to go there, in either case, to make sure. This, for me, is
the especial brief of the ethnographer: that he goes there and
makes sure.

96. By 'back in the direction of community' I mean back toward the
work of such as Redfield, Dorothy Lee, Ruth Benedict, Hortense
Powdermaker, Mauss, Durkheim, Weber—writers whom I read as
having great concern for the constitution of human communities.
And while this is a general, implicit tack, my use of "context
of situation" is explicit and meant to be specific. In a
contribution to the same ASA Conference as was Hymes's above
(see Note 13), R.H. Robins sketches the "context of situation"
of Malinowski, later taken up by the first British professor of
linguistics, J.R. Firth, as it "became the basis of a theory of
meaning and a significant part of a theory of language during a
period of the development of general linguistics in Great
Britain...during the late 1930s and during the first decade or
so after the war", losing some of its interest after Firth's
death in 1960 and during the "exciting turmoil" which
linguistic analysis and description was thrown into by
Chomsky's *Syntactic Structure* (1957) (Robins 1971:33-46, p.35). He lists Malinowski's essential points as he sees them (I shall excerpt, briefly, from his six points [pp.35-6]), points which Firth took up and built "into the centre of his theoretical approach to language" (p.36):

1. language as the vocal communication of thought was, as a definition, quite valueless...
2. Language was a 'mode of activity', like other socially co-operative activities...
3. Utterances were produced and understood not as self-contained events, but strictly within a shared context of situation, all that was relevant in the personal, cultural, historical, and physical setting in which the utterances were spoken and heard.
4. The meanings and uses of linguistic forms, words, and sentences, were acquired and understood from their occurrences in such contexts... The meaning relation should not be thought of as a dyadic one between a word and its referent, but...between the word in its sentence and the context of its occurrence.
5. [Consequently], the meanings of words and sentences are not universals that happen to be differently labelled in different languages... Translation is possible only in the unification of the cultural context...
6. The word was not the primary meaningful unit. This was the sentence. Sentences were what was uttered and understood, and word meanings were distillations or abstractions from the meanings, the contextual functions, of sentences...

Robins mentions a "penetrating and revealing application" by T.F. Mitchell (1957), but notes that such studies of context of situation are rare, not surprisingly in light of the criticisms of J.B. Carroll (1953), Lyons (in Bazell et al. 1966), and especially Langendoen ("who," Robins says on p.44, "chides Firth and those following up his ideas with making context of situation 'a convenient dumping ground for people's knowledge about the world, their own culture, etc.'" [Langendoen 1968:50]). Robins notes an "unpublished but circulated 'working paper'" in which Langendoen is more sympathetic, but in which, according to Robins (and this is Robins criticizing a man who he finds "one of the ablest and most interesting" of the critics of context of situation), "he still fails to come to grips with the question of what shall and shall not properly be held to fall with that term 'meaning' in an adequate explanation of our lexical knowledge of our native language" (p.44). In summary, Robins says that the Malinowski and Firth theory of context of situation brought linguists' attention to the study of meaning ("hitherto this topic had been rather left to the philosophers"), and he concludes that, "at least until it is replaced by something more effective, has something of indispensable value for both linguists and ethnographers."

97. The reference is to Ernest Gellner's "The Alchemists of Sociology" (1959) in which he wrote, "It is perhaps no accident that the most striking work on contemporary America has come from one who is not an academic social scientist at all, but a journalist." Gellner refers to W.H. Whyte, and to the "eyebrows raised among the pukka scientific sociologists". More recently, more in keeping with my own proclivities (but keeping
still to America), we may note the raised eyebrows at the inclusion of Hunter Thompson and Tom Wolfe (and Robert Pirsig's motorcycle) in academic anthropological curricula, evidence that anthropologists go wherever the ethnographies are found, whether or not they are found in ethnography.

98. Michael Young's new book, Sculptures of Los, which I have been privileged to read in MS., is just one such attempt to distinguish the author's own interpretive idiom while owning up to the very real literary fact that the written work is his version of the lives, and myths, and people-living-those-myths, a fact not lost on the subjects of the work (many of whom appeared earlier in Young's Fighting with Food) who, Dr Young tells me, can't wait to see their 'Bible' in print. The point is that even the na"ive writer who presumes to put his 'interpretation' of some people or other on the anthropological page will find the discerning reader shall take it only to be a version, grist for that reader's own interpretive mill. (See, on this point, Anthony Wilden's comments on Lacan's having given us a new reading of Freud, rendering an interpretive reading of what Freud thought was interpretation but which turns out to be, in fact, versions of patients lives accompanied by what bits of clues to Freud's own stance the reader can glean. [Wilden 1968:310; passim]. Better, then, for the reader to have the attention of a Michael Young or other mature writer for whom the point of the literary process is in the reading and who knows the task of the writer to be the putting of the best and most informed version he is capable and enough clues to why this is his version (who he is to have made such a version; how it is he sees in order that what he sees looks like this) to enable the reader to 'factor him out' of the account as he makes his own reading.

99. See as a prime example Jules Henry, Culture Against Man, pp.4, 5-8, 45-99.

100. On biology I am thinking particularly of Lewis Thomas, whose biological essays won the National Book Award (The Lives of a Cell). But the problem of genre is found not only in the relatively unsuspected winning of a national award for writing by a biologist, but in what to call some of what writers themselves write. Tom Wolfe, a journalist who has published four books and three collections of essays was recently awarded the Harold D. Vursell Memorial Award for writing in book form, as though some members of the American Academy of Arts and Letters just couldn't bring themselves to say he wrote books.

101. There is, too, a question of genre raised by the notion of 'oral literature'. I do not mean to ignore this possible contradiction of my relegation of genre to writing. But I am not at all comfortable with the label 'oral literature', and suspect that it is another of those ubiquitous uncritical retroglosses, from modern literate culture back onto the primitives, so often perpetrated by those whose vested interest is in categorization for manipulation and not in the struggle for getting inside these oral genres and seeing if they are what literatures are, and must therefore be called 'literature'—because, say, someone were to discover some community where there existed two modes of hearing, one like listening and the other, a rare one certainly and not yet known, like 'reading'.
102. This is one of those delightful things of which Pierre Bourdieu says 'that goes without saying because it came without saying' except in this case, as is the case for so much spoken idiom, the saying comes only with its saying and it is the meaning which goes without saying, often the derivation never coming at all and with no adverse effect whatsoever on the speakers who use it to mean 'the whole thing'.

103. The clearest statement of this problem of attending to words in order to point up why we do not attend to them too closely when we want them to do their work is Paul Valéry's in his "Poetry and Abstract Thought" (pp.52-51 of Vol.7, The Art of Poetry, of The Collected Works of Paul Valéry):

Allow me to add to these preliminary considerations one last remark and one illustration. Here is the remark: you have surely noticed the curious fact that a certain word, which is perfectly clear when you hear or use it in everyday speech, and which presents no difficulty when caught up in the rapidity of an ordinary sentence, becomes mysteriously cumbersome, offers a strange resistance, defeats all efforts at definition, the moment you withdraw it from circulation for separate study and try to find its meaning after taking away its temporary function. It is almost comic to inquire the exact meaning of a term that one uses constantly with complete satisfaction. For example: I stop the word Time in its flight. This word utterly limpid, precise, honest, and faithful in its service as long as it was part of a remark and was uttered by someone who wished to say something. But here it is, isolated, caught on the wing. It takes its revenge. It makes us believe that it has more meanings than uses. It was only a means, and it has become an end, the object of a terrible philosophical desire. It turns into an enigma, an abyss, a torment of thought....

It is the same with the word Life and all the rest. (tr. Denise Folliot)

104. One of the omissions among the threads of the warp and weft of Torres Strait culture—and a glaring one to Jeremy Beckett and others with first-hand knowledge of Islanders—with which I have elucidated this ethnological presentation is that of religion (cf. Beckett n.d. for a well-wrought picture of Torres Strait religious politics). Religion is not included among the threads of education, talk-without-curves, islandtaim, and Torres Strait Pidgin simply because in respect of Islander religion on the mainland I don't know that I know what's going on. Sometimes I do; sometimes I think I do; and sometimes I know exactly that I do not. Were the present work an ethnography, I would argue for the legitimacy of my presenting just such occasional ignorance. Since it has been about ethnography, I have eschewed exemplifications which would necessarily have been complicated by explications of ignorance. (I may add, here, however, that while I may well anticipate an obligation as a member of the anthropological community of discourse to respond to those who would argue that the present ethnological
presentation is mortally flawed by my inattention to Torres Strait religions in their weird and glorious detail, I feel no obligation to pretend to knowledge I do not in fact have simply in order to 'round out' some sort of picture of society with observations of religious behaviour de rigeur: Were I to do so the argument for attention to what the ethnographer knows he knows upon which the entire argument for the primacy of idiom and the exemplary stories permitted therein would be compromised.

105. J.P. Stern, Lichtenberg: A Doctrine of Scattered Occasions, pp.191 and 189, respectively. Stern's efforts to define the aphorism within which Lichtenberg worked are to find the aphorism a "full genre", much the same as I am proposing to find ethnography:

A "full genre" I take to be a kind of writing each manifestation of which is distinct and self-contained, and displays qualities and inherent forces recognizably different from those of other kinds, and not found elsewhere. (p.190)

Stern acknowledges the problem of describing a genre, "the nature of which is to be determined by the result of the description"—as Lichtenberg, his study, put it, "founding the thing to be examined upon the unexamined"—and refers to Michael Oakeshott's demonstration of the continuity between 'description' and 'definition' (Oakeshott 1933, esp. Ch.IV), and cites Dilthey:

The coherent whole of a work is to be grasped from single words and their connections, and yet a full understanding of the single presupposes an understanding of the whole. This circle...occurs again in the relation obtaining between the single work and the literary genre to which it belongs." (Wilhelm Dilthey [Die Entstehung der Hermeneutik, Schriften, V, 330] quoted in K. Vißtor, "Probleme der literarischen Gattungsgeschichte" in Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte, IV [Halle, 1931], 438.)

It seems to me, however, that just such a hermeneutic circle operates on any of the (as Peirce called them) retroductive operations by which men come to their understandings, not least on the ethnographic operation of coming to terms with another society.


I have drawn from the well of language nary a thought which I do not have and which I could not put into words.

The printer put: ". . . which I could not express in words." On the contrary—in fact: Many a thought which I do not have and which I could not put into words I have expressed in words.

And, too, this puts me in mind of Liam Hudson's "all those messages that lie beyond the literal meaning of our utterance...a hidden stockpile of images, metaphors and
"echoes", and Paul Goodman saying he has "that kind of personality that first says and then initiates what it wants...I tentatively say 'I love you' and find that I love you. Or very often I have said what seems to be to be a bluff, beyond what I know or want, and it proves to be after all what I mean."

107. Stern, J.P., "A Literary Definition of the Aphorism", pp.189-226 of Stern op.cit.; the quotations are from pp.191-192, with original emphasis.

108. The reference here are to being 'between' Roland Barthes (or at least the Roland Barthes of the Preface to Mythologies [1957 edition]) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Barthes wrote,

What I mean is that I cannot countenance the traditional belief which postulates a natural dichotomy between the objectivity of the scientist and the subjectivity of the writer, as if the former were endowed with a 'freedom' and the latter with a 'vocation' equally suitable for spiriting away or sublimating the actual limitations of their situation. What I claim is to live to the full the contradiction of my time, which may well make sarcasm the condition of truth.

The other 'pole' is Rousseau, as in Lettres Écrites de la Montagne (1964:686), in the version used by Roberto Unger to introduce the Theory of the Self (Ch.5 of Unger 1975; p.192):

Silence your scorn, reader, if at times in this as in other parts of the essay I abandon the heavy-handed though frivolous sobriety we have come to expect in philosophic argument. Remember that all men, no matter how modest their contributions, are entitled to the answer Rousseau gave to the detractors of his enthusiasm: When Archimedes ran naked through the streets of Syracuse to announce his findings, what he said was no less true because of the way it was communicated.

109. Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation", in Against Interpretation, NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1965. On the distinction between what a work is and what it is about let me offer, apropos of my own polemical restriction of ethnology, Sontag's comment on art made "manageable, conformable" by interpretation:

But it should be noted that interpretation is not simply the compliment that mediocrity pays to genius. It is, indeed, the modern way of understanding something, and is applied to works of every quality. Thus, in the notes that Elia Kazan published on his production of A Streetcar Named Desire, it becomes clear that, in order to direct the play, Kazan had to discover that Stanley Kowalski represented the sensual and vengeful barbarism that was engulfing our culture, while Blanche Du Bois was Western civilization, poetry, delicate apparel, dim lighting, refined feelings and all, though a little worse for wear to be sure. Tennessee Williams' forceful psychological melodrama now became intelligible: it was about something, about the
decline of Western civilization. Apparently, were it
to go on being a play about a handsome brute named
Stanley Kowalski and a faded mangy belle named
Blanche Du Bois, it would not be manageable.

110. A.D. Hope, "D.H. Lawrence's Kangaroo: how it looks to an
Australian", in W.S. Ramson, ed., The Australian Experience,
The subsequent list of Lawrence's errors is from p.166. Apropos
the blue-bottle 'octopus', Hope quotes Lawrence's description,
which he says "is nearly all wrong as information but it is
magical as a vivid impression:

The sea had thrown up, all along the surf-line, queer
glittery creatures...[Hope continues the quotation
for several lines, concluding...] They must have been
some sort of little octopus, with the bright glass
bladder, big as smallish narrow pears, with a blue
frill along the top to float them, and the strings to
feel with—and perhaps the long string to anchor by.
Who knows?

Who knows, indeed? He could have asked the next fisherman he
met..."(p.169).

The quotations are from p.14 and p.148, both from A Wizard of
Earthsea, Book I of the trilogy. On this question of
'tamiliarization' and 'foreignization', cf. Robbe-Grillet
(1963) on the literary culpability of "anthropomorphic
analogies" which 'charge objects with flagrant human content'.

112. Lao-tsu taught,

Look at the village as village;
Look at the nation as nation;
Look at the universe as universe.

How do I know the universe is like this?
By looking!

(Tao te ching, ch.54;
tr. Gia-fu Feng)

J.P. Stern, in his definition of the aphorism, recognized
"the premise of any such definition is the conviction that the
categories of literature are not empty names signifying
nothing, but meaningful designations of distinct kinds of
literary expression: and hence also representations of distinct
ways of responding to the world... Granted the premise that
'literature' is 'divided into' distinct 'kinds', as against
'the confusion of kinds which is the inelegance of letters and
the stultification of values'," he wrote (quoting Henry James'
Introduction to The Awkward Age [1910]), "the respectable
pedigree of these designations in the poetics of two thousand
years, as well as their kinship with the 'humors' and
'archetypes' in Western thought, will have to serve here
instead of a deductive proof" (op.cit.:189-190, 349n93). Stern's problem, after Lao-tsu, is that while the aphorism is
certainly there, we cannot 'Look at the aphorism as aphorism'
until after Stern, in the same way that the present work claims
in a spirit of reluctant audacity that we cannot 'Look at the
idiom as idiom' until after we see what an idiom is. And there
is no reason to go looking unless other things don't work. Lao-tsu said the Tao that can be said is not the eternal Tao. And in the same way any aphorism of Lichtenberg's or Bradley's or whoever's that Stern gives us, he can only give us as aphorism: it cannot be an aphorism when Stern gives us it any more than can Lao-tsu's chapters be the eternal Tao, any more than can my instances of Islander idiom as idiom be the Island idiom. But the aphorisms Stern gives us can become aphorisms in reading, just as the Tao te ching becomes the Tao in doing, just as the Island idiom comes to life from time to time when the reader imagines the situations I describe and the context is the idiom. Otherwise we must admit the great Tao to be sayable in a few piddly verses, aphorisms to be any old bit of 'short, pithy prose', and idiom to be partible into language, situation, 'paralinguistics', and so on. In fact, it is quite the contrary: Having recognized, slowly, and with much effort over time, these analytically distinguishable bits of human's speaking, it turns out that they only make sense as sense-making action because there is a communicative milieu in which we grow up learning when to use 'language', when to use 'paralinguistics', when to use silence, (even when to use somebody else to do our talking or signaling for us). This is the milieu I have come to call idiom. Once said it is no longer idiom; henceforth it can be read by anybody as merely a name in English for what others have called other things. But this is the risk of language, to be misread. And it is more than offset by the capacity of language for alternity, for releasing us from eternal bounded actuality.

113. Having made much, perhaps overmuch, of genre in proposing how we might, as writers and readers, make the most of alternity in describing other cultures, let me defend myself by mention of another genre or two in which the problem of situated communication outside of what we understand the governance of language normally to be is dealt with.

The Zen koan is a genre which, when read by most Westerners, may be easily mistaken for, say, Oriental aphorism: it is short, pithy (we assume), and prose (rarely does versification make it through the translations). As we learn to read koans, however, we begin to understand something of the Zen idiom. That is, we learn that koans are meant to be answered (nothing at all like aphorisms. Reading further (to wit: getting practised readings), we understand that some koans may not be answered by words; some may be answered by any words at all; some may be answered by words and gestures (some of these by any words and one of several gestures and some by any gesture with a few chosen words); and some, in order to be answered, must not be answered. The koan is thus a genre in which there is a theory of language. For instance, in the koan on What Will You Call It? (one of The One Hundred and Forty-Four Koans, tr. Yoel Hoffman [1977]), Master Isan said, 'When I die, I will be transformed into a male buffalo at the house of the parishioner at the foot of the mountain. On the buffalo's lower left side will be written the five words, "This is the monk Isan." If you call it "Isan", it's a buffalo. If you call it "buffalo", it's Isan. Well then, what will you call it?'

We might say that this is often the way language turns up in idiom (or, when a community of idiom is denied, how language is often used to work double binds on subordinate interlocutors). Lewis Carroll has Alice say to Humpty Dumpty,
"I don't know what you mean by 'glory'."
Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. "Of course you don't—till I tell you. I meant 'there's a nice knock-down argument for you!'"
"But 'glory' doesn't mean 'a nice knock-down argument'," Alice objected.
"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."
"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."

(Of course, this is so in 'language', and is even comprehensible in the strange situation of Carroll's in which Alice plays ethnographer...but as ethnographers are, Alice is excused from much of the governance of the idiom. In particular, she is obviously freed here from the rules of who may command the rhetoric, of who may say what 'the question is' in the idiom.)

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master—that's all."

In the koan, Kyōzan is presenting the koan and, in doing so, telling the tale of Isan. The koan ends, "Here Kyōzan stepped out, bowed, and walked away." The answer, then, must be an answer to the master (all koans exist for teaching pupils) and not, as is sometimes the case, an answer as if to the Master telling the tale within the koan (Kyōzan, but he has left the tale).

ANSWER
'My name is so-and-so,' the pupil says, giving his own name.
(The pupil then quotes a Zen scripture on the many different names for Confucius.)

Whether you say Köshi or Kyūchūji, it's still Confucius.

And, as long as we are in Zen idiom, not only are Köshi and Kyūchūji the 'same', but also are Isan and the buffalo not the same.

Another genre, one even more easily bent to my own design here, is that of the "Subtleties" of Mulla Nasrudin, the mythical Sufi Master whose stories (the so-called 'subtleties': see Idries Shah 1964) are also meant as teachings, not so much through practice in the actions pursuant to them but more as 'lights' with which to see through the scales ordinary perceptions cover our eyes with. (Some of these, too, are like aphorisms, or even like koans, such as the "Trust in Allah; but tie your camel first", which first came to me in a version attributed to Oliver Cromwell, a little-known Sufi: "Trust in the Lord; but keep your powder dry"). One of the old Sufi tales pictures a man so in need of a donkey (I forget exactly why) that he goes to great lengths to search one out, even to the extent of going to a foreign country and working himself half to death in order to save the money to buy an ass in order to get to donkey country... The punch line is about the stupidity of
riding a donkey in search of a donkey. This is why we must not 'ride' into a foreign community on the back of language in order to study language: If we do this, language is all we will get—the tertium quid, an 'other thing' in respect both of us and our informants—and never the wherewithall to know when to use language, and which one to use, and to whom, and how...in short: never to know the idiom. Better to go in with nothing, for then, in order to learn how to communicate, we will have to learn the idiom.

114. Such questions for consideration in respect of such universality ("beyond ethnographic solipsism", as Edwin Ardener put it [1971:lxvii]) as come easily to mind have to do with, say, upper and middle class school-society children who grow up with only an adult language in which they are prohibitively incompetent and no childhood idiom with which to say their say; adult immigrants who never get exposed to the earthy, no-holds-barred situations by which children learn the rules of the idiom, and so live either where one word has to fit all categories (my migrant Middle European neighbour uses "friend" when he means everyone from acquaintances to workmates to amigos to colleagues to buddies) or doomed to knowing the choosing without the choices, like an old thesaurus; persons inculcated into a restricted idiom whereby words are invested with an erroneous concreteness and double-binds or other neuroses develop.

115. Michael Oakeshott wrote in respect of one of his philosophical cornerstones—'habits of affection and conduct'—"We acquire habits of conduct, not by constructing a way of living upon rules or percepts learned by heart and subsequently practised, but by living with people who habitually behave in a certain manner: we acquire habits of conduct in the same way as we acquire our native language." (Oakeshott 1933; cf. Himmelfarb 1975)."
Acknowledgements

Edward Koiki Mabo, Neta, and family, without whom I would be no one, my work nothing.

Dr Nicolas Peterson of the Department of Prehistory and Anthropology, A.N.U., who helped me to turn a chance meeting in Darwin into a place in his department as a Ph.D. student, and continued to help through the research and writing as my supervisor.

Douglas Lewis, anthropologist and fellow epistemologist, whose companionship did much to ease the 'threat of chaos' I mentioned in Chapter 1; and to he and Marian Obenchain who opened their house to Cherie and me in the time when thought itself was difficult.

Michael Young, the anthropological writer, who has kept me in audience and by his reading keeps present the value of bringing Others to life in our fine English tongue.

Basil Sansom, friend, confidant, Professor, teacher, whose untiring interest and affection is the sustenance for tackling the hard questions of anthropology, and whose committed criticism makes the tackling constantly worthwhile.

John Larocque, for his implementation of ARL STENO text-processing program with which this work was produced, and for the Cromwell Bibliography System custom-designed to produce the bibliography, and for general help and technical advice regarding the programs and the DEC-10 which did the work.

Ann Harley and Max Alexander, friends and eager readers, who kept for us a quiet and loving center; and Gubby, so long a part of us, who did everything to get us started.

...And Dianne Sansom, who first suggested, so long ago now, that I go up there and see what those Islanders are about, and whose interest and affection and hospitality nurtured us through it all.

To each of these people, thank you. And to Cherie, my wife, who kept us going when part of me was so far away, and waited for me to return.

And my gratitude to the Members of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, and to its Principal, Dr Peter Ucko, for the personal interest and support as well as for the grants which assisted my principal research in 1977-78, met fieldwork emergencies in 1979, and wholly funded a return visit in 1980. And to Bill Ramson, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, A.N.U., whose personal concern brought an emergency grant which enabled me to return from my last fieldwork.
It is fitting that I close with especial acknowledgement of my Editor, Cherie W. Cromwell, without whose skill and effort none of this could have been the same and little of it possible at all. Before she became my editor she was a teacher of young Islander children at Australia's first black community school. Before that she worked in gainful employment, contributing most of her salary to the costs of sustaining long and expensive urban field research.

She has become a gifted text-processing editor. To complete the present work, she has taught her computer to speak Torres Strait Pidgin and Meriam mir. We have been able to design everything from the spacing between lines to the length of each dash. As a writer who depends so much on the quality of his own text in order to explore the very nature of text itself, I am fortunate to have had Cherie Cromwell as my editor.

We have collaborated many times in the past, both in her work and in mine. This time it has been my very great privilege.
Bibliography


Cavell, Stanley 1969. *Must We Mean What We Say?*, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons.


Haddon, A.C. 1901-35. Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits, vol.I-VI, Cambridge,


Hoffmann, Yoel 1977. The Sound of the One Hand, St. Albans: Paladin.


Oakeshott, Michael 1933. Experience and Its Modes, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.


Perls, Frederick S. 1969. In and Out the Garbage Pail, Moab UT: Real People Press.


Simmel, Georg 1922. Lebensanschauung. Vier metaphysische Kapitel, Munich and Berlin: Duncker und Humblot.


Young, Michael n.d. Sculptures of Los, MS.
Index

Abduction 45, 46, 272, 316
Alternity 19, 342
Archimedes 340
Ardener, Edwin 335, 344
Ashby, Hal 269
Ashley Montagu, M.F. 52
Austin, J.L. 122, 296, 297
Authority
  language 151
  of genre 317
  of listening 161
  of speech 145
Ayer, A.J. 42
Bally, Charles 41, 273, 319, 333
Bar-Hillel, Y. 136
Barthea, Roland 335, 340
Bass, Alan 319
Basso, Keith 198
 Bateson, Gregory 100, 132, 281
Bauman, Richard 194
Becker, Ernest 22, 76, 324
Beckett, Jeremy 9, 61, 243, 315, 338
Benedict, Ruth 335
Berger, Peter
  and Berger and Kellner 111
  and Luckmann 111, 124, 235
Berkeley, George 58
Bernstein, Basil 335
Birdwhistell, Ray 85
Blake, William 308, 316, 320
Blom, Jan-Petter 251, 332
Bloomfield, Leonard 321
Boas, Franz 85, 306
Borges, Jorge Luis 14, 50, 55, 84, 273, 318, 320, 323, 333
Bourdieu, Pierre 41, 62, 273, 316, 319, 333, 337
Breslin, Jimmy 332
Brown, Norman 0, 273, 317, 334
Buber, Martin 245
Buchler, Justus 316
Burgess, Anthony 16, 276, 281, 334
Butler, Samuel 316
Carnap, Rudolf 320, 323
Carroll, J.B. 336
Carroll, Lewis 334, 342
Castaneda, Carlos 76, 322
Cayton, William 263
Cherry, Edmund 318
Chomsky, Noam 77, 335
Clay, Cassius 232, 262, 263
Closure 36
Collingwood, R.G. 316
'Coming of the Light' 97
Community
  of context 235
Gass, William 259
Geach, P. 42
Geertz, Clifford 2, 44, 72, 79, 136, 259, 272, 332
Gellner, Ernest 2, 66, 336

Genre
absence of ethnographic 269
aphorism 302, 340
as reading 74, 269
conversations and discourses 72
koan 342
literary 71
New Journalism 269, 332
pornography 69

Gestalt psychology
and form and content 329
and silence 330

Ghosts 92, 119, 184
Goffman, Erving 112, 123, 128, 136
Goodman, Paul 17, 71, 78, 83, 271, 320, 332, 339
Grice, H.P. 39, 318
Gusdorf, Georges 22

Habit 80, 323
Hacking, Ian 36, 131, 318, 320
Haddon, A.C. 243
Hall, E.T. 88
Hallowell, A.I. 88
Hegel 137, 273, 323, 333
Heidegger 137, 137
Heinlein, Robert 292
Henry, Jules 25, 318, 337
Himmelfarb, Gertrude 344
Hoffman, Yoel 342
Hofstadter, Douglas 324
Hope, A.D. 307, 341
Hudson, Liam 42, 86, 319, 325, 339
Humboldt, Wilhelm von 270
Husserl 316, 317
Hymes, Dell 296

Idiom
and metaphor 10
and sociolinguistics 335
and style 86
anthropological 66
anthropology of 274, 294
collocations (Tyler) 77
domain of the 'unsaid' 281
ethnographer's 274
ethnography as capture of 304
legalistic (and ethnography) 292
ture to 257
Zen 342

Idriess, Ion 93

Imagination
and knowledge 34
educated (Frye) 323
imaginary societies 56
Needham on 59
sociological (Wright Mills) 334
Interpretation 79  
Interpretations 5, 16  
Irby, James 58  
Isbell, Billie Jean 67  
'Islander public' 45  
Jakobson, Roman 132, 321  
James, Henry 341  
Johnson, E.W. (And Wolfe) 332  
Joyce, James 13, 51  
Kangaroo (Lawrence) 307  
Kant 53  
Kantorowicz, Gertrude 137  
Kapferer, Bruce 138  
Kaplan and Manners 138  
Kazan, Elia 340  
Kearney, George 9  
Kluckhohn, Clyde 88  
Korzybski 76  
Kroeber, A.L. 274, 317  
Kuhn, Thomas 83, 324  
Lacan, Jacques 246, 258, 331, 332  
Langendoen, D.T. 320, 336  
Language  
and conduct (Oakeshott) 344  
and difference 282  
idiolect 271  
scientific 255, 260  
Lao-tsu 256, 257, 341  
Lawrence, D.H. 1, 15, 306, 341  
Leach, Edmund 22  
Lee, Dorothy 335  
Leech, G. 318  
Lefebre, Lucien 335  
LeQuin, Ursula 16, 309, 341  
Levi-Strauss, Claude 58, 70, 72  
Levinas, Emmanuel 324  
Lewis, Gilbert 41, 318  
Lewis, Oscar 2  
Lichtenberg 302, 303, 305, 339, 342  
Luckmann, Thomas  
and Berger 111, 124  
Lyons, John 336  
Malinowski, Bronislaw 85, 325, 335  
Mannheim, Karl 235  
Mauss, Marcel 335  
Mead, George Herbert 50, 87, 245, 274, 275, 316  
Meaning  
and consequence 161  
and context of situation 336  
and saying 313  
as 'independent coherence' (Simmel) 251  
in mir 146  
in the reader 256, 258  
next-thing 53, 78, 251, 313, 321  
Meetings  
Island 103  
mixed (Islanders and Aborigines) 107  
timing of 102
Miller, Henry 13
Mind
'of man' 76
and brain 300
and ethnographer's motion 300
and genre 304, 305
locus 76, 87
movements of 318
natural (Bateson) 322
Mitchell, T.F. 336
Monegal, Emir 56
Montague, C.E. 319
Motion
coming to terms 61
hermeneutic 62
hermeneutic (Steiner) 134
of contentious self 260
of hearer 277
of inference 204
of mind 76
of self 62, 134, 251
out of idiom 287
 toward idiom 19
Muhammad Ali 232, 235, 236, 247, 263
Myles na gCopaleen (Flann O'Brien) 50
Naven (Bateson) 132
Needham, Rodney 55, 61, 80, 320
Nelson, Ronald 82
New Journalism 269, 307, 332
Niven, Larry 216, 222
O'Neill, Gerard K. 291
Oakeshott, Michael 339, 344
Pakarar 44, 47, 48, 49
Peirce, C.S. 45, 87, 316
Penfield, Wilder 331
Perls, Fritz
 and Hefferline and Goodman 329
Pfeutze, Paul 245
Philips, Susan 88
Philostratus 334
Pirsig, Robert M. 337
Poirier, Richard 75, 81, 321, 323
Popper, Karl 36, 318, 331
Pornography 69
Positivism 255, 257, 320
Powdermaker, Hortense 335
Pragmatists 87
Predicate 1
Predication
anthropological 268, 294
establishment by reading 298
in Islander idiom 295
of genre 289
predicative demand 37
the work of community 289, 295
Quacks 231, 233, 237
Ramson, W.S. 341
Reading 8, 15, 32, 40, 256, 271
Redfield, Robert 2, 335
Reisman, Karl 198
Richards, I.A.
"feedforward" 80
and Ogden 41
mind and movement 317
Ricoeur, Paul 62
Rigby, Bruce 9
Robbe-Grillet, Alain 341
Robins, R.H. 335
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 22, 23, 76, 340
Royce, Josiah 84
Ryle, Gilbert 42, 62, 75
"Said and unsaid" (Tyler) 277
Sansom, Basil 111, 138
Saussure, Ferdinand de 271
Scheffler, Israel 316
Schleiermacher 270
Schutz, Alfred 125, 235, 256
Searle, John R. 124, 296
Self
"Implications" (Mead) 50
"self system" (Sullivan) 245
"social self" (Pfeutze) 245
'discourse of the Other' (Lacan) 247
and brain (Popper and Eccles) 331
and social reality 238
contentious 261
I-thou (Buber) 245
mind, self, society (Mead) 245
performing (Poirier) 321
presentation of (Goffman) 123
theory (Unger) 332
"Sentential knowledge" (Hacking) 36
Silence
as what is missing 193
commanded 229
consequential 180, 187, 201, 213, 330
emergent 187, 190, 203, 211, 220
immanent 176, 177, 200, 212, 277, 330
in 'real talk' 166
Quaker (Bauman) 194
Western Apache (Basso) 198
Simmel, Georg 80, 235, 236, 251, 253, 260, 329, 332
Small, Albion 22, 23
Sociation 140
Sontag, Susan 15, 306, 340
Sorrow 186, 328
Southern, Terry 269
Speech acts
"preparatory conditions" (Searle) 124
and "other actions" (Austin) 122
expelling 123
Stein, Gertrude 324
Steiner, George 62, 81, 132, 136, 270, 324, 334
Stern, J.P. 302, 304, 359, 341
STORYTIME 311, 313, 315
Sturgeon, Theodore 69, 319, 320