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Response Cries

Author(s): Erving Goffman

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RESPONSE CRIES

ERVING GOFFMAN

University of Pennsylvania

Utterances are housed not in paragraphs, but in turns at talk—occasions implying a temporary taking of the floor, as well as an alternation of takers. Turns themselves are naturally coupled into two-party interchanges. Interchanges are linked in runs marked off by some sort of topicality. One or more of these topical runs make up the body of a conversation. This interactionist view assumes that every utterance is a statement establishing the next speaker's words as a reply, or a reply to what the prior speaker has just established, or a mixture of both. Utterances, then, do not stand by themselves—indeed, they often make no sense when so heard—but are constructed and timed to support the close social collaboration of speech turn-taking. In nature the spoken word is only found in verbal interplay, being integrally designed for such collective habitats. However, this paper considers some roguish utterances that appear to violate this interdependence, entering the stream of behavior at peculiar and unnatural places, producing communicative effects but no dialog. The paper begins with a special class of spoken sentences and ends with a special class of vocalizations—the first failing to qualify as communication, the second failing not to.*

1. To be all alone, to be a SOLITARY in the sense of being out of sight and sound of everyone, is not to be alone in another way—namely as a SINGLE, a party of one, a person not in a WITH, a person unaccompanied 'socially' by others in some public undertaking (itself often crowded), such as sidewalk traffic, shopping in stores, and restaurant dining.¹

Allowing the locution 'in our society'—and, incidentally, the use of WE as a means of referring to individuals without specifying gender—it can be said that when we members are solitary, or at least assume we are, we can have occasion to make passing comments aloud. We kibitz our own undertakings, rehearse or relive a run-in with someone, speak to ourselves judgmentally about our own doings (offering words of encouragement or blame in an editorial voice that seems to be that of an overseer, rather than ourselves), and verbally mark junctures in our physical doings. Speaking audibly, we address ourselves as the sole intended recipients of our own remarks. Or, speaking in our own name, we address a remark to someone who isn't present to receive it. This is self-communication, specifically SELF-TALK. Although a conversation-like exchange of speaker-hearer roles may sometimes occur, this seems unusual: either we address an absent other, or we address ourselves in the name of some standard-bearing voice. Self-talk of one type seems rarely answered by self-talk of the other type. I might add that the voice or name in which we address a remark to ourselves can be just what we might properly

* I have incorporated, without specific acknowledgment, a large number of suggestions, both general and particular, provided by John Carey, Lee Ann Draud, John Fought, Rochel Gelman, Allen Grimshaw, Gail Jefferson, William Labov, Gillian Sankoff, Joel Sherzer, and W. John Smith. I am grateful to this community of help; with it I have been able to progress from theft to pillage. Comments on broadcasters' talk are based on a study in progress.

¹ This easy contrast conceals some complications. A WITH—a party of more than one—can be solitary too, as when a lone couple picnics on a deserted beach. Strictly speaking, then, a SINGLE is a party of one present among other parties, whereas a solitary individual is a party of one with no other parties present.

use in addressing a remark to someone else, or what another might properly use in talking to us. It is not the perspective and standards that are peculiar, or the words and phrases through which they are realized, but only the fact that there are more roles than persons. To talk to oneself is to generate a full complement of two communication roles, speaker and hearer, without a full complement of role-performers; and which of the two roles—speaker or hearer—is the one without its own real performer is not the primary issue.

Self-talk could, of course, be characterized as a form of egocentricity—developmentally appropriate in childhood years, and re-appearing later only ‘in certain men and women of a puerile disposition’ (Piaget 1956:40). Common sense, after all, recommends that the purpose of speech is to convey thoughts to others; and a self-talker necessarily conveys them to someone who already knows them. To interrogate, inform, beseech, persuade, threaten, or command oneself is to push against oneself, or at best to get to where one already is, in either case with small chance of achieving movement. To say something to someone who can’t hear it seems equally footless.

Or worse, self-talk might appear to be a kind of perversion, a form of linguistic self-abuse. Solitary individuals who can be happily immersed in talking to themselves need not seek out the company of their fellows—a convenience that works to the general detriment of social life. Such home consumption in regard to the other kind of intercourse qualifies either as incest or masturbation.

A more serious argument would be that self-talk is merely an out-loud version of reverie, the latter being the original form. Such a view, however, misses the sense in which daydreaming is different from silent, fugue-like, well-reasoned discussion with oneself—let alone the point (on which Piaget 1962:7 and Vygotsky 1962:19–20 seem to agree) that the out-loud version of reverie and of constructive thought may precede the silent versions developmentally. It misses, too, the fact that both the autistic and constructive forms of ‘inner speech’ are considerably removed from facially animated talk in which the speaker overtly gives the appearance of being actively engrossed in a spirited exchange with invisible others, his eyes and lips alive with the proceedings.

In any case, in our society at least, self-talk is not dignified as constituting an official claim upon its sender-recipient—which is true, incidentally, also of fantasy, ‘wool gathering’, and the like. There are no circumstances in which we can say *I’m sorry, I can’t come right now; I’m busy talking to myself*. And anyway, hearers ordinarily do not REPLY to our self-talk, any more than to the words spoken by an actor on the stage, although they may REACT to both. Were a hearer to say, *What?*, that would stand as a rebuke to conduct, not a request for a rerun, much as when a teacher uses that response to squelch by-plays occurring at the back of the room; or, with a different intonation, it could mean that the self-talk had been misheard as the ordinary kind, a possibility which could itself induce a reply, such as *Sorry, I was only talking to myself*.

Indeed, our society places a taboo on self-talk. Thus it is mainly through self-observation and hearsay that one can find out that a considerable amount of this sort of thing goes on. Admittedly, the matter has a Lewis Carroll touch: the offense seems to be created by the very person who catches the offender since, it is the

witnessing of the deed which transforms it into an improper one. (Solitary self-talkers may occasionally find themselves terminating a spate of self-talk with a self-directed reproach; but in doing so, they seem to be catching THEMSELVES—sometimes employing self-talk to do so.) In point of fact, the misdoing is not so much tied up with doing it in public as CONTINUING to do it in public. We are all, it seems, allowed to be caught stopping talking to ourselves on one occasion or another.

Expectedly, there are questions of frames and their limits. Strictly speaking, dictating a letter to a machine, rehearsing a play to a mirror, and praying aloud at our bedside are not examples of self-talk; but if others unexpectedly enter the scene of such solitary labor, we still feel a little uneasy and look for another type of work. Similarly, there are comedy routines in which the butt is made vulnerable by having to sustain a full-blown discussion with someone who is hidden from general view. And there are well-known comic gestures by which someone caught talking to himself attempts to transform the delict into a yawn, or into the just-acceptable vocalizations of whistling, humming, or singing.² But behind these risible issues of frame is the serious fact that an adult who fails to attempt to conceal his self-talk, or at least to desist quickly upon the appearance of another person, is in trouble. Under the term verbal hallucination, we attribute failure in decorum here to 'mental illness'.³

Given the solitary's recourse to self-addressed remarks well into adult life, and given that such talk is obviously not merely a transitional feature of primary socialization (if, indeed, a natural phase of childhood development), one is encouraged to shift from a developmental to an interactional approach. Self-talk, when performed in its apparently permissible habitat—the self-talker all alone—is by way of being a mimicry of something that has its initial and natural provenance in speech between persons; this in turn implies a social encounter, and the arrangement of participants through which encounters are sustained. (Such transplantation, note, is certainly not restricted to deviant activity; thus a writer does it when he quotes, in the body of his own single sentence, an entire paragraph from a cited text—thereby pseudomorphically depositing in one form something that in nature belongs to another.)

With self-talk, then, one might want to say that a sort of impersonation is occurring; after all, we can best compliment or upbraid ourselves in the name of someone other than the self to whom the comments are directed. But what is intended here is not so much the mere citation or recording of what a monitoring voice might say, or what we would say to another if given a chance, but a stage-acted version of such

² Nor should the opposite framing issue be neglected. A man talking to himself at a bar may cause the bartender to think him drunk, not peculiar; if he wants to continue drinking, he may suffer more hardship from the first imputation than the second. (In an instance reported to me, a bar-room self-talker, misframed as having had too much, temporarily solved this threat to his drinking rights by retreating to the tavern's telephone booth to do his self-talking.)

³ I leave open the question of whether the individual who engages in verbal hallucination does so in order to create a disturbing impression, or does so in ignorance of the effects, or indifference to them, or in spite of concern about them. I leave open too the question of whether, in treating unabashed self-talk as a natural index of alienation, we have (in our society) any good grounds for our induction.

a delivery, albeit only vaguely a version of its reception. What is set into the ongoing text is not merely words, but their animator also—indeed, the whole interactional arrangement in which such words might get spoken. To this end we briefly split ourselves in two, projecting the character who talks and the character to whom such words could be appropriately directed. Or we summon up the presence of others in order to say something to them. Self-talk, then, involves the lifting of a form of interaction out of its natural place, and its employment in a special way.

Self-talk described in this way recommends consideration of the soliloquy, long a feature of Western drama, although not currently fashionable.⁴ An actor comes stage center and harangues himself, sometimes at enormous length, divulging his inner thoughts on a pertinent matter with well-projected audibility. This behavior, of course, is not really an exception to the application of the rule against public self-talk. The soliloquizer is really talking to self when no one is around; we members of the audience are supernatural, out-of-frame eavesdroppers. Were a character from the dramatized world to approach, our speaker would audibly (to us) self-direct a warning: *But soft, I see that Jeffrey even now doth come. To the appearance of innocent business then*—and would stop soliloquizing. Were he to continue to self-talk, it would be because the script has instructed him to fail to notice the approaching figure whom all the rest of us have seen.

Now, if talking to oneself in private involves a mock-up of conversation and a recasting of its complementarity, then the production of this recasting on the stage, in the bloated format of a soliloquy, obviously involves a further inseting, and a transformation of what has already been transformed. The same could be said, incidentally, about a printed advertisement featuring realistically-posed live models whose sentiments are cast into well-articulated inner speech in broken-line balloons above their heads—providing a text that the other figures in the pictured world can't see, but we real people can, as distinguished from the continuous-line balloon for containing words that one figure openly states to another.

Here, I believe, is a crucial feature of human communication. Behavior and appearance are ritualized—in the ethological sense—through such ethologically-defined processes as exaggeration, stereotyping, standardization of intensity, loosening of contextual requirements etc. In the case under question, however, these transformations occur to a form of interaction, a communication arrangement, a standard set of participant alignments. I believe that any analysis of self-talk (or for that matter, any other form of communication) that does not attend to this non-linguistic sense of embedding and transformation is unlikely to be satisfactory.

2. These parables about self-talk provide entrance to a mundane text. First, definitions: By a SOCIAL SITUATION, I mean any physical area within which two or more persons find themselves in visual and aural range of one another. The term GATHERING can be used to refer to the bodies that are present. No restriction is implied about the relationship of those in the situation: they may all be involved in the same conversational encounter, in the sense of being ratified participants of the

⁴ It is never necessary in novels and comics, where the author can open up a character's head so the reader can peer into the ideas it contains; technologically, it is no longer necessary in the competing modes of commercial make-believe—movies and television. In these latter, a voice-over effect allows us to enter into the inner thoughts of a character shown silently musing.

same state of talk; or some may be in an encounter while others are not, or are in a different one; or no talk may be occurring. Some, all, or none of those present may be definable as together in terms of social participation, i.e. in a WITH.

Although almost every kind of mayhem can be committed in social situations, one class of breaches bears specifically on social situations as such, i.e. on the social organization common to face-to-face gatherings of all kinds. In a word, although many delicts are SITUATED, only some are SITUATIONAL. We owe, to any social situation in which we find ourselves, evidence that we are reasonably alive to what is already in it—and furthermore to what may arise, whether on schedule or unexpectedly. If need for immediate action is required of us, we will be ready—if not mobilized, then mobilizable. A sort of communication tonus is implied. If addressed by anyone in the situation, we should not have far to go to respond, if not to reply. All in all, a certain respect and regard is to be shown to the situation at large. These demonstrations confirm that we are able and willing to enter into the perspective of the others present, if no more than is required to collaborate in the intricacies of talk and pedestrian traffic. In our society, then, it is generally taboo in public to be drunk, to belch or pass wind perceptibly, to daydream or doze, or to be in disarray with respect to clothing and cosmetics—and all these for the same reason. These acts comprise our conventional repertoire, our prescribed stock of ‘symptoms’, for demonstrating a lack of respectful aliveness in and to the situation; their inhibition is our way of ‘doing’ presence, and thereby self-respect. And the demonstration can be made with sound; audible indicators are involved as well as visual ones.

It is plain, then, that self-talk, in a central sense, is situational in character, not merely situated; its occurrence strikes directly at our sense of the orientation of the speaker to the situation as a whole. Self-talk is taken to involve the talker in a situationally inappropriate way. Differently put, our self-talk—like other ‘mental symptoms’—is a threat to intersubjectivity: it warns others that they might be wrong in assuming a jointly-maintained base of ready mutual intelligibility among all persons present. Understandably, self-talk is less an offense in private than in public; after all, the sort of self-mobilization and readiness it is taken to disprove is not much required when one is all alone.

This general argument makes sense out of a considerable number of minor details. In a waiting room or on public transport, where it is evident that little personal attention to pedestrian traffic is required (and therefore less than a usual amount of aliveness to the surround), reading is allowed in our society, along with such self-withdrawal to a printed world as this makes possible. (Observe that reading itself is institutionalized as something that can be set aside in a moment, should a reason present itself—something that can be picked up and put down without ceremony. This definition does not hold for all our pleasures.) However, chuckling aloud to ourselves in response to what we are reading is suspect; this can imply that we are too freely immersed in the printed scene to retain dissociated concern for the scene in which our reading occurs. Interestingly, if we mouth the read words to ourselves, making the mouthings audible, we will be taken to be unschooled, not unhinged—unless, of course, our general appearance implies a high educational status and therefore no ‘natural’ reason for uncontained reading. (This is not to deny that

some mumbled reading gives the impression that too much effort is invested in the sheer task of reading to allow a seemingly reserve for the situation at large.)

In public, we are allowed to become rather deeply involved in talk with others, providing this does not lead us to block traffic or intrude on the sound preserve of others; presumably our capacity to share talk with one other implies we are able to share it with those who see us talking. So, too, we can conduct a conversation aloud over an un-boothed street-phone while either turning our back to the flow of pedestrian traffic or watching it in an abstracted way, and the words will not be thought improper. Even though our co-participant is not visually present, a natural one can be taken to exist, and an accounting is available as to where, cognitively speaking, we have gone. Moreover, this is a familiar place to which others can see themselves traveling, and from which we can be duly recalled, should events warrant.⁵

Observe also that we can, with some impunity, address words in public to a pet—presumably on the grounds that the animal can appreciate the affective element of the talk, if nothing else. In any case, although on these occasions a full-fledged recipient isn't present to reply to our words, it is clear that no imagined person or alien agency has captured our attention. On the other hand, to be seen walking down the street alone while SILENTLY gesticulating a conversation with an absent other is as much a breach as talking aloud to ourselves; it is taken to be evidence of alienation, just as much as its audible counterpart.

Finally, there are the words we emit (sometimes very loudly) to summon another into talk. Although such speaking begins by being outside of talk with actual others, its intended recipient is likely quickly to confirm—by ritualized orientation, if not by a verbal reply—the existence of the required environment, doing so before our utterance is completed.⁶ A summons that is openly snubbed or apparently undetected, however, can leave us feeling that we have been caught engaging in something like talking to ourselves, and moreover very noticeably.⁷

⁵ I once saw an adolescent black girl make her male companion collapse in laughter, on a busy downtown street, by moving away from him to a litter can in which she had spied a plastic toy phone. Holding the phone up to her mouth and ear while letting the cord remain in the can—and then, half-turning as if to view the passing parade in a dissociated manner (as one does when anchored to an open telephone kiosk)—she projected a loud and lively conversation into the mouthpiece. Such an act 'puts on' public order in a rather deep way, striking at its accommodative close readings—ones we all ordinarily support without much awareness.

⁶ A pet or a small child can be repeatedly summoned with a loud cry when it is not in sight, with some disturbance to persons in range; but a 'mental' condition is not ordinarily imputed. Typically it is understood that the words are merely a signal (a toy whistle would do) to come home, or to come into view to receive a message—but not to come into protracted conversation from wherever the signal is heard.

⁷ Such an occurrence is but one instance of the deplorable class of occasions when we throw ourselves full-face into an encounter where none can be developed—as when we respond to a summons that was meant for someone behind us, or warmly greet a total stranger mistakenly taken to be someone we know well, or (as has already been mentioned) mistakenly reply to someone's self-talk. The standard statement by which the individual whom we have improperly entangled sets us right—e.g. *Sorry, I'm afraid you've ...*—itself has an uneasy existence. Such a remark is fully housed within a conversational exchange that was never properly established, and its purpose is to deny a relationship that is itself required for the remark to be made.

To say that self-talk is a situational impropriety is not to say that it is a CONVERSATIONAL delict—no more, i.e., than any other audible breach of decorum, such as an uncovered, audible yawn. Desisting from self-talk is not something we owe our fellow conversationalists as such; i.e., it is not owed to them in their capacity as co-participants in a specific encounter, and thus only to them. Clearly it is owed to all those in sight and sound of us, precisely as we owe them avoidance of the other kinds of improper sounds. The individual who begins to talk to himself while in a conversational encounter will cause the other participants in the encounter to think him odd; but for the same reason and in the same way, those not in the encounter but within range of it will also think him odd. Here the conversational circle is not the relevant unit; the social situation is. Like a snail caught outside its shell, words are here caught outside of conversations, outside of ratified states of talk; one is saved from the linguistic horror of this fact only because the words themselves ought not to have been spoken. In fact, here talk is no more conversational than a belch; it merely lasts longer, and reflects adversely on a different part of personality.

So a rule: NO TALKING TO ONESELF IN PUBLIC. But of course the lay formulation of a rule never gets to the bone; it merely tells us where to start digging. In linguistic phrasing, 'No talking to oneself in public' is a prescriptive rule of communication. The descriptive rule—the practice—is likely to be less neat, and certainly less available, allowing (if not encouraging) variously-grounded exceptions. The framework of normative understandings that is involved is not recorded, or cited, or available in summary form from informants. It must be pieced out by the student—in part by uncovering, collecting, collating, and interpreting all possible exceptions to the stated rule.

3. An unaccompanied man—a single—is walking down the street past others. His general dress and manner have provided anyone who views him with evidence of his sobriety, innocent intent, suitable aliveness to the situation, and general social competency. His left foot strikes an obtruding piece of pavement and he stumbles. He instantly catches himself, rights himself more or less efficiently, and continues on.

Theretofore, his competence at walking had been taken for granted by those who saw him, confirming their assessment of him in this connection. His tripping suddenly casts these imputations into doubt. Therefore, before he continues, he may well engage in some actions that have nothing to do with the laws of mechanics. The remedial work he performs is likely to be aimed at correcting the threat to his reputation, as well as his posture. He can pause for a moment to examine the walk, as if intellectually concerned (as competent persons with their wits about them would be) to discover what in the world could possibly have caused him to falter—the implication being that anyone else would certainly have stumbled, too. Or he can address a wry little smile to himself, to show that he himself takes the whole incident as a joke—something quite uncharacteristic, something that can hardly touch the security he feels in his own manifest competency, and therefore warranting no serious account. Or he can 'overplay' his lurch, comically extending the disequilibrium, thereby concealing the actual deviation from normal ambulatory orientation with clowning movements, implying a persona obviously not his serious one.

In brief, our subject externalizes a presumed inward state, and acts so as to make discernible the special circumstances which presumably produced it. He tells a little story to the situation. He renders himself easy to assess by all those in the gathering, even as he guides what is to be their assessment. He presents an act specialized in a conventional way for providing information—a DISPLAY—a communication in the ethological, not the linguistic, sense. The behavior here is very animal-like, except that what the human animal seems to respond to is not so much an obvious biological threat as a threat to the reputation which it would ordinarily try to maintain in matters of social competence. Nor is it hard to catch the individual in a very standard look—the hasty, surreptitious survey sometimes made right after committing a fleeting discreditable deed. The purpose is to see whether witnessing has occurred and remedial action is therefore necessary; and this assessment itself is done quickly enough so that a remedy, if necessary, can be provided with the same dispatch as when there is no doubt from the start that it will be necessary.

However, instead of (or as a supplement to) engaging in a choreographed accounting that is visually available, our subject may utter a cry of wonderment, such as *What in the world!* Again, he renders readily accessible to witnesses what he chooses to assign to his inward state, and directs attention to what produced it; but this time the display is largely auditory. Moreover, if non-vocal gestures, in conjunction with the visible and audible scene, can't conveniently provide the required information, then self-talk will be the indicated alternative. An individual who suddenly stops in his tracks need only grimace and clutch at his heart if there is an open manhole at his feet; but the same stopping, consequent on his remembering that he was supposed to be someplace else, is more likely to be accounted for by words. (Presumably, the more obscure the matter, the more extended the self-remarks will have to be—and perhaps the less likely the individual will be to offer them.)

I am arguing here that what is part of the subject matter of linguistics, in some sense, can require the examination of our relation to social situations at large, not merely our relation to conversations. Apparently, verbalizations quite outside of conversations can play much the same role as a choreographed bit of non-vocal behavior. Together, they are like other situational acts of propriety and impropriety in that they are accessible to the entire surround, and in a sense designed for it. They are more like clothing than speech. But unlike clothing or cosmetics, these displays—whether vocal or in pantomime—are to be interpreted as bearing on a passing event, one with a limited course in time. (What we wear can certainly be taken as an indication of our attitude to the social occasion at hand, but hardly to specific events occurring during the occasion.) Necessarily, if unanticipated passing events are to be addressed, a marker must be employed that can be introduced just at the moment the event occurs, and withdrawn when concern for the event has ended.

4. I have argued that there is a prohibition against public self-talk, and that breachings of this rule have a display character—yet also that there are social situations in which one could expect self-talk. Indeed, the very force which leads us to refrain from self-talk in almost all situations might itself cause us to indulge in self-talk during certain exceptional ones. In this light, consider now in greater detail a few environments in which exposed self-talk is frequently found.

When we are 'informed' of the death of a loved one (only by accident are we 'told', since this verb implies that the news might be conveyed in passing), a brief flooding out into tears would certainly not be amiss in our society. As one might expect, it is just then that public self-talk is also sanctioned. Thus Sudnow (1967:141) describes the giving of bad news in hospitals:

'While no sympathy gestures are made, neither does the doctor withdraw from the scene altogether by leaving the room, as, for example, does the telegram delivery boy. The doctor is concerned that the scene be contained and that he have some control over its progress, that it not, for example, follow him out into the hall. In nearly all cases the first genuine interchange of remarks was initiated by the relative. During the period of crying, if there is any, relatives frequently "talk". Examples are: "I can't believe it", "It's just not fair", "Goddamn", "Not John ... no ...". These remarks are not responded to as they are not addressed to anyone. Frequently, they are punctuated by crying. The physician remains silent.'

The common-sense explanation here is that such informings strike at our self so violently that self-involvement immediately thereafter is reasonable—an excusable imposition of our own concerns upon everyone else in the gathering. Whatever the case, convention seems to establish a class of 'all-too-human' crises, to be treated as something which anyone not directly involved should still appreciate; they give us victims the passing right to be momentary centers of sympathetic attention, and provide a legitimate place for anything 'uncontrolled' we do during the occasion. Indeed, our utter self-containment during such moments might create uneasiness in others concerning our psychological habitat, causing them to wonder how responsive we might be to ordinary situated concerns directly involving them.

Not all environments which favor self-talk are conventionally understood to do so. For example, a podium speaker who suddenly finds that he has a page or line missing from his text, or a faulty microphone, will sometimes elect to switch from talking to the audience to talking to himself, addressing a full sentence of bewilderment, chagrin, or anger for his own ears and (apparently) his own benefit, albeit half-audibly to the room. Even in broadcast talk, when speakers lose their places, misplace their scripts, or find themselves with incoherent texts or improperly functioning equipment, they may radically break frame in this way, seeming suddenly to turn their backs on their obligations to sustain the role of speaker-to-an-audience. It is highly unprofessional, of course, to engage in sotto-voce, self-directed remarks under just those microphonic conditions which ensure their audibility; but broadcasters may be more concerned at this point about showing that some part of them is shocked by the hitch, and in some way not responsible for it, than about maintaining broadcasting decorum. Also, being the sole source of meaningful events for their listeners, they may feel that the full text of their subjective response is better than no text at all. Note that other social situations provide a speaker with an audience that is captive and concerned, and thereby encourage self-talk: drivers of buses, taxis, and private cars can shout unflattering judgments of other motorists and pedestrians when they have passed out of range, and feel no compunction about talking aloud to themselves in the presence of their passengers. After all, there is a

sense in which a contretemps in traffic visibly and identically impinges on everyone in a vehicle simultaneously.⁸

The fact that drivers may actually wait until the apparent target of their remarks cannot hear them points to another location for self-talk, which is also suggested by the lay term MUTTERING. Frustrated by someone's authority, we can mutter words of complaint under our breath as the target turns away, out of apparent conversational earshot. (Here is a structural equivalent of what children do when they stick out their tongues, or put their thumbs to their noses, just as their admonisher turns away.) These sub-vocalizations reside in the very interstice between a state of talk and mere co-presence—more specifically, in the transition from the first to the second. Here function seems plain: in muttering, we convey that although we are now going along with the line established by the speaker (and authority), our spirit has not been won over, and compliance is not to be counted on. The display is aimed either at third parties or at the authority itself, but in such a way that we can deny our intent, and the authority can feign not hearing what we have said about him. Again, this is a form of communication that hardly fits the linguistic model of speaker and addressed recipient; here we provide a reply to the speaker that is displaced from him to third parties, or to ourselves. Instead of being the recipient of our reply, the initial speaker becomes merely the object or target of our response. Like tongue-sticking, muttering is a time-limited communication, entering as a 'last word', a post-terminal dollop to a just-terminated encounter; it thus escapes, for incidental reasons, the injunction against persisting in public self-talk.

Consideration of self-talk in one kind of interstice recommends its consideration in others. For example, if we are stopped for a moment's friendly chat just before entering or leaving an establishment or turning down a street, we may provide a one-sentence description of the business we are about to turn to; this account serves as a rationale for our withdrawing, and as evidence that there are other calls upon our time. Interestingly enough, this utterance is sometimes postponed until the moment when the encounter is just ending, in which case we may mumble the account half-aloud and somewhat to ourselves. Here again is self-talk that is located transitionally between a state of talk and mere co-presence; again, self-communication is self-terminating, although this time because the communicator, not the hearer, is moving away. Here it is inescapably clear that the self-talker is providing verbal information to others present, though not using the standard arrangement—a ratified state of talk—for doing so.

Finally, it must be allowed that when circumstances conspire to thrust us into a course of action whose appearance might raise questions about our moral character or self-respect, we often prefer to be seen as self-talkers. If we stoop to pick up a coin on a busy street, we may well identify its denomination to ourselves aloud,

⁸ Of course, there will be occasions of equivalent license for non-verbal signs, both vocal and gesticulatory. In trying on a shoe, we can engage in all manner of grimaces and obscure soundings, for these signs provide running evidence of fit; and such information is the official, chief concern (at that moment) of all parties to the transaction, including the shoe clerk. Similarly, a sportsman or athlete is free to perform an enormous flailing about when he flubs; apart from other reasons for this license, he can be sure (if anyone can) that his circumstances are fully attended and appreciated by everyone who is watching the action. After all, such clarity of intent is what sports are all about.

simultaneously expressing surprise, even though we ourselves no longer need the information: the street is to be framed as a place of passage, not—as it might be to a child or a bum—a hunting ground for bits of refuse. If what we thought was a coin turns out to be a worthless slug, then we may feel urged to externalize, through sound and pantomime, that we can laugh at the fools we have made of ourselves.⁹ Trying the door-handle of a car we have mistaken for our own, and discovering our mistake, we are careful to blurt out a self-directed remark that properly frames our act for those who witness it, advertising inadequate attentiveness in order to deny that we are thieves.

With these suggestions of where self-talk is to be found, we can take a second look at the conventional argument that children engage in it because they aren't yet socialized into the modesties of self-containment, the proprieties of personhood. Vygotsky, responding to what he took to be Piaget's position, long ago provided a lead ([1934] 1962:16):

'In order to determine what causes egocentric talk, what circumstances provoke it, we organized the children's activities in much the same way Piaget did, but we added a series of frustrations and difficulties. For instance, when a child was getting ready to draw, he would suddenly find that there was no paper, or no pencil of the color he needed. In other words, by obstructing his free activity we made him face problems.

'We found that in these difficult situations the coefficient of egocentric speech almost doubled, in comparison with Piaget's normal figure for the same age, and also in comparison with our figure for children not facing these problems. The child would try to grasp and to remedy the situation in talking to himself: "Where's the pencil? I need a blue pencil. Never mind, I'll draw with the red one and wet it with water; it will become dark and look like blue."' ¹⁰

The implication is that, for children, the contingencies are so great in undertaking any task, and the likelihood so strong that they will be entirely discounted as reasonably-intentioned persons if they fail (or indeed, that they will be seen as just

⁹ Picking money off the street is, of course, a complicated matter. Pennies and even nickels we might well forego, if the doubt cast on our conduct is of more concern to us than the money. (We accept the same small sums in change when paying for something in a shop, but there a money transaction is the official business at hand.) Should another in our sight drop such a coin, we might well be inclined to retrieve and return it: we are allowed a distractive orientation to the ground we walk on, so long as this is patently in the interests of others. (If we don't retrieve our own small coins, then we run the risk that others will do so for us, and the consequent necessity of showing gratitude.) If the sum is large enough to qualify as beyond the rule of finders-keepers, we might quickly glance around to see if we have been seen, carefully refraining from saying or gesturing anything else. Covert also may be our act whenever we spy a coin of any denomination to see if any additional ones are not to be found.

¹⁰ Piaget, as his reply (1962:3–4) to a reading of Vygotsky's ms suggests, apparently meant 'egocentricity' to refer to speech (or any other behavior) that did not take into consideration the perspective of the other in some way, and only incidentally (if at all) to speech not openly addressed to others, the latter being what Vygotsky described, and which I call 'self-talk'. Piaget's concept of egocentricity has led to another confusion, a failure to discriminate two matters: taking the point of view of the other in order to discover what his attitude and action will be, and accepting for oneself or identifying with the perspective of the other. The classic con operation illustrates how fully the first form of sympathy may be required and produced without leading to the second.

fooling around anyway), that they are always prepared to offer some voicing of what they are about. An adult attempting to learn to skate might be equally self-talkative.¹¹

Some loose generalizations might be drawn from these descriptions of places for self-talk. First, when we address a remark to ourselves in public, we are likely to be in sudden need of re-establishing ourselves in the eyes and ears of witnesses as honest, competent persons not to be trifled with; and an expression of chagrin, wonderment, anger etc. would seem to help in this—at least establishing what our expectations for ourselves are, even if in this case they can't be sustained. Second, one could argue that self-talk occurs right at the moment when the predicament of the speaker is evident to the whole gathering in a flash, or can be made so—assuring that the utterance will come as an understandable reaction to an understood event; it will come from a mind that has not drifted from the situation, a mind readily tracked. The alien world reflected in hallucinatory talk is therefore specifically avoided; and so too is some of the impropriety of talking outside the precincts of a ratified conversation. Nor is 'understandable' here merely a matter of cognition. To quickly appreciate another's circumstances (it seems) is to be able to place ourselves in them empathetically. Correspondingly, the best assurance another can have that we will understand him is to offer himself to us in a version with which we can identify. Instead of thinking of self-talk as something blurted out under pressure, then, it might better be thought of as a mode of response constantly readied for those circumstances in which it is excusable. Indeed, the time and place when our private reaction is what strangers present NEED to know about is the occasion when self-talk is more than excusable.¹²

5. It was suggested above that, when an unaccompanied man stumbles, he may present his case by means of self-talk instead of silent gesture. However, there is another route to the advertisement of self-respect. He can emit one or two words of exclamatory imprecation, such as *Hell!* or *Shit!* Observe that these ejaculatory expressions are nothing like the pointed shout of warning which one individual might utter to and for another—nor even like an openly directed broadcast to all in hearing, like a street-vendor's cry or a shriek for help. Talk in the ordinary sense is apparently not at issue. In no immediate way do such utterances belong to a conversational encounter—a ritually ratified state of talk embracing ratified participants—or to a summoning to one. First speaker's utterance does not officially

¹¹ Cook-Gumperz & Corsaro (1976:29) offer a more compelling account: 'We have found that children consistently provide verbal descriptions of their behavior at various points in spontaneous fantasy in that it cues other interactants to what is presently occurring as well as provides possibilities for plugging into and expanding upon the emerging social event.' The authors imply that if a fantasy world is to be built up during JOINT play, then words alone are likely to be the resource that must be employed, and an open recourse to self-talk then becomes an effective way to flesh out what is supposed to be unfolding for all the participants in the fantasy.

A purely cognitive interpretation of certain action-oriented, self-directed words ('non-nominal expressions') has also been recently recommended by Gopnik (1977:15–20).

¹² Understandably, stage soliloquies occur only when the character's personal feelings about his circumstances are exactly what we members of the audience must be privy to, to be properly positioned in the unfolding drama.

establish a slot which second speaker is under some obligation to fill: there is no ratified speaker and recipient (not even imaginary ones), but merely actor and witness. To be sure, an interjection is involved; but it is one that interrupts a course of physical action, not an utterance.

When, unaccompanied, we trip and curse ourselves (or the walk, or the whole wide world), we curse TO ourselves; we appear to address ourselves. Therefore, a kind of self-remarking seems to be involved. Like the publicly tolerated self-talk already considered, imprecations seem to be styled to be overheard in a gathering. Indeed, the styling is specific in this regard: when no one is present in the individual's surround, the expression is quite likely to be omitted. If women and children are present, your male self-communicator is quite likely to censor his cries accordingly: a man who utters *Fuck!* when he stumbles in a foundry is likely to avoid that particular expletive if he trips in a day nursery. If it is apparent that only very close-by persons can see what we have just done (or failed to do), then whispered expletives are possible; if witnesses are far away, then shouted sounds will be required. 'Recipient design' is involved (to use Harvey Sacks' term), and so quickly applied as to suggest that on-going monitoring of the situation is being sustained, enabling just this adjustment when the moment arises which requires it. Of course, in any case we will have taken the time to encode our vocalization in the conventional lexicon of our language (which is likely to be the local one)—a feat that is instantaneously accomplished, even sometimes by bilinguals who, in addition, must generally select their imprecations from the language of their witnesses.¹³ (This is not to say that bilinguals won't use a harsh imprecation from one language in place of a less harsh one drawn from the language in use; foreignness apparently serves as a mitigation of strength.) Significantly, we have here a form of behavior whose very meaning is that it is something blurted out, something that has escaped control; and so such behavior very often is and has; but this impulsive feature marks not the limits to which the utterance is socially processed, but rather the conventionalized styling to which it is obliged to adhere.

It is plain that singles use imprecations in a variety of circumstances. Racing unsuccessfully to enter a turnstile before it automatically closes, or a door before it is locked for the evening, may do it; coming up to what has just now become a brick wall, we may exhibit frustration and chagrin, often with a curse. (Others, having formulated a possible reading of the precipitous rush we have made, can find that our imprecations are a way of confirming their interpretation, putting a period to the behavioral sentence we have played out, bringing the little vignette to a close, and converting us back to someone easily disattendable.) Precariously carrying too many parcels, we may curse at the moment they fall. When the horse we have bet on is nosed out at the finish line, we may damn our misfortune while tearing up our tickets; since our cause for disappointment, anger, and chagrin is amply evident, or at least easily surmisable, we have license to wail to the world. Walking along a wintry street that carries a record-breaking snow now turned to slush, we are in a position to cry *God!* in open private response—but as it happens, we do so just at the point of passing another—the cause of our remark and the state of our mind

¹³ It would be interesting to know whether or not bilingual children who self-talk select the code likely to be employed by others in their presence.

being perfectly plain and understandable. It might be added that the particular imprecations I have used so far as illustrations seem in our society to be the special domain of males: females, traditionally at least, use softer expressions. As is now well known, this gender convention is not impervious to rapid politically-inspired change.

Finally, I want to note that although imprecations and extended self-remarks can be found in much the same slot, do much the same work, and indeed often appear together—raising the question as to why they should be described separately—judgment should be reserved concerning their equivalence. Other questions must be considered first.

6. The functioning of imprecations raises the question of an allied set of acts that can be performed by singles: RESPONSE CRIES, i.e. exclamatory interjections which are not full-fledged words. *Oops!* is an example. These non-lexicalized, discrete interjections—like certain unsegmented, tonal, prosodic features of speech—comport neatly with our doctrine of human nature. We see such ‘expression’ as a natural overflowing, a flooding up of previously contained feeling, a bursting of normal restraints, a case of being caught off-guard. That is what would be learned by asking the man in the street if he uses these forms—and, if so, what he means by them.

I am assuming, of course, that this common-sense view of response cries should give way to the co-occurrence analysis that sociolinguists have brought to their problems. But although this naturalistic method is encouraged by sociolinguists, here the subject matter moves one away from their traditional concern. A response cry doesn’t seem to be a statement in the linguistic sense (even a heavily elided one), purportedly doing its work through the concatenated semantic reference of words. A remark is not being addressed to another—not even, it seems, to oneself. So, on the face of it at least, even self-communication is not involved, but only a simpler sign process whereby emissions from a source inform us about the state of the source—a case of exuded expressions, not intentionally sent messages. One might better refer to a ‘vocalizer’ or ‘sounder’ than to a speaker. This, of course, is not to deny the capacity of a well-formed, conventionally-directed sentence to inform us about the state of the protagonist who serves as its subject, nor to deny that the speaker and protagonist can be the ‘same’—for indeed, through the use of 1st person pronouns, they routinely are. But this latter arrangement brings us information through a message, not an expression. This route is fundamentally different from and less direct than the one apparently employed in response cries—even though, admittedly, such cries routinely come to be employed just in order to give a desired impression. Witnesses can seize the occasion of certain response cries to shake their heads in sympathy, cluck, and generally feel that the way has been made easy for them to initiate passing remarks, attesting to fellow-feeling; but they aren’t obliged to do so. A response cry may be uttered in the hope that this half-license it gives to hearers to strike up a conversation will be exercised; but, of course, this stratagem for getting talk started could not work if an innocent reading were not the official one. Expectedly, the circumstances which allow us to utter a response cry are often just the ones that mitigate the impropriety of a different tack we could take, that of opening up an encounter by addressing a remark to an unacquainted other; but that

fact doesn't relieve one of the necessity to distinguish between this fully social sort of comment and the kind that is apparently not even directed to oneself.

A response cry is (if anything is) a ritualized act in the ethological sense of that term. Unable to shape the world the way we want to, we displace our manipulation of it to the verbal channel, displaying evidence of our alignment to the on-going events; the display takes the condensed, truncated form of a discretely-articulated, non-lexicalized expression. Or, suddenly able to manage a tricky, threatening set of circumstances, we deflect into non-lexicalized sound a dramatization of our relief and self-congratulation in the achievement.

7. Consider now some standard cries:

7.1. THE TRANSITION DISPLAY. Entering or leaving what can be taken as a state of marked natural discomfort—wind, rain, heat, or cold—we seem to have the license (in our society) to externalize an expression of our inner state. *Brr!* is a standard term for wind and cold upon leaving such an atmosphere. (Other choices are less easily reproduced in print.) *Ahh!* and *Phew!* are heard when leaving a hot place for a cool one. Function is not clear. Perhaps the sounding gives us a moment to orient ourselves to the new climatic circumstances and to fall into cadence with the others in the room; these are not ordinarily taxing matters, and thus do not ordinarily require a pause for their accomplishment. Perhaps the concentration, the 'holding ourselves in' sometimes employed in inclement places (as a sort of support for the body) gets released with a flourish when we escape from such environments. In any case, we can be presumed to be in a state of mind that those already safe might well appreciate (for after all, weather envelops everyone in the vicinity), and so self-expression concerning our feelings does not take us to a place mysterious to our hearers. It appears that, unlike strong imprecations, transition displays in our society are not particularly sex-typed.

7.2. THE SPILL CRY. Here the central examples *Oops!* and *Whoops!* are phonetically well-formed, although not in every sense words. They are as much (perhaps even more) the practice of females as males. Spill cries are emitted to accompany our having, for a moment, lost guiding control of some feature of the world around us, including ourselves. Thus a woman, rapidly walking to a museum exit, passes the door, catches her mistake, utters *Oops!*, and backtracks to the right place. A man, dropping a piece of meat through the grill to coals below, utters *Oops!*, and then spears the meat to safety with his grill fork.

On the face of it, the sound advertises our loss of control, raising the question of why we should want to defame ourselves through this publicity. An obvious possibility is that the *Oops!* defines the event as a mere accident, shows we know it has happened, and hopefully insulates it from the rest of our behavior—indicating that failure of control was not generated by some obscure intent unfamiliar to humanity, or some general defect in competence. Behind this possibility is another: the expression is presumably used for MINOR failings of environmental control. So, in the face of a more serious failure, *Oops!* has the effect of downplaying import, and hence implication as evidence of our incompetence. (It follows that, to show we take a mishap VERY seriously, we might feel constrained to omit the cry.) Another reason

for (and function of) spill-crying is that, since a specific vocalization is involved, we necessarily demonstrate that at least our vocal channel is functioning—and behind this, at least some presence of mind. A part of us proves to be organized and standing watch over the part of us that apparently isn't watchful. Finally, and significantly, the sound can provide a warning to others present that a piece of the world has gotten loose, and that they might best be advised to take care. Indeed, close observation shows that the *oo* in *Oops!* may be nicely prolonged to cover the period of time during which that something is out of control.

Note that, when we utter *Oops!* as we slip on the ice, we can be making a plea to the closest other for a steadying hand, and simultaneously warning others to watch out; these circumstances surely open up our surround for vocalizations. When in fact there is no danger to oneself, we may respond to ANOTHER's momentary loss of control with an *Oops!* also—providing him a warning that he is in trouble, a readied framework within which he can define the mishap, and a collectively established cadence for his anticipated response. That some sort of help for others is thus intended seems to be borne out by the fact that men seem more likely to *oops* for another when that other is a child or a female, and thus definable as someone for whom responsibility can be taken. Indeed, when a parent plucks up a toddler and rapidly shifts it from one point to another, or 'playfully' swings or tosses it in the air, the prime mover may utter an *Oopsadaisy!*—stretched out to cover the child's period of groundlessness, counter-acting its feeling of being out of control, and at the same time instructing the child in the terminology and role of spill cries. In any case, it is apparent that *oopsing* is an adaptive practice with some survival value. And the fact that individuals prove (when the occasion does arise) to have been ready all along to *oops* for themselves, or for an appropriate other, suggests that when nothing eventful is occurring, persons in one another's presence are still nonetheless tracking one another and acting so as to make themselves trackable.

7.3. THE THREAT STARTLE, notably *Eek!* or *Yipe!* These response cries are sex-typed (or at least so believed) for feminine use. Surprise and fear are stated—in lay terms, 'expressed'. But the surprise or fear are very much under control—indeed, nothing to be really concerned about. A very high open stairwell, or a walk that leads to a precipice, can routinely evoke *yipes* from us as we survey what might have been our doom, but from a position of support; we have had ample time to secure ourselves. A notion of what a fear response would be is used as a pattern for mimicry. A sort of overplaying occurs that covers any actual concern by extending, with obvious unseriousness, the expressed form which this concern would take. We demonstrate that we are alive to the fearsome implications of the event, but not overwhelmed by them—that we have seen the trouble and by implication will assuredly control for it, and are therefore in need of no warning; all of this releases others from closely tracking us. The moment it takes to say the sound is one we can use to compose ourselves. In a very subtle way, then, a verbal 'expression' of our state is a means of rising above it—and a release of concern now no longer necessary, coming after the emergency is really over.

Here an argument made earlier about multiple transformations can be taken up. Precipitous drops are the sorts of things to which an individual can be very close

without the slightest danger of falling over, or intent to do so. In these circumstances, it would seem that imagery of accident would come to the fore, or at least be very readily available. It is this easily-achieved mental set that the threat startle seems to participate in. Thus the unconvincing character of the actual circumstances can be nicely reflected in the light and almost relaxed character of the cry. One has, then, a warning-LIKE signal in dangerous-LIKE circumstances. Ritualization begins to give way to a copy of itself—a playful version of what is already a formalized version, a display that has been retransformed and reset, a second-order ritualization.

7.4. REVULSION SOUNDS, such as *Eeuw!*, are heard from a person who has by necessity or inadvertence come in contact with something contaminating. Females in our society, being defined as more vulnerable in this way than males, might seem to have a special claim on the expression. Often, once we make the sound, we can be excused for a moment while decontamination is attempted. At other times, our voice performs what our physical behavior can't, as when our hands must keep busy cleaning a fish, leaving only the auditory and other unrequired channels to correct the picture—to show that indelicate, dirty work need not define the person who is besmeared by it. Observe again that there is an unserious note, a hint of 'hyper-ritualization': often the contamination that calls forth an *Eeuw!* is not REALLY believed to contaminate. Perhaps only germ contamination retains that literal power in our secular world. So again, a protective-like cry is uttered in response to a contaminating-like contact.

8. So far, response crying has been largely considered as something available to someone who is present to others, but not 'with' any of them. If one picks accompanied individuals, not singles, the behavior is still to be found; indeed, response crying is, if anything, encouraged. So also, response cries are commonly made by persons in an OPEN STATE OF TALK, persons having the right but not the obligation to address remarks to the other participants; this is a condition that commonly prevails among individuals jointly engaged in a common task (or even similarly engaged in like ones) when this work situates them in immediate reach of one another. Examples follow.

8.1. THE STRAIN GRUNT. Lifting or pushing something heavy, or wielding a sledgehammer with all our might, we emit a grunt attesting the presumed peak and consummation of our fully-extended exertion. The sound seems to serve as a warning that, at the moment, nothing else can claim our concern—and sometimes as a reminder that others should stand clear. No doubt the cry also serves as a means by which joint efforts can be temporally coordinated, as is said to be true of work songs. Observe that these sounds are felt to be entirely unintended, even though the glottis must be partially closed off to produce them, and presumably could be fully opened or closed to avoid doing so. In any case, it could be argued that the expression of ultimate exertion these sounds provide may be essentially overstated. I might add that strain grunts are routinely guyed, employed in what is to be taken as an unserious way—often as a cover for a task that is reckoned as undemanding but may indeed require some exertion: another case of retransformation. Note too that strain grunts are employed during solitary doings that can

be construed as involving a peaking of effort. The rise and falling away of effort contoured in sound dramatizes our acts, filling out the setting with their execution. I suppose the common example is the vocal accompaniment we sometimes provide ourselves on passing a hard stool.

8.2. THE PAIN CRY, *Oww!* or *Ouch!*¹⁴ The functioning of this exclamation is rather clear. Ensnared in a dentist's chair, we use a pain cry as a warning that the drill has begun to hurt. When a finger is firmly held by a nurse, we *ouch* when the needle probing for a sliver goes too deep. Plainly, the cry in these cases can serve as a self-regulated indicator of what is happening—providing a reading for the instigator of the pain, who might not otherwise have access to the information needed. The meaning, then, may not be 'I have been hurt', but rather, 'You are just now coming to hurt me.' This meaning, incidentally, may also be true of the response that a dog or cat gives us when we have begun accidentally to step on its tail, although THAT cry often seems to come too late. In any case, these are good examples of how closely a vocalizer can collaborate with another person in the situation.

8.3. THE SEXUAL MOAN. This subvocal tracking of the course of sexually climactic experience, a display available to both sexes, is said to be increasingly fashionable for females—among whom, of course, the sound tracing can be strategically employed to delineate an ideal development in the marked absence of anything like the reality.

8.4. FLOOR CUES. A worker in a typing pool makes a mistake on a clean copy and emits an imprecation; this leads to, and apparently is designed to lead to, a colleague's query as to what went wrong. A fully-communicated statement of disgust and displeasure can then be introduced, but now ostensibly as a reply to a request for information. A husband reading the evening paper suddenly brays out a laugh or a *Good God!*, thereby causing his wife to orient her listening, or even to ease the transition into talk by asking what it is. (A middle-class WIFE might be less successful in having her floor cues picked up.) Wanting to avoid being thought self-centered, intrusive, garrulous, or whatever—and consequently feeling uneasy about making an open request for a hearing in the particular circumstances—we act so as to encourage our putative listeners to make the initial move, inviting us to let them in on what we are experiencing. Interestingly, although in our society married couples may routinely breach many of the standard situational proprieties when alone together—this marking the gradual extension of symmetrical ritual license between them—the rule against persisting in public self-talk may be retained, with the incidental consequence that the couple can continue to use response crying as a floor cue.

8.5. AUDIBLE GLEE. A lower middle-class adolescent girl, sitting with four friends at a table in a crowded crêperie, is brought her order, a large crêpe covered with ice cream and nuts. As the dish is set before her, she is transfixed for a moment,

¹⁴ Solitarily experiencing a bout of intense pain, we sometimes follow its course with a half-moaned, half-grunted sound-tracing, as though casting the experience in a sort of dialogic form were a way to get through the moment and to maintain morale. We sometimes also employ such sound-tracings when witnesses are perceivedly present, producing in these circumstances a real scene-stopper—implying that our current, inner, acutely-painful state is the business everyone should be hanging on.

and wonder and pleasure escape with an *Oooooo!* In a casino, an elderly woman playing the slots alongside a friend hits a twenty-dollar pay-off, and above the sound of silver dropping in her tray peeps out a *Wheee!* Tarzan, besting a lion, roars out a Hollywood version of the human version of a lay version of a mammalian triumph call.

9. It is important, I believe, to examine the functioning of response cries when the crier is a ratified participant of on-going talk—being a participant of a conversational social encounter, as opposed to a task-structured one. While walking along talking to a friend, we can, tripping, unceremoniously interrupt our words to utter *Oops!*, even as the hand of our friend comes out to support us; as soon as this little flurry has passed, we revert back to our talk. All that this reveals, of course, is that when we are present to others as a fellow conversationalist, we are also present to them—as well as to all others in the situation—as fellow members of the gathering. The conversational role (short of what the phone allows) can never be the only accessible one in which we are active.

So response cries can function in work encounters, and can obtrude into conversational ones. Now we move on to a closer issue. If these responses are to be seen as ritualized expressions—and some as standardized vocal comments on circumstances that are not, or are no longer, beyond our emotional and physical control—then there is reason to expect that such cries will be used at still-further remove, namely in response to a VERBALLY PRESENTED review of something settled long ago, at a place quite removed. A broker tells a client over the phone that his stock has dropped; the client, well socialized in this sort of thing, says *Yipe!* or *Eek!* (Jack Benny made a specialty of this response cry.) A plumber tells us what our bill will be, and we say *Ouch!* Indeed, response cries are often employed thrice-removed from the crisis to which they are supposed to be a blurted response: a friend tells us about something startling and costly that happened to him, and at the point of disclosure we utter a response cry—on his behalf, as it were, out of sympathetic identification and as a sign that we are fully following his exposition. In fact, we may offer a response cry when he recounts something that happened to someone ELSE. In these cases, we are certainly far removed from the exigent event being replayed, and just as far removed from its consequences, including any question of having to take immediate rescuing action. Interestingly, there are some cries which seem to occur more commonly in our response to another's fate as it is recounted to us (good or bad), than they do in our response to our own. *Oh, wow!* is an example.

We can play all these response games because our choice of vocalization allows the recipient, or rather hearer, to treat the sound as something to which a specific spoken reply is not required. To the plumber, we are precisely NOT saying: 'Does the bill have to be that high?'—such a statement would require a reply, to the possible embarrassment of all.

Having started with response cries in the street, our topic has moved into the shelter of conversations. But it should not be assumed from this that the behaviors in question—response cries—have somehow been transmuted into full-fledged creatures of discourse. That is not the way they function. These cries are conventionalized utterances which are specialized for an informative role; but in the

linguistic and propositional sense, they are not statements. Obviously, information is provided when we utter response cries in the presence of others, whether or not we are in a state of talk at the time. That is about the only reason we utter them in the first place, and the reason they are worth studying. But to understand how these sounds function in social situations, particularly during talk, one must first understand the source of the prototypes of which they are designed to be recognizable versions. What comes to be made of a particular individual's show of 'natural emotional expression' on any occasion is a considerably awesome thing, not dependent on the existence anywhere of natural emotional expressions. But whatever is made of such an act by its maker and its witnesses is different from what is made of openly-designed and openly-directed communication.

10. At the beginning of this paper it was argued that extended self-talk, if discovered, reflects badly on the talker. Then it was observed that elements in the situation can considerably mitigate the impropriety of talking to ourselves publicly—and that, in any case, we are prepared to breach the injunction against public self-talk when, in effect, to sustain this particular propriety would go even harder on our reputations. Much the same position could be taken with respect to interjected imprecations. In both cases, one can point to some hitch in the well-managed flow of controlled events, and the quick application of an ostensibly self-directed pronouncement to establish evidence—a veneer—of control, poise, and competency. Although response cries do not, on the surface, involve words uttered even to oneself—being IN PROTOTYPE merely a matter of non-symbolic emotional expression—they apparently come to function as means of striking a self-defensible posture in the face of extraordinary events, much as does exposed self-talk. However, one routine source of trouble in the management of the world is, interestingly enough, the management of talk itself. So again we have response cries, but this time ones that are constantly uttered.

First, there is the well-known filled pause (usually written *ah* or *uh* or *um*) employed by speakers when they have lost their places, can't find a word, are momentarily distracted, or otherwise find they are departing from fluently-sustained speech. Response CRIES seems an awkward term for such unblurted subvocalizations; but they do, I think, function like response cries, if only in that they facilitate tracking. In effect, speakers make it evident that, although they do not now have the word or phrase they want, they are giving their attention to the matter and have not cut themselves adrift from the effort at hand. A word search, invisible and inaudible in itself, is thus voluntarily accompanied by a sound shadow—a sound, incidentally, that could easily be withheld merely by otherwise managing the larynx—all to the end of assuring that something worse than a temporary loss of words has not happened, and incidentally holding the speaker's claim to the floor.¹⁵ (Interestingly, in radio broadcasting, where visual facial signs of a word search can't be effective,

¹⁵ A case can be made that, in some English-speaking circles, the familiar hesitation markers are systematically employed in slightly different ways. For example, *uh* might be heard when the speaker had forgotten a proper name; *oh* might occur when he knew a series of facts, but was trying to decide which of them could be appropriately cited or best described for the hearers. The unfilled or silent pause participates in this specialization—giving one reason, alas, to think of it as a response cry, too. Here see the useful paper of James 1972.

the filling of pauses by a search sound or a prolongation of a vowel has much to recommend it: speakers are under obligation to confirm that nothing has gone wrong with the studio's equipment, as well as their own—the floor in this case being a radio station. If only inexperienced broadcasters frequently employ filled pauses, it is because professionals can manage speech flow, especially reading aloud, without the hitches in encoding which, were they to occur, would equally give professionals reasons to ritualize evidence of what was occurring.)

In addition to the filled-pause phenomenon, consider the very standard form of self-correction which involves the breaking-off of a word or phrase that is apparently not the one we wanted, and our hammering home of a corrected version with increased loudness and tempo, as if to catch the error before it hit the ground and shattered the desired meaning. Here the effect is to show that we are very much alive to the way our words should have come out; we are somewhat shocked and surprised at our failure properly to encode an appropriate formulation the first time round, and the rapidity and force of the correct version seem to suggest how much on our toes we really are. We display our concern and the mobilization of our effort at the expense of smooth speech-production—electing to save a little of our reputation for presence of mind, over and against that for fluency. Again, as with filled pauses, one has what is ostensibly a bit of pure expression, i.e. a transmission providing direct evidence (not relayed through semantic reference) of the state of the transmitter, but now an expression that has been cut and polished into a standard shape to serve the reputational contingencies of its emitter.

11. Earlier it was suggested that imprecations were somewhat like truncated, self-addressed statements, but not wholly so. Later these lexicalized exclamations were shown to function not unlike response cries. Now we must try to decide where they belong.

Suppose that someone brings you the news that he has failed in a task you have seriously set him. Your response to the news can be: *I knew it! Did you have to?* In the styling I have in mind, this turn at talk contains two moves and a change of 'footing': the first move (uttered half under the breath with the eyes turned upward) is a bit of self-talk, or something presented in that guise—the sort of open aside which adults are especially prone to employ in exasperated response to children, servants, foreigners, and other grades who easily qualify for moments of non-person treatment. The second move (*Did you have to?*) is conventionally directed communication. Observe that such a turn at talk will oblige its recipient to offer an apology or a counter-account, locking the participants into an interchange. But although the recipient of the initial two-move turn will be understood to have overheard the self-addressed segment, he will have neither the right nor the obligation to reply to it specifically, at least in the sense that he does in regard to the conventionally communicated second portion.

Now shift from extended self-talk to the truncated form—imprecation: *Shit! Did you have to?* Given the same histrionics, one again has a two-move turn, with a first move that can't be answered in a conventional way. If the respondent does address the remark to this blurted-out portion, it will be to the psychic state presumably indexed by it—much as when we comfort people who have burst into tears, or when

we upbraid them for loss of self-control. Or the respondent may have to venture a frame ploy, attempting to counter a move by forcing its maker to change the interpretive conventions that apply to it—as in the snappy comeback *Not here*, injected immediately after the expletive. In all this, and in the fact that standard lexicalizations are employed, *I knew it!* and *Shit!* are similar. However, although *I knew it!* follows grammatical constraints for well-formed sentences, *Shit!* need not, even if one appeals to the context in order to see how it might be expanded into a statement. *Shit!* need no more elide a sentence than need a laugh, groan, sob, snicker, or giggle—all vocalizations that occur frequently, except in the utterances ordinarily presented for analysis by linguists. Nor, I think, does it help understanding very much to define *Shit!* as a well-formed sentence with *NP!* as its structure. Here, of course, imprecations are exactly like response cries. For it is the essence of response cries that they be presented as if mere expression—and not recipient-directed, proposition-like statements—were involved, at least on the face of it.

Imprecations, then, might best be considered not as a form of self-talk at all, but rather as a type of response cry. Unlexicalized cries have come to be somewhat conventionalized, and imprecations have merely extended the tendency, further ritualizing ritualizations. Since religious life already sets aside a class of words to be treated with reserve and ranked with respect to severity, response crying has borrowed them—or so it would seem.

Insofar as self-talk is structurally different from the normal kind, imprecatory utterances (like other response cries) are too, only more so. And because of this sharp, underlying difference between conventionally directed statements and imprecatory interjections, the two can be given radically different roles in the functioning of particular interaction systems; they serve close together, in complementary distribution and without confusion.

Consider tennis: during the open state of talk sustained in such a game, a player who misses an 'easy' shot can response-cry an imprecation loudly enough for opponents and partner to hear. On the other hand, a player making a 'good' shot is not likely to be surprised if an opponent offers a complimentary statement about him to him. (As these two forms of social control help frame his own play, so he will participate in the two forms that frame his opponents'.) But, of course, good taste forbids a player to address opponents in praise of his own efforts—just as they must allow him elbow room, and not reply directly to his cries of self-disgust. A player may, however, use directed, full-fledged statements to convey self-castigation and (when directed to his partner) apology. Response cries and directed statements here comprise a closely-working pair of practices, part of the ritual resources of a single interaction system. And their workings can be intermingled because of their structural difference, not in spite of it. Given this arrangement, it is understandable that a player will feel rather free to make a pass at ironically praising himself in statements made to opponents or partner, correctly sensing that his words could hardly be misframed as literal ones. (That he might employ this device just to induce others to communicate a mitigated view of his failure merely attests again to the various conveniences that can be made of forms of interaction.)

Just as response cries can form a complementary resource with conventionally

directed statements, so they can with self-directed ones. For example, in casino craps, a shooter has a right to preface a roll, especially a 'come out', with self-encouraging statements of a traditional kind—directed to the fates, the dice, or some other ethereal recipient; this grandstanding (as dignified gamblers call this self-talk) sometimes serves to bring the other players into a cadence and peaking of attention. When, shortly, the shooter 'craps out', he is allowed a well-fleshed imprecation, coincidental with the dissolution of the table's coördinated involvement. So again we find complementarity and a division of labor, with self-talk located where collective hope is to be built up, and imprecatory response cry where it is to be abandoned.

12.1. DISCUSSION. Written versions of response cries seem to have a speech-contaminating effect, consolidating and codifying actual response cries—so that, in many cases, reality begins to mimic artifice, as in *Ugh!*, *Pant pant*, *Gulp*, and *Tsk tsk*; this route to ritualization is presumably unavailable to non-human animals.¹⁶ This easy change is only to be expected: response cries themselves are by way of being second-order ritualizations, already part of an unserious (or less than serious) domain.

Here cartoons and comics are to be taken seriously. These printed pictures must present entire scenarios through a small number of 'panels' or frozen moments, sometimes only one. The cartoonist has great need, then, for expressions that will clearly document the presumed inner state of his figures, and clearly display the point of the action. Thus, if individuals in real life need response cries to clarify the drama of their circumstances, cartoon figures need them even more. So we obtain written versions of something that could be thought originally to have no set, written form. Moreover, cartoon figures portrayed as alone must be portrayed acting in such a way as to make their circumstances and inner states available to the viewer (much as real persons do when in the presence of others), and included in this situational-like behavior are response cries. (So also in the case of movies showing persons ostensibly alone.) In consequence, the practice of emitting response cries when alone is tacitly assumed to be normal, presumably with at least some contaminating effect upon actual behavior when alone.

12.2. A point might be made about the utterances used in response cries. As suggested, they seem to be drawn from two sources: taboo but full-fledged words (involving blasphemy and—in English—Anglo-Saxon terms for body functions) and from the broad class of non-word vocalizations ('vocal segregates', to employ Trager's term, 1958:1–12)—of which response cries are one, but only one, variety.

There is a nice division of linguistic labor here. Full-fledged words that are socially acceptable are allocated to communication in the openly directed sense, while taboo words and non-words are specialized for the more ritualized kind of

¹⁶ The carry-back from the written to the spoken form is especially marked in the matter of punctuation marks, for here writing has something that speaking hasn't. Commonly used lexicalizations are: *underline*, *footnote*, *period*, *question mark*, *quotes*, and *parenthetically*. Written abbreviations (such as British *p* for *pence*) also enter the spoken domain. Moreover, there is a carry-back to the spoken form of the pictorial-orthographic form of the presumed approximated sound-effects of an action: *Pow!*, *Bam!* are examples.

communication. In brief, the character of the word bears the mark of the use that is destined for it; and we have a case of complementary distribution on a grand scale.

Non-words as a class are not productive in the linguistic sense, their role as interjections being one of the few that has evolved for them. (This is not to say that a particular vocal segregate can't have a very lively career, quickly spreading from one segment of a language community to others; the response cry *Wow!* is a recent example.) Many taboo words, however, are quite productive, especially in the tradition maintained in certain subcultures, where some of these words occur (if not function) in almost every syntactic position.¹⁷ Furthermore, curse words are drawn from familiar scales of such words, and choice will sharply reflect (in the sense of display, negotiate etc.) the terms of the relationship between speaker and hearer; non-words don't function very effectively in this way.

Note that non-words can't quite be called part of a language. For example, there tends to be no canonical 'correct' spelling. When and where convention does begin to establish heavily a particular form and spelling, the term can continue to be thought of as not a word by its users, as if any written version must continue to convey that a rough-and-ready effort at transcription is at work. (I take it here that, in our society, a feature of what we think of as regular words is that we feel the written form is as 'real' a version as the spoken.) Further, although we have efficient means of reporting another's use of an expletive (either literally or by established paraphrastic form), this is not the case with non-words. So, too, the voiced and orthographic realizations of some of these constructions involve consonant clusters that are phonotactically irregular; furthermore, their utterance can allow the speaker to chase after the course of an action analogically with stretches, glides, turns, and heights of pitch foreign to his ordinary speech. Yet the sound that covers any particular non-word can stand by itself, is standardized within a given language community, and varies from one language community to another, in each case like full-fledged words.¹⁸ And the non-words of a particular language comply with and introduce certain of the same phonotactic constraints as do its regular words (Jefferson 1974:183-6). Interestingly, there is some evidence that what one language community handles with a non-word, other language communities do too.

On the whole, then, non-word vocalizations might best be thought of as semi-words. Observe that the characterization provided here (and by linguists) of these half-caste expressions takes no note that some (such as *Uh?* and *Shh!*) are clearly part of directed speech, and are often interchangeable with a well-formed word (here *What?* and *Hush!*); but others (such as the *uh* as filled pause) belong to a radically different species of action—viz., putatively pure expression, response

¹⁷ Admittedly, even in these productive cases, taboo words are not entirely vulnerable to syntactic analysis. Saying that *the fuck* in a sentence like *What the fuck are you doing?* is adjectival in function, or that *bloody* in *What are you bloody well doing?* is an adverb, misses something of the point. Here specific syntactic location seems to be made into a convenience; somehow the intensifying word is meant to color uniformly the whole of the utterance in which it occurs (cf. Quang Phuc Dong 1971).

¹⁸ Quine (1959:6) has an example: "'Ouch'" is not independent of social training. One need only to prick a foreigner to appreciate that it is an English word.'

crying. (Imprecations and some other well-formed interjections provide an even more extreme case, for exactly the same such word may sometimes serve as an ostensibly undirected cry, but at other times be integrated directly into a recipient-directed sentence under a single intonation contour.) Here again, one can see a surface similarity covering a deep underlying difference, but not the kind ordinarily addressed by transformationalists.

Apart from qualifying as semi-words, response cries can be identified in another way, namely as articulated free-standing examples of the large class of presumed 'natural expressions' or signs meant to be taken to index directly the state of the transmitter—some of which, like voice qualifiers, can paralinguistically ride roughshod across natural syntactic units of speech. Although gender differences in the basic semantic features of speech seem not very marked in our society, response cries and other paralinguistic features of communication are. Indeed, speech AS A WHOLE might not be a useful base to employ in considering gender differences, since it cancels sharp contrasts revealable in special components of discourse.

12.3. Earlier, I suggested that a response cry can draw on the coöperation of listeners—requiring that they hear and understand the cry, but act as though it had not been uttered in their hearing. It is in this way that such a form of behavior, ostensibly not designed for directed linguistic communication at all, can be injected into public life—in certain cases, even into conversations and broadcasts. In brief, a form of response perceived as native to one set of circumstances is set into another. In the case of blasphemous cries, what is inserted is already something that has been borrowed from another realm, semantic communication; so the behavior can be said to have been returned to its natural place, but now so much transformed as to be little like a native.

This structural reflexivity is, I believe, a fundamental fact of our communicative life. What is ritualized here, in the last analysis, is not an expression, but a self-other alignment—an interactional arrangement. Nor, as earlier suggested, is that the bottom of embedding. For example, when a speaker finds he has skated rather close to the edge of discretion or tact, he may give belated recognition to where his words have gone—marking a halt by uttering a plaintive *Oops!*, meant to evoke the image of someone who has need of this particular response cry, the whole enactment having an unserious, openly theatrical character. Similarly, in the face of another's reminder that we have failed in fulfilling some obligation, we can utter *Darn it* in an openly false manner—as a taunting, even insolent, denial of the imprecation we might normally be expected to employ. In brief, what is placed into the directed discourse in such cases is not a response cry, but a mocked-up individual uttering a mocked-up response cry. (All of this is especially evident when the cry itself is a spoken version of the written version of the cry, as when a listener responds to the telling of another's near-disaster by ungulpingly uttering the word *Gulp*.) So, too, the filled pause *uh*, presumably a self-expression designed to allow hearers to track speaker's engagement in relevant (albeit silent) production work, can apparently be employed with malice aforethought to show that the word that does follow (and is ostensibly the one wanted all along) is to be heard as one which the speaker might not naturally use (Jefferson, 192-4). In this case a 'correction format' has been used as a

convenience, its work set into an environment for which it was not originally designed. Similarly, on discovering that he has said *April the 21st* instead of *May the 21st*, an announcer may (as one type of remedial work) repeat the error immediately, this time with a quizzical, speaking-to-oneself tone of voice, as though this sort of error were enough of a rarity to cause him to break frame; but this response itself he may try to guy, satirizing self-talk (and self-talkers) even as he engages in it, the transformation confirmed by the little laugh he gives thereafter, to mark the end to error-making AND playful correction.

The moral is that what is sometimes put into a sentence may first have to be analysed as something that could not occur naturally in such a setting, just as a solitary's self-comments may first have to be analysed as something found exclusively in social intercourse. And the transformations which these alien bits of speech undergo, when set into their new milieu, speak as much to the competence of ethologists as grammarians.

A turn at talk that contains a directed statement AND a segment of self-talk (or an imprecation or a non-lexicalized response cry) does not merely involve two different moves, but MOVES OF TWO DIFFERENT ORDERS. This is very clear, e.g., when someone in or out of a conversation finds cause to blurt out *Shit!*—and then, in apparent embarrassment, quickly adds *Excuse me*, sometimes specifically directing the apology to the person most likely to have been offended. Here, patently, the first move is an exposed response cry; the second is a directed message whose implied referent happens to be the first. The two moves fit together nicely—indeed, some speakers essay an imprecation knowing that they will have a directed apology to compensate for it; but this fit pertains to how the two moves function as an action–response pair, self-contained within a single turn at talk, and not to any ultimate commonality of form. So, too, when an announcer coughs rather loudly, says *Excuse me* with greater urgency of tone than he likes, and then follows with a well-designed giggle: here we have a three-move sequence of sounded interference, directed statement, and response cry—the second move a comment on the first, and the third move a comment on the second move's comment. Any effort to analyse such strips of talk linguistically by trying to uncover a single deep structure that accounts for the surface sequence of words is destined to obscure the very archeological issues which the generative approach was designed to develop. A blender makes a mush of apples and oranges; a student shouldn't.

A student shouldn't, even when there is no obvious segmentation to help with the sorting. For now it is to be admitted that through the WAY we say something that is part of our avowedly directed discourse we can speak—ostensibly at least—for our own benefit at the same time, displaying our self-directed (and/or non-directed) response to what is occurring. We thereby simultaneously cast an officially-intended recipient of our proposition-like avowals as an overhearer of our self-talk. The issue is not merely that of the difference between what is said and what is meant—i.e. the issue of implicature; rather, the issue is that one stream of information is conveyed as avowedly-intended verbal communication, while the other is simultaneously conveyed through a structural ruse, i.e. our allowing witnesses a glimpse into the dealings we are having with ourselves. It is in this way that one can account for the apparently anomalous character of imprecations of the *Fuck you!* form. It might

appear as if one person were making a directed verbal avowal to another by means of an imperative statement with deleted subject. But in fact the format is restricted to a relatively small list of expletives, such as *screw*; and none qualify as ordinary verbs, being constrained in regard to embedded and conjoined forms in ways that standard verbs in the elided imperative form are not (cf. Quang Phuc Dong).

Nor is this analysis of the unconversational aspects of certain conversational utterances meant to deny the traditional concept of transformation and embedding; rather, the power of the latter is displayed. Waiting with her husband and a friend for the casino cashier to count down her bucket of silver, a happy player says, *And when I saw the third 7 come up and stop, I just let out 'Eeeee'*. Here, through direct quotation, a speaker brings to well-circumscribed three-person talk what was, a few minutes before, the broadly accessible eruption of a single. This shows clearly that what starts out as a response cry (or, for that matter, as any sounded occurrence—human, animal, or inanimate) can be conversationally replayed—can be reset into ordinary discourse through the unlimited power of sound mimicry.

13. CONCLUSION. The public utterance of self-talk, imprecations, and response cries constitutes a special variety of impulsive, blurted actions—namely, vocalized ones. Our tacit theory of human nature recommends that these actions are ‘purely expressive’, ‘primitive’, or ‘unsocialized’, violating in some way the self-control and self-possession we are expected to maintain in the presence of others, providing witnesses with a momentary glimpse behind our masks.

However, the point about these blurtings is not that they are particularly ‘expressive’. Obviously, in this sense of that word, ordinary talk is necessarily expressive, too. Naked feelings can agitate a paragraph of discourse almost as well as they can a solitary imprecation. Indeed, it is impossible to utter a sentence without coloring the utterance with some kind of perceivable affect—even if (in special cases) only with the emotionally distinctive aura of affectlessness. Nor is the point about segmented blurtings that they are particularly unsocialized, for obviously they come to us as our language does, not from our own invention. Their point lies elsewhere. One must look to the light these ventings provide, not to the heat they dispel.

In every society, one can contrast occasions and moments for silence with occasions and moments for talk. In our own, one can go on to say that by and large (and especially among the unacquainted) silence is the norm, and talk something for which warrant must be present. Silence, after all, is very often the deference we owe in a social situation to others present. In holding our tongue, we give evidence that such thought as we are giving to our own concerns is not presumed by us to be of any moment to the others present, and that the feelings which these concerns invoke in ourselves are owed no sympathy. Without such enjoined modesty, there could be no public life, but only a babble of childish adults pulling at one another’s sleeves for attention. The mother to whom we would be saying *Look, no hands* could not look or reply, for she would be saying *Look, no hands* to someone else.

Talk, however, presumes that our thoughts and concerns will have some relevance, interest, or weight for others; and in this we can hardly avoid presuming a little. Talk, of course, in binding others to us, can also do so for protracted periods of

time. The compensation is that we can sharply restrict this demand to a small portion of those present—indeed, often to only one.

The fugitive communications I have been considering constitute a third possibility—minor, no doubt, but of some significance if only because of what they tell us about silence and talk. Our blurtings make a claim of sorts upon the attention of everyone in the social situation—a claim that our inner concerns should be theirs, too; but unlike the claim made by talk, ours here is only for a limited period of attention. Simply put, this invitation into our interiors tends to be made only when it will be easy for other persons present to see where the voyage takes them. What is precipitous about these expressions, then, is not the way they are emitted, but the circumstances which render their occurrence acceptable. The invitation we are free to extend in these situations we would be insane to extend in others.

Just as most public arrangements oblige and induce us to be silent, and many other arrangements to talk, so a third set allows and obliges us momentarily to open up our thoughts and feelings and ourselves, through sound, to whoever is present. Response cries, then, do not mark a flooding of emotion outward, but a flooding of relevance in.

There is linguistic point to the consideration of this genre of behavior. Response cries such as *Eek!* might be seen as peripheral to the linguist's domain; but imprecations and self-talk are more germane, passing beyond semi-word vocal segregates to the traditional materials of linguistic analysis. The point is that all three forms of this blurred vocalization—semi-word response cries, imprecations, and self-talk—are creatures of social situations, not states of talk. A closed circle of ratified participants oriented to engaging exclusively with one another in avowedly-directed communications is not the base; a gathering, with its variously-oriented, oftentimes silent and unacquainted members, is. Further, all three varieties of ejaculatory expression are conventionalized as to form, occasion of occurrence, and social function. Finally, these utterances are too commonly met with in daily life, surely, to justify scholarly neglect.

Once we recognize that there is a set of conventionalized expressions that must be referred to social situations, not conversations—i.e. once we appreciate that there are communications specifically designed for use outside states of talk—then it is but a step to seeing that ritualized versions of these expressions may themselves be embedded in the conventionally-directed talk to be found in standard conversational encounters. Appreciating this, we can then go on to see that, even though these interjections come to be employed in conversational environments, they cannot be adequately analysed there without reference to their original functioning outside states of talk.

It is recommended, then, that linguists broaden their net, to bring in uttering that is not talking, and to deal with social situations—not merely with jointly sustained talk. Incidentally, linguists might then be better able to countenance inroads that others can be expected to make into their conventional domain; for I believe that talk itself is intimately regulated and closely geared to its context through non-vocal gestures which are very differently distributed than the particular language and subcodes employed by any set of participants—although just where these boundaries of gesture-use ARE to be drawn remains an unstudied question.

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