

From Inchoate Pronouns to Proper Nouns: a Theory Fragment with 9/11, Gertrude Stein, and an East German Ethnography

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Opening, and some vocabulary

In this essay I want first to sketch a fragment of a theory, and then show some examples of the uses of that theory. The fragmentary theory owes a good deal to the wider theory of rhetoric culture, whose argument is something like this: social life does not move as in serried ranks, or merely through plainly specifiable causal forces, but also through constant messy and mutual action and reaction, a sort of Brownian motion, of people upon one another. In this setting people use learned schemas of thought constantly to influence and move one another; but those very schemas are themselves plastic and mutable, the material of constant symbolic play (Carrithers 2005a; Carrithers 2005b). The consequence of this is that we cannot read off the ways in which people respond to events, or in which they seek to shape events, simply from a schedule of their ideologies, or their cultural schemas, or their social organisation. On the contrary, we are fanciful animals, for whom situations are always drenched in alternatives, in apprehension and hope, in a constant play of possibilities. In this essay I will be concerned with our play with pronouns, collective nouns, and proper nouns; in short, play with our handles on people.

The theory begins at the very point at which anthropology and history come together — or, sometimes, fail to come together. That point lies in the *historicity* of social life, and here I mean historicity to refer simply to the eventfulness of things, to the fact that things keep going on, relentlessly, whatever the plans we lay or the devices we invent to forestall events (Carrithers 1992). Recently the word ‘historicity’ has been used in a slightly different way by Hirsch and Stewart, who mean by it ‘the manner in which persons operating under the constraints of social ideologies make sense of the past, while anticipating the future.’ (Hirsch & Stewart 2005) This is an entirely admirable and useful definition for their purposes, but cuts in quite a different direction than the one I take here. I want sharply to separate things that happen from the sense that is made of them, so that we arrive at some clearer view of that moment when confusion moves to clarity, when uncertainty moves to certainty. I will want to say that we are constantly confronted with a *situation* to which we must respond. Now I am using the word ‘situation’ here to designate the result of some episode of historicity. So, to take a spectacular example which I will use shortly, the flying of one jet airliner into the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York, followed by the flying of another into the South Tower of the World Trade Center, created a *situation*, and the noticeable pause before resources of explanation, narration, and clarification (however helpful or not) were marshalled evokes just the sense of a gap between happening and response, between historicity and rhetoric, that I want to stress here. Nor do I mean that historicity happens only on a world-historical scale. Just yesterday, after an e-mail exchange with Colleague A, the bright idea struck me that other colleagues would benefit from my last message. So, forgetting that the whole conversation with Colleague A was attached, I sent off my message to all concerned, and Colleague B was among the recipients. But, alas, there

was buried in the attached correspondence with A some reference to B, and though in the original context that reference was harmless, in the new context it was subject to misunderstanding. Alas again! It *was* misunderstood! I had created a *situation* ... and I then had to experience the gap between the situation and the rhetorical solution, which was only achieved when I figured out how best to talk to those involved, how best to marshal my narrative rhetoric. And finally: a situation can be brief and quickly settled, as I suppose I settled my e-mail *faux pas*; but a situation can be relatively enduring, as is the situation created by the attack on the Twin Towers. And let me make one final point about situations: the rhetoric meant to deal with a situation can itself create a new situation, or, to put it another way, rhetoric can itself create historicity, can be an event in itself. Thus the rhetoric of George Bush's government, notably the phrase 'war on terror', which was chosen from among so many other, and better, alternatives, became itself a difficult and troubling feature of the continuing situation.

I take my lead from James Fernandez, who has written widely and influentially of the way in which people form their response to situations through the use of an armoury of figures (in the sense of 'rhetorical figures'). He wrote of metaphor, which is so frequently used to explain people and situations, as

A strategic predication upon an inchoate pronoun (an I, a you, a we, a they) which makes a movement and leads to performance. (Fernandez 1986:8)

This may at first seem oracular, but in fact it is just condensed. In the first place, he is talking here of how people respond to a situation, and in using the word 'strategic' he suggests that the response is oriented to an end. 'Predication' refers just to an act of description, of attribution. Thus Fernandez gives the example of the then head of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover, calling the then Attorney General, Ramsey Clark, a 'jellyfish.' That 'strategic predication' on the Attorney General was Hoover's response to what he found an unacceptable situation, created by the Attorney General's criticism of his, Hoover's, running of the FBI as an ideological institution whose purpose was the glorification of Hoover.

Let me skip now to the end of Fernandez's dictum. Here 'a movement' refers in the first instance to the movement of mind and heart in the audience at which the strategic predication aims, in this case a plain denigration of the Attorney General. And the 'performance' refers to whatever action might follow on such a movement of mind and heart. Might the Attorney General be sacked? Might he be ignored in government circles? And here of course the point is that, where people intervene rhetorically in situations, they often mean to change that situation, move it to a different state, and so cause things to happen.

The remaining part of Fernandez's dictum, the 'inchoate pronoun (an I, a you, a we, a they),' is the main source of my theory fragment here. The word 'inchoate' means 'unformed,' 'disordered,' 'undeveloped,' 'not yet organised,' and so refers to the material on which the speaker's rhetorical imagination is going to work, the raw situation which is not yet grasped, packaged, not yet sent in a particular direction. And this raw material comprises the people involved, those persons in the situation who might seem, if only darkly and in potential, to be related to the speaker in some

way: if an 'I', then the speaker will be concerned to find his/her own place in the situation; if a 'we', then the concern is with him/herself and others in the same plight; and so forth, through the possibilities. So the effect of this phrase, 'inchoate pronouns,' is in the first place to stress that it is persons, and not inanimate nature, that are the topic of the moving rhetoric. Beyond that, the language of 'inchoate' suggests on one hand the as yet unmanaged, unmanipulated character of the situation, but on the other that the situation can be developed, can be subjected to movement and performance, so that what is at first unformed and unclear can become formed, directed, and clearly delineated. Fernandez's conceptual vocabulary is one of movement, of flow, and is to that extent based in historicity as I have defined it: the incessant interacting changeability which pervades human affairs and requires of us the ability to respond, to move ourselves and others, to delineate, and then to perform.

This idea has been developed, in the first place by Fernandez himself (Fernandez 1995) in an elaboration of the conceptual roots of the very idea of pronouns. But it has been elaborated in another direction as well, namely to show that it is not just metaphor, but any figurative way of talking about people that can have this structure. Thus it is possible to speak of narrative in a similar way:

A story is the strategic insertion of inchoate pronouns in an inchoate situation into a story line which makes a move and leads to a performance. (Carrithers 2007)

And this is the line I am going to follow, namely the way in which such insertion of an inchoate pronoun into a narrative takes place.

Since a theory, even a fragmentary one, can use a model, let me set out the following diagram, Figure 1, as a mental map for what follows. Even though Figure 1 is quintessentially static, I mean it to suggest the ways in which one's understanding of a situation may move, or be moved, from an absolutely unformed state, 'the inchoate' at the upper left, through successive stages of particularity and detail, potentially as far as personal names at the lower right. I differentiate, first, between 'the inchoate' and 'inchoate pronouns' because there are situations in which the question of agency may not yet be clear. For example, a fire starts: was it lightning or spontaneous combustion that started it, or did person or persons unknown take a hand? Once one suspects that there was personal agency, the speaker could start to speak, or at least to think, about a 'someone', i.e. an indefinite pronoun could begin to be used. And the rhetor could use 'everyone', or 'anyone' as well: 'it could have been anyone who started the fire, but everyone says somebody else did it.'

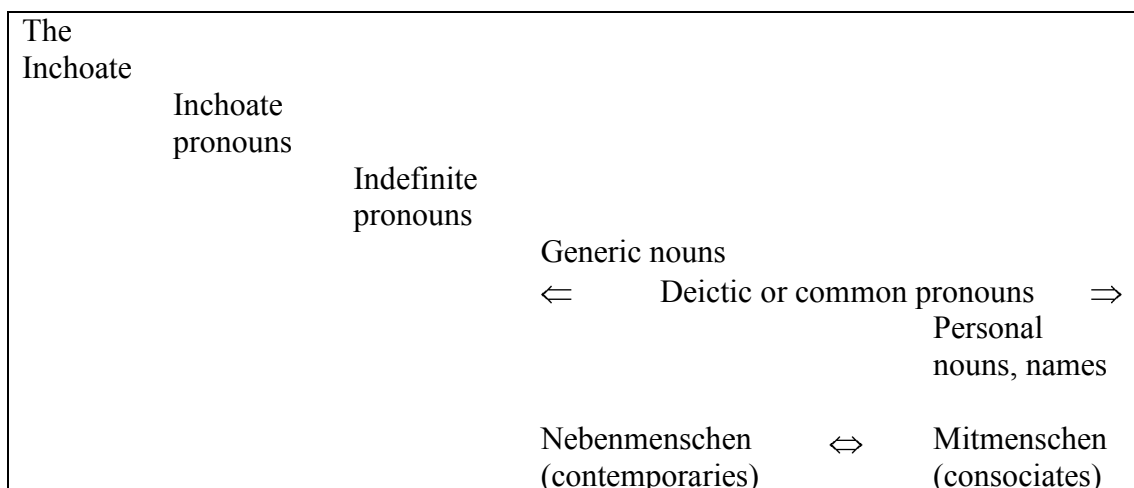


Figure 1.

At ‘generic nouns’ things get especially interesting. Take me as an example of a person who could moved from inchoate pronominality into being a character in a story. Generically speaking, I might be multitudes. I could be a man, an American, a driver, an academic, a Buddhist, a pedestrian, a consumer, a taxpayer, a native English speaker, or even a photographer. I could also be a father, a husband, and a son. With a little more verbal complexity I could be described also as a former resident of Colorado, as a present resident of Durham, and as a one-time Fulbright scholar in Sri Lanka. And there are many more genera I could be attributed to, including a number of not very complimentary ones which have no doubt passed rhetorically behind my back. So, depending on your purposes, I could be placed into a great variety of stories by the mere act of attribution or predication: no fancy rhetorical figures needed at all.

Moreover it is at the step of generic nouns, especially in the plural, that much of the rhetorical work that shapes our world gets done, by politicians, bureaucrats, and the press, by people on the street and in their homes, but also by anthropologists, historians, and sociologists, for we are plural rhetoricians as well. This is in part *Seeing like a State* (Scott 1998) territory, the world in which the state, or powerful others, lay designations on us, designations which have particular narrative consequences. Here the characters in stories can be women or men; immigrants, illegal immigrants, or asylum seekers; patients, nurses or doctors; civilians or soldiers; foreigners or natives; underage girls or old age pensioners; Germans, Zimbabweans, Ainu or Navajo; Muslims or Hindus; some part of a voting demographic; and so forth. Politicians of all stripes, attempting to achieve influence through nationalist, ethnic, religious, or special interest categorisation, utilise such rhetoric. But note, too, that social scientists make such designations their stock in trade as well. This was shown vividly by the social historian Lutz Niethammer: writing of the mid 1990s, he noted that more than five hundred books in the New York Public Library had the word ‘identity’ in their title, and that the great majority of these works concerned some generic, ‘collective or cultural identity,’ rather than personal or psychological identity (Niethammer 2000:21). So there were books on Jewish, or British, or German, or Japanese, or Afro-American generic identities, for example. A similar investigation

of the Durham University Library in 2008 reveals that, by this point, we have more than seven hundred titles with 'identity' in the title or keyword. More than nine tenths of these are books about some sort of generic, collective identity; and these are of course themselves only a very small portion of social science work which depends fundamentally on such generic attribution.

These generic attributions can, of course, be disputed: one may want to assert an opposed generic noun, a different and better character in a different story, or no generic character at all. Standing in line in some government office somewhere, or holding a brown envelope sent to me from some fluorescent-lit warren in a government high-rise, I may want to be my own character in my own story, not theirs: I am a human being, I am a *person*, I assert my own generic designation! One informant tells me that, in her childhood, she sometimes felt an immediate sense of rebellion when someone, perhaps on television, seemed to treat her as 'a member of the public': she was herself, not a nameless part of the mass! So there is no guarantee that any generic predications will go uncontested, no certainty that the rhetoric will convince everyone involved, even where, as so often, the designator has the power to act *as if* their rhetorical descriptor is the only one relevant in the situation, and to compel compliance.

The next item in my diagram comprises the deictic or common pronouns. By 'common' I mean just the pronouns which we ordinarily understand as such. Fernandez (Fernandez 1995) shows in passing that, whereas English at present has been called a five person system (I, we, you, s/he, they; thus ignoring the gender distinction in the singular third person), there are far more complex systems. English used to be a six person system, differentiating between the plural and the singular second person. Some systems may also differentiate between an exclusive 'we', in which the speaker and his/her putative group are embraced, but not that of the addressee, and an inclusive 'we', which does include the addressee. And then there are many further details possible, leading so far as 15 person systems, and to great complexity in the linguistic realization of pronouns (Forchheimer 1953; Harley & Ritter 2002). But in any case it is the deictic, the 'pointing' character of pronouns that are important here. In both writing and speech they can be used to 'point' to persons already mentioned earlier in discourse (anaphora); or they can be used with some other form of deixis, such as gesture or intonation, which can suggest, sometimes exactly, sometimes vaguely, the person or persons mentioned. And it is precisely because pronouns can point toward the vague and general, or the crisp and particular, that they stretch in the model from the one to the other.

So at last we come to individuals, persons with names, or at least individual designations. Across different languages, and within any one language, there may be very different ways of indicating individual human beings. Thus the Queen of England could be just plain Elizabeth Windsor, or she could be, well, *the Queen*; in the second person she could be 'ma'am', or in the third person, if she is present, 'her Majesty.' Some societies use teknonyms, others patronyms, yet others matronyms to designate individuals. Some societies use kin terms ubiquitously, so that a personal name for someone is either little known, or even secret; and/or people may be known in the third person by a nickname, one which they themselves may not know, or may at least make out not to know. But in any case, the resources for specifying an individual, rather than a category or a group, are unimaginably rich in any human

language, such that in both speech and writing we are well able not only to indicate a particular person, but to attribute to him or her a broad series of qualities, both psychic and physical, both behavioural and social. Moreover, in attributing qualities to persons, we also bestow them with a place in some plotline: we can describe persons such that no-one else could be mistaken for *that* person, *that* character in *that* narrative.

There is also another contrast between the knowledge of someone that we have through generic nouns, whether singular or plural, and knowledge of specific individuals, namely that these two forms of understanding can be radically different in nature. This is the contrast drawn at the bottom of the diagram, the contrast between what Alfred Schutz (Schutz 1967 [1932]) called ‘Nebenmenschen’ and ‘Mitmenschen’ — or, as these are translated into English, between ‘contemporaries’ and ‘consociates.’ Contemporaries are those we know as types, those whom we can recognise and treat appropriately just insofar as we properly recognise their type. The type of ‘policeman’ often occurs to me as the best example of someone whom we know as a contemporary, that is, generically, through assigning them to a particular category. But of course there are many other types: ‘plumber,’ ‘bus driver,’ ‘classical musician,’ or ‘soldier,’ for example. ‘Woman’ and ‘man,’ ‘girl’ and ‘boy,’ or their local equivalent, do a lot of generic work as well. And then there are paired types, such as ‘customer’ and ‘salesperson’ or ‘doctor’ and ‘patient,’ which enable us to perform more or less creditably with total strangers. These are all ways of characterising people who live ‘beside’ (*neben*) us, so to speak; they form a world with which we live, but not through intimate involvement and the discovery of individual life stories and vicissitudes, but only through our knowledge of their social genus, and the accompanying knowledge of their appropriate roles, and of our own roles in respect to them. They are strangers.

The contrast, Mitmenschen or consociates, we know in a very different way. Consociates are people we grow old with, whose lives we participate in, whom we know intimately and in their own terms. We are entwined with them; we are able to join in their absolutely individual life story, and to that extent, we see beyond any generic designation to particularities of attitude, experience, and reaction. We have, with consociates, a ‘thou-relationship’, an intimacy and mutual knowledge of one another face-to-face, and a ‘we-relationship,’ in that we have experiences in common with them; we have, at least in part, ‘grown old together’ with them (Schutz 1967 [1932]). Concomitantly, the knowledge we have of consociates is essentially different from the knowledge we have of contemporaries. Whereas contemporaries are those whom we understand through categorisation, typification, and with whom we can relate successfully through generic templates, consociates are those we have touched, smelled, and with whom we share mutual times, mutual places, mutual autobiographical memories, and mutually experienced emotions. A brief gesture, an inflection, a raised eyebrow can convey the equivalent of a novel to a consociate. And indeed, if my mental map is bounded on the left by sheer ignorance, it is bounded on the right by the inexpressible: those forms of intimate knowing — the tone of a voice, the style of a movement, a particular smell, a remembered situation, a joke where ‘you just had to be there to appreciate it’ — which even the most gifted might fail to convey successfully to people who were not present.

Now let me be clear what I am suggesting with this theory fragment. First, I am suggesting a sketch of a phenomenology of lived social experience, hanging without from ignorance on one side and inexpressibility on the other, and arrayed within across a spectrum from vagueness to absolutely vivid specificity. An event or presence may become known only as something inchoate, perhaps hardly apprehended at all. Then, to the extent that it is an event involving persons, we may go on to apprehend it through inchoate pronouns, and then, a bit more concretely, through indefinite pronouns. Some events we may then apprehend still more concretely through generic, typifying nouns, and through the typical narratives that go with typifying nouns. Our apprehension could stop there, or it could go further, so that we come to know the persons more intimately, not as types but as consociates, with the sort of phenomenal knowledge that exists as much in the muteness of touch and smell as in the fluency of sight and sound. Perhaps few events or apprehensions cover the whole spectrum, from bare intimation to full intimacy. But however that may be, the spectrum is, in the first instance, a map of largely passive recognition, of passive competence, of what may happen to us as *patients*, as people to whom things happen, to use a vocabulary I have suggested elsewhere (Carrithers 2005a).

But that is not the main thrust of my argument. My main aim is to take this theory fragment to a second stage, to see it as a theory not only of patients but also of *agents*, and very specifically as a theory of rhetorical agency, and therefore as a matter of how people marshal different forms of pronominality to make a case, tell a story, and so move people from ignorance to understanding of a situation. I now present three cases of such rhetoric. What they share is a common, truth-seeking, *documentary* purpose: each endeavours to describe and interpret a broad, sprawling situation that goes beyond what any single human being could know face-to-face on the basis of their intimate experience alone. And so the rhetors must willy-nilly range far beyond the familiarly known persons, the consociates with their personal names, who populate the far right of the diagram, into the broader territories in the middle and on the left of the diagram, and so toward strangers.

Case 1. ABC news and the first moments of 9/11

On the 11th of September in 2001, at about two o'clock in the afternoon Greenwich Mean Time, I was walking down Silver Street in Durham when I noticed, in the window of a television rental business, the broadcast image of a skyscraper on fire. I made inquiries and soon discovered that the broadcast images were from New York, where the time was about nine in the morning; that the skyscraper was at the World Trade Center; and that this was probably one of those moments which become what psychologists call 'flashbulb memories,' defining occasions whose import is remembered vividly long afterwards by whole populations. I spent several hours thereafter glued to a television, and was able to experience, and later to puzzle over, the gap between the raw fact of what was happening, which was for most of this time highly uncertain, represented only by grainy and mostly distant television footage, and what was being made of those events by broadcast journalists. I was able to witness, in other words, the gap between the rising of a situation and the mobilising of rhetoric to render that situation intelligible. In what follows I offer very brief transcriptions of the very beginning of the situation, drawn from the Good Morning America show of the ABC network, originating from New York itself. (Recordings

of this, and of other national and international news sources covering the events, are available at http://www.archive.org/details/sept_11_tv_archive#top; accessed 10 January 2008.)

The events first burst into the Good Morning America show at 8:51 AM New York time when, following an ad for a later ABC news program, the camera returned to the two anchors who then hosted the program, Diane Sawyer and Charles Gibson (hereinafter DS and CG), seated in comfortable chairs on the set. They spoke quite strictly, and in that sense professionally, within the conventions of American broadcast journalism. Those conventions appear here through one of the many facets of the complex idea of 'objectivity', namely a stress on being clear about what is known and what is not yet known. There is a second convention involved as well, namely that broadcasters must keep talking, they may allow no dead time, no embarrassing silences while they try to find out what is happening ... and that despite the fact that, for much of the short slices of broadcast I present here, drawn from little more than ten minutes air time, what they know is drawn almost wholly from very distant telephoto shots, presumably from a patrolling aircraft, of smoke pouring out of the North Tower, and later from highly fragmentary and unclear reports from street level.

This is the beginning of their report:

DS: We want to tell you what we know as we know it, but there is a report in that there has been some sort of explosion [here the picture switches to, and holds on, a slightly shaky airborne telephoto shot of the North Tower burning] at the World Trade Center in New York City. One report said, and we couldn't confirm any of this, that a plane may have hit one of the two towers of the World Trade Center. ... We don't know anything about what they have concluded happened there this morning, but we're going to find out and of course make sure that everybody knows on the air ...

These are rich utterances, but let me concentrate only on the inchoate pronouns which begin to take shape here. DS begins with a 'we' ('*we* want to tell you...'), which refers in the first instance to the two anchors themselves, but might also extend to the otherwise unseen news organisation behind them. That shadowy set of characters, forever nameless, does indeed come forward very slightly when DS goes on to say 'we're going to find out,' which simply cannot mean that the two anchors are going to rush out into the streets with a notebook and pencil. Then an even more inchoate pronoun appears, when DS refers to 'what *they* have concluded happened there this morning.' This 'they' has no particular referent, is truly inchoate, unformed, though it is intelligible enough in the setting: for we may suppose that there will be some authoritative 'they' who are involved in dealing with the event, and who will, in the course of things, make pronouncements.

So at this point, already something of a cast of characters are beginning to assemble for the viewer. In the foreground sit the newscasters themselves, supported by an ever anonymous staff, always off camera, and there is some as yet unknown authoritative 'they.' Of course what is being mobilised rhetorically here is in part a typifying move, notably evoking authorities who presumably will eventually take responsibility. But in any case, all these more or less inchoate pronouns are already

made present by the broadcasters at this point, even though no knowledge whatsoever of the actual persons involved in the scene is available, indeed no more information is actually forthcoming than is carried in the distant shots of smoke pouring out of the building, shots in which the flames giving rise to the smoke are not even visible.

Then CG takes over the commentary smoothly:

CG: These are of course the two Trade Center buildings that are down at the foot of Manhattan, they really are the beacons of New York. It was there that there was the explosion a couple of years ago, that was brought about by terrorists, that's all gone through the courts, but this, we don't know anything about this, other than the fact that there's obviously been a major incident there ... was it a plane, was it deliberate, was it an accident...

This is in part scene setting, indeed quite literally, in that CG begins by giving some geographical and figural detail to the location of events. He then offers a speculative story, a conceivable narrative explanation, by mentioning the previous 'explosion' at the World Trade Center, by mentioning the characters responsible, 'terrorists,' and by showing how that narration had taken a regular course, 'through the courts.' This is a speculation, captured in a vividly evocative generic noun ('terrorists') that will in fact hover silently over ABC's coverage until its confirmation about twelve minutes later. But at this point this is mere speculation, and CG straightaway returns to the propriety of careful journalism, stressing that 'we don't know anything about this.'

He also gives a short catalogue of ways to regard what is happening: 'a major incident,' 'a plane,' 'deliberate,' 'an accident.' None of these words denotes a person or character, and indeed in this setting they are offered in part just because they are deliberately vague and do not offer actual persons. Yet each rhetorically entails some inchoate pronoun. We could say, with Kenneth Burke, that it is possible to denote a situation by the actions involved, or by the setting, or by the purpose of the actions, or by other features such as the characters, such that the whole situation could as well be grasped by one feature as by another (Burke 1996 [1969]). One could speak, for example, of a 'murderer', and evoke implicitly the idea of a 'murder'; or one could speak of a 'murder,' and imply the existence of a 'murderer.' Or one could give these terms a cognitivist slant, and say that a word like 'deliberate' is a schema which calls for an intending agent, whereas 'incident' entails that persons may be involved, but offers no judgment about the nature or character of those persons. 'Accident' is in principle an alternative to 'deliberate', in that 'accident' allows that no intention need be suggested, while still providing for persons in the role of 'victims' of the accident. And finally, though we know that a 'plane' has pilots and passengers as associated characters, these could fit as well into the unintended 'accident' as into the category of 'deliberate' agency. My overall point is just this, that even where there are no person-like nouns or pronouns explicitly in sight, it is nevertheless possible for a rhetor to suggest their implicit presence as inchoate pronouns.

In the next ten minutes of the broadcast DS and CG manage to interview an ABC reporter at street level. He confirms that the affected building is the North Tower, that flames continue to be plainly visible from that closer viewpoint, and that some airplane-like sound preceded the explosion. He says that fire crews are converging on the building, and the audience can hear them on the sound track. A man on the street

is also interviewed, whose account is far from coherent, but who asserts that he saw an airplane of some kind hit the building. But in total very little new information comes forward, even though talk continues constantly. Then DS says this, apropos a telephoto shot framing the smoke as it billows up and over the top of the building:

DS: Looking at the top of the building, you mentioned there is an observation centre and I don't know what time it opens, but I think it opens fairly early and people are up there at all hours of the day, families, tourists, coming in to look at the city of New York from the top, but also, there are also, I don't know if this is the building that has the restaurant on the top but as well in those high floors there are places where tourists teem in the morning even if the regular workers weren't in. ...

There is a slight catch in DS's voice as she says this, and one can understand why. At this point little new information is available, but a sense of this as a 'major incident,' as CG said earlier, is sinking in, especially following the news from street level that flames are visible, that they show no sign of diminishing. Apart from the earlier speculative mention of a previous terrorist attack, however, the anchors have at this point so far stuck quite strictly to the line between what is known and what is unknown. But here DS begins using other knowledge about the location of the incident, and finds herself throwing her rhetorical imagination into what is displayed on the screen. She speaks now of much more concrete, if unknown, persons, categorised as 'people' for the first time, and more than that, as 'families,' 'tourists,' and 'regular workers.' All this is still framed as speculation (repeated 'I don't know's'), but for the first time in ABC's broadcast, a personal cost of what is happening is suggested to the viewers by the anchor. In this passage, quite despite the constraints of journalistic convention and the lack of close information from the Twin Towers, DS moves our imagination from the only very vaguely adumbrated, indeed mostly only implicit, inchoate pronouns which have appeared so far, to discover a set of generic nouns which are richly evocative, and far more specific. These are not only 'people'; they are 'regular workers,' who have to be there every day; they are 'tourists,' who have come for [read: 'innocent'] recreation and enlightenment; and above all, they are 'families,' who have with them the unmentioned, but inescapably suggested, 'children,' with all the vulnerability and pathos of that word. And 'families' suggests too the world of those 'we grow old with,' and in so doing moves the imagination toward the most intimate end of the scale of inchoate pronouns, consociates. Insofar as it is possible to judge from DS's delivery, her tone of voice, with its slight catch, suggests that she is as much the audience, the *patient*, of her own rhetorical discovery as are the television viewers.

This is the key point of this example for my fragmentary theory. It is a moment at which no new information is offered, a moment poised between an inchoate past and a still only speculative future, but a moment at which nevertheless the viewers' minds are moved in a particular direction. It is the moment at which the broadcaster offers a new set of persons, and new set of feelings, to play across the public. It is a moment at which, in terms of my mental map, we are moved powerfully toward more specificity and more understanding, even if that understanding is still only speculative. After this passage DS goes on straightaway to mention for a second time in the broadcast the previous 'terrorist' attack on the Twin Towers, thus poisoning the 'tourists' and 'families' on one hand against 'terrorists' on the other, and so

suggesting a possible story, one which is still marked as speculative, but which is nevertheless vivid in its outline: [innocent] ‘families’ attacked by ‘terrorists.’ Less than a minute after this passage, the monitor in the television studio, broadcast from the observing aircraft, will show the second plane hit the second tower, and the inchoate personages involved in the ‘incident’ will take another step toward clarity for those in the studio and across the US. DS will say, *sotto voce*, ‘oh my god, my god, terrible’, brief moments of deeply evocative dead air time will punctuate the broadcast, and CG will speak of ‘some sort of concerted effort to attack the World Trade Center.’ We are here far short of the specificity that will soon be sought by so many, including the personal names and fates of those killed, and those of the attackers, but we have been made to see, at least in vague, generic outline, some of the growing situation’s characters, and the broad outline of the plot that entangles them.

Case 2. Gertrude Stein reports from WWII France

I offered that first example to convey a sense of the gap between things that happen and narratives that describe happenings, and so to convey the gap between historicity and rhetoric. I also tried to show one sort of rhetorical movement, a powerful and compelling one in the genre of news reporting, namely from indistinct inchoate pronouns to more distinct generic nouns. In this second example, I want to show a looser and more exploratory play back and forth across the space of pronominality — indeed it was this example that set me thinking about the matter.

In February 1945 the publishers Random House released the book *Wars I Have Seen*, written by Gertrude Stein while living in the south of France during the German occupation in WWII. The book’s ostensible topic is the experience of everyday life in that situation, and was treated by the publishers as being in effect journalistic reportage, as a ‘straightforward, clear, on-the-spot story of what the common people of France endured from 1940 to September 1944’ (cited in Davis 1998:572). And — while it is true that the book covers a much longer period, and stems from the middle of a situation rather than from the beginning — it is still arguably related to the genre of ABC’s Good Morning America report. Certainly *Wars I have Seen* can frequently give the reader a vivid view into everyday life among a conquered people.

But it was written by a woman entering her seventh decade of life who had devoted her considerable powers for more than forty years to a particular line of Modernist literary experimentation. Her practice was an artist’s one, to stand aside from her subject — a person, a situation, a story, a condition — to reveal a field of possibilities that surround that subject: not just things as they are, not merely documentary, but things as they are *and* as they might be. Moreover her Modernist interpretation of that general artist’s task owes something to a common ground with her long-standing friend, Picasso. They shared this question: is it possible to twist and unhinge the practices of representation — in his case painting, in hers writing — so as to reveal an underlying structure in a scene, and in our habituated way of seeing that scene? While *Wars I Have Seen* is considerably more modest than Picasso’s painting ‘Guernica,’ it shares with ‘Guernica’ one accomplishment, namely that, in the absence of names, dates, maps, surveys, measurements, photographs, lists, specific

cases or a certified chronicle of events, it documents an underlying structure in a situation.

The following passage is an excellent example of Stein's way of characterising a situation in *Wars I Have Seen*, and I will take it as the key to unlocking her rhetoric:

Sometime and every one is hoping it is going to be pretty soon now there will be everything happening and nothing at all to do with war.

It is the story that they all told last fall. They were talking people in a position to know and one of them said it was going to be over now, and they all said eagerly how do you know and he said very easily, my wife has had enough of it.

Yes everybody has had enough of it everybody's wife and everybody's husband and everybody's mother and everybody's father and everybody's daughter and everybody's son, they all have had enough of it.

In 1918 they did not all feel like that, there had been a great deal of it, a great deal of war but not everybody was fully simply naturally and uninterestedly tired of it, they all have had enough of it. That is all. (Stein 1984 [1945]:78)

This passage was first brought to my attention through the use of the third paragraph ('Yes everybody has had enough of it ...') in a recent composition by the composer Heiner Goebbels, 'Songs of Wars I Have Seen' (premiered in London on 12 July 2007 and later broadcast on BBC 3). That paragraph in particular possesses an incantatory, musical character that fitted it for Goebbels' use, and which makes it likewise fit material for treatment as war poetry, or rather anti-war poetry (Nicholls 2005). Yet this language also shares at least something of the documentary purpose of the Good Morning America broadcast, in that its aim to say what is actually going on. It also shares some of the broadcast's stylistic character, namely repetition. (To see this, read again the first speeches by DS and CG.) In this latter respect Stein's language is derived rather more from speech than from written language, and gains much of its rhetorical force from that speech-like, repetitious character (Tannen 1989). Moreover the quoted passage, taken as a whole, also resembles, or perhaps better, caricatures, a common form of argumentation in both speech and writing. It begins with a general assertion that conveys the idea that everyone in this situation hopes the war will end soon. In the second paragraph an example is given of this hope. In the third paragraph the assertion is re-stated, this time in a more forceful manner. And in the fourth paragraph further evidence is adduced. This is a general form that is observed in many forms of exposition. So if Stein's writing here still seems aesthetically estranged from more usual ways of accounting for situations, we can at least see why we recognise and understand it.

Much of both the strangeness, and the force, of Stein's rhetoric lie in her use of indefinite pronouns, and indefiniteness in general. Take the very first sentence:

Sometime and every one is hoping it is going to be pretty soon now there will be everything happening and nothing at all to do with war.

This lacks a specific time, place, or person, and is indeed saturated with indefiniteness ('sometime,' 'every one,' 'pretty soon,' 'everything,' 'nothing'), and so it cuts away most of the conventions of the memoir, reportage, or historical writing. There is not a detail or specificity in sight. But what remains, however vague, is nevertheless informative. First, it shows a structure of hope among the relevant people, and therefore an orientation to the situation. What do people desire in this situation? The clear answer: 'nothing at all to do with war.' And second, the sense of an 'every one' can only mean: everyone (more or less known to Gertrude Stein) who is afflicted with the war and the occupation.

The next paragraph has at least the outward form of a move away from the inchoate toward greater specificity:

It is the story that they all told last fall. They were talking people in a position to know and one of them said it was going to be over now, and they all said eagerly how do you know and he said very easily, my wife has had enough of it.

So where previously we had indefinite time and indefinite pronouns, here we have at least some sketchy notion of specific time, 'last fall,' and at least common pronouns, 'they,' 'one of them,' 'he,' and pertaining to this 'he,' a relational noun, his 'wife.' But these pronouns, and the noun, are without antecedents or references, and so are little more informative than the indefinite pronouns before.

Still, the bare bones of an informative narrative form show through. This is a skeletal anecdote, an amusing story. It is first marked as such ('it is the story they all told...'), and then a vague setting is given for the story, 'they were all talking...'. Moreover there is the barest hint of a more specific, if still generic, flavour here in the reference to 'people in a position to know.' And Stein also gives a single stroke of colour, when the anecdote is offered 'easily.' On one hand, the anecdote evokes a common form of male / female badinage concerning the supposed superiority, and implied inferiority, of female knowledge. On the other hand, there is also something of the intimate, of people known personally rather than generically. Nevertheless the event is outlined with the barest of means, as though it were a Zen portrait achieved with one or two seemingly careless brush strokes. Or, to return to my terms here, it is a specific event, bearing a hint of intimacy, yet reported with the least specific means possible. So here Stein moves toward the increasingly vague left of my mental map of inchoate pronouns, rather than toward the right, as the broadcast journalists sought to do.

The most forceful of these paragraphs is the third, which seeks to drive home Stein's main point about the situation:

Yes everybody has had enough of it everybody's wife and everybody's husband and everybody's mother and everybody's father and everybody's daughter and everybody's son, they all have had enough of it.

On one hand, the statement 'everybody has had enough of it' has the form of a factual declaration. On the other hand, because it appears in Stein's prevailing idiom of spoken, rather than written, language, it has at first much less force, possessing as

much meaning as, say, a passing comment that ‘everybody is fed up with the weather’: not so much a positive fact as a conversational opinion about the prevailing mood. Yet Stein then goes on rhetorically to restore that conversational ‘everybody’ to a positive declarative one by canvassing a set of generic relational kin terms which must perforce cover the whole intended population For everyone is at the very least a daughter or son, if not yet a wife, husband, mother or father.

And note the stuff of which this is made. The ‘everybody’ is the repeated note, and though the relational terms appear to modify that ‘everybody’ into an informative specificity, they do not in fact do so: at the end of the statement we possess no more information than before, even if we accept Stein’s argument that the sense of being fed up is universal and all-embracing. Again, her point is made, not by moving toward increased specificity, and certainly not by adducing surveys, quotations, observed behaviours or vivid details, but by play with generic and indefinite pronouns. Nevertheless, like CS in the broadcast, Stein’s mention of family — wife, husband, mother, father, daughter, son — makes a gesture toward that most intimate and specific sphere, those we know as consociates. So the overall effect is that of a vivid and specific statement, an evocation of intimacy, while using no specificity whatsoever.

The concluding statement is the most oracular and portentous of the four:

In 1918 they did not all feel like that, there had been a great deal of it, a great deal of war but not everybody was fully simply naturally and uninterestedly tired of it, they all have had enough of it. That is all.

This continues the previous pronouncement by saying ‘. . . they all have had enough of it. That is all.’ But it also interjects a comparative statement, and this comparison is based on Stein’s own experience, for she had herself witnessed enough to be able to speak of ‘wars I have seen.’ She was a volunteer working with French war wounded during World War I. She mentions other wars which she has witnessed in some form, such as seeing American soldiers, ‘doughboys’, on their way to fight in the Spanish-American War of 1898. And in fact there is something that resembles a ‘theory’ of wartime experience that lies behind Stein’s wider references in this statement, as in her other writing at the time. This theory is less a conceptual, and more a cultivated experiential ‘view’ (which is after all the etymological root of ‘theory’), a view which decisively ignores conventional ways of seeing sense in a wartime situation.

Her view appears intermittently in Stein’s late work as dichotomies, sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit, between ‘daily life’ and some threatening opposite. On one side of the dichotomy are those who stand against daily life. At the beginning of the war, for example, she wrote of the ‘gross têtes,’ the ‘big heads [who are] ambitious that is the reason they are big heads and so they are at the head of the government and the result is misery for the people’ (quoted at Whittier-Ferguson 2001:405). She has, similarly, a wonderful rant in *Wars I Have Seen* about civil servants, who ‘believe what they are supposed to believe, they really do believe what they are supposed to believe, which has a great deal to do with wars and wars being what they are’ (Stein 1984 [1945]:52). Or, as Whittier-Ferguson put it in a decidedly unSteinian way, ‘We conduct ourselves in wartime under assumed names, bearing allegiance to abstractions and figures on horseback, forcing the human mind into . . .

dishonest compromises' (Whittier-Ferguson 1999:144). As a result of the 'big heads' and the civil servants there comes to be a contrast between what people in public life and ordinary people can do in the situation of war, 'where everybody had to stay at home and could not even write letters to friends not most of the time, as some one said not long ago, any public character can talk and talk all day long over the radio and any radio speaker but any of us who just want to send a post card to somebody well we just cannot ...' (Stein 1984 [1945]:65).

In contrast, Stein places the value of life firmly on the domestic, the everyday, on life known through consociates, not through public characters. 'And anyway,' she wrote, 'except in daily life nobody is anybody' (quoted at Olson 2003:328). From the viewpoint of those of occupied France, sunk deep in the realities of daily life distorted by the constrictions and deprivations of war — and so from the only viewpoint that really matters for Stein — there is no larger, encompassing, narrative, beyond what their daily life requires, which is an end to the situation. For so long as the situation of war lasts, meaningful life, daily life, and the affairs and things of that life, are distorted. 'Even cake,' that marker of quotidian comfort and ordinariness, 'gets to have another meaning' (Stein, quoted in Davis 1998).

So the significant contrast is between 'history' (Stein 1984 [1945]:65), with its civil servants and the 'big heads', and the unhistorical habitual conduct of intimate ordinary life which does not, strictly speaking, have a history, because it is not a chronicle of heroic developments and heroic figures, but rather is just a matter of the unremarked yet challenging round of daily tasks. Indeed Stein understands the nineteenth century to have been quintessentially one of 'history,' of epic change, of scientific development, whereas the disastrous Second World War has completed the work of the First World War: it has 'killed' the nineteenth century (Nicholls 2005:17; Stein 1984 [1945]:65), and with it any reasonable belief in heroic progress, in the 'big heads' and their histories.

Certainly nobody no not anybody thinks that this war is a war to end war. No not anybody, no well no certainly nobody does think about it, they only think about this war ending, they cannot take on the future, no really not, certainly not as a warless certainly not as future. Better get through with this war first. (Stein 1984 [1945]:187)

This is just the significance of her remark that 'in 1918 ... there had been a great deal of it, a great deal of war but not everybody was fully simply naturally and uninterestedly tired of it'; they still believed in 'history' then, but now 'they all have had enough of it.'

It is tempting to think of Stein as offering a position directly counter to that of the 'big heads,' and therefore to claim her for pacifism (as for feminism or gay liberation). But the import of her diagnosis of the situation is somewhat stranger. As she wrote in *Wars I Have Seen*, 'life is not real, life is not earnest, it is strange, which is an entirely different matter' (Nicholls 2005:17). Here she quotes Longfellow's nineteenth century paean to heroic, historic doing ('life is real, life is earnest, but the grave is not the goal'), but she does not so much reject it as stand orthogonal to it, beyond it, for to stand against it directly would be just another 'ism', another addition to 'history.' And this move beyond the incessant narrative of ambition and destruction is achieved

in part just by her move toward the left of my map of inchoate pronouns, away from specific names with their specific stories and specific fates. It is not just that the specific names and specific deeds comprise the public stuff of war making, but also that the stuff of everyday life eludes such *publicness* altogether. Here the strangeness of Stein — and the strangeness of everyday life — is achieved (in part) by the constant, unremitting use of some indefinite pronoun (‘everybody,’ ‘anyone’), or a third-person mention of that indefinite pronoun (‘they’, as in ‘they [everybody] have all had enough of it’). Any one mention of ‘everybody’ might seem just a generality of everyday, casual speech, but the repetition creates a very different impression, forcing us to see things *as strange*. Against this constant texture of ‘everybody’, the occasional mention of some generic term, such as ‘public characters’, then stands out vividly.

But the other part of her rhetoric is to suggest an intimacy among the ‘everybody.’ For insofar as she uses the repetitions and vague generalisations of conversation, she also suggests that the world she adumbrates is a face-to-face world, one whose ‘everybody’ is not a matter of a census enumeration or a politician’s gesture, but rather the ‘everybody’ you come across in daily life. For her it is only in daily life, in meeting across the back fence or at the baker’s, that persons become real: ‘except in daily life, nobody is anybody.’ As Gertrude Stein eludes the literary realism of the nineteenth century with her high Modernist style, so she eludes any realistic narratives of history and development; and she does so by a constant play with inchoate pronouns. She uses the vaguely expressed and the merely adumbrated, but leaves us with the impression that these approximations are the approximations of intimate life: when I come home and speak of ‘everybody’ to my wife, my husband, my partner, I don’t have to fill in the detail, for it is already intimately assumed. So Stein leaves us with the ultimate intimacy of situations without distracting detail. If the question asked by her art were: is it possible to document an extensive social situation through intimations of domestic life alone? then the answer must be yes.

Case 3. Ethnography and the disappearing women of East Germany

Or we could say that Stein achieves in her own way the squaring of a particular circle: she portrays the situation of a populace as a whole by simulating an understanding of that multitude as though they were consociates, as though they were familiarly known in their irreducible particularity. Or, to put it in terms of pronominality, she simulates the knowledge of a generic noun (the French under German occupation) as though they were personal nouns. This is at once a physical impossibility — for how could she possibly know all those people face-to-face? — and a very considerable rhetorical achievement ... an achievement which is demanded, to one degree or another, of many rhetor/researchers. Anglophone journalists dealing with 9/11 in the days and weeks to come, for example, would soon move toward the detailed stories of those named and idiosyncratic individuals who had one experience or another of those terrible events. Sometimes the movement of curiosity toward specificity may meet a barrier: thus, for example, American journalists often stopped with only an approximate generic knowledge, notably of nationality and religion, of those who applauded the 9/11 attacks, as though that generic knowledge of people as Schutz’s ‘contemporaries’, as types, were enough. But other rhetor/researchers, notably social scientists such as historians, sociologists and anthropologists, wish to carry on toward

as intimate and detailed a knowledge as possible. The ultimate in such knowledge is that of ethnographers who aspire to an intimate face-to-face interpretation, based in a we-relationship, of some populace. For such ethnographers the problem is as acute as it was for Gertrude Stein, without access to her methods: how do you reconcile generic description of a whole populace with face-to-face knowledge, and depiction, of named individual persons?

This is a problem confronted in a particularly poignant form by the rhetor/researchers of the Berlin Institute for Population and Development in a 2007 report. The topic of the report is the preponderance of young men — and, correspondingly, the lack of young women — in the population of East Germany. The title of the report could be translated (if awkwardly) as ‘Emergency concerning Man[power]: From Heroes of Labour to the New Underclass?’ (*Not am Mann: von Helden der Arbeit zur neuen Unterschicht?* (Kröhnert & Klingholz 2007); hereinafter The Report). On one hand, this is quintessentially the territory of generic nouns, of Schutz’s types and ‘contemporaries,’ and above all of political arithmetic and the classification and enumeration of a populace by the state and other agencies. The English version of the Report’s abstract captures this language very well:

A new study of the Berlin Institute for Population and Development analyses causes and consequences of young women leaving the new German states [i.e. East Germany, formerly the German Democratic Republic]: the regions are becoming poorer – socially, economically and demographically. A portion of the men who stayed behind have formed a new underclass.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, over 1.5 million people left their old hometowns in the new German states — approximately 10 percent of the population at the end of the GDR era. Particularly people who were young, qualified and female left in large numbers. Among 18- to 29-year-olds the proportion of young women is small, especially in remote, economically weak and structurally weak regions. Accordingly, there is an excess of men in these regions of 25 percent or more. These deficits of women cannot be found anywhere else in Europe. Even Arctic Circle regions of Northern Sweden and Finland, which have long suffered from the migration to cities of young women in particular, do not have figures that compare to those of East Germany.

So here we have a situation whose populace is generically specified (East Germans), then subdivided generically (male, female, age 18-29). In our diagram of pronominality, this language falls firmly and narrowly into the typifying, generic range.

On the other hand, rather more than one third of the Report — under the circumstances a large, even surprising, proportion — comprises straightforward ethnography of the situation, of a kind quite familiar to anthropologists, based on face-to-face fieldwork in two more or less typical towns in East Germany. Moreover the ethnography is placed early in the study, with the effect that the ethnography’s significance is quietly and firmly laid down as the very foundation of what might otherwise seem a purely demographic and quantitative sociological study. The chief author and organiser of the study, Steffen Kröhnert, was inspired by the intimate

clarity and close detail of *Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal* (Jahoda et al. 2007 [1933]), a famous work of ethnography (there called ‘sociography’) noted for its subtle use of face-to-face research alongside typifying quantitative methods. As in that study, the Report is exemplary in the skill with which it uses face-to-face experience to explore what is — as against the simplifying typifications of East Germans that often dominate the commercial public sphere in Germany — a situation of great intricacy and nuance. Nevertheless it is no mean feat, for these or any other ethnographers, to blend what is intimately learned about named people, on the far right of the pronominality diagram, with the categories and generic types beloved of social science, in the middle of the diagram.

The ethnography was carried out in two towns, Ebersbach and Herzberg. Here is part of the introduction to Ebersbach:

Along the inhospitable, much travelled main street of Ebersbach stand many empty dilapidated buildings. Less than 9,000 of the former 12,000 residents remain. Only a quarter of the residents are younger than thirty (Federal average 32 percent). ... (p. 10)

One *could* say of this that it uses some of the supposedly typical ethnographic rhetoric that Clifford Geertz characterised as ‘I-witnessing’, or ‘Being There,’ an authorial ploy which establishes the writer’s authority through demonstrating authentic first-hand knowledge (Geertz 1988). In the present context, though, I would assert rather that the telling detail (‘many dilapidated buildings’) plays the same role here that the footage of the burning tower played in the ABC news broadcast: it just depicts some relevant information about the setting in which the persons act. More to the point is the characterisation of those persons generically, as ‘residents’, and the sense of their place in a very bare plotline in which the ‘residents’ diminish in number while they age as a collective group. I would also suggest that the other telling details, that the main street of Ebersbach is ‘much travelled’ but also ‘inhospitable,’ begins to move our understanding from that of the generic type of the ‘residents’ toward a more specified ‘we’ experience. For, like the dash of colour in Stein’s depiction of the anecdotist who spoke ‘easily,’ there is here a more intimate sense of place as something which we — the readers, or the ethnographers, or the Ebersbachers, or all of us — could experience together.

The authors are at some pains to explore this sense of dilapidation, not merely as a geographical or demographic feature, but as a mutually experienced social situation as well. Ebersbach was once centred on a textile factory during GDR times, but that factory has long since been shut down.

The people of Ebersbach appear to us as a community that once was brought together by the [centrally located] textile factory, but that now has largely lost the basis of its common life [since the factory closed]. Again and again we meet and talk to conversational partners, above all the employed, who state that they hardly keep up any contacts in the place. (p. 9)

The authors first (rhetorically) move the ‘people of Ebersbach’ into a ‘community’ which they once had — the evocative German word here is of course *Gemeinschaft* — and then to its loss, and in so doing they vividly evoke that collective social

dilapidation which is a central narrative trope of the study. The authors then signal their reliance on face-to-face experience with those whom they meet as ‘conversational partners’ (*Gesprächspartner*). This is a movement toward intimacy, but by summarising these as a ‘they’ who ‘hardly keep up any contacts in the place,’ they immediately make a move back to a more generic description. This characteristic movement from particular to general and back is a typical rhythm in ethnographic writing generally (as has often been remarked), and in one way or another perdures through this ethnography as well.

But the play of pronominality can go further toward indefiniteness on one hand, and intimate specificity on the other:

In the face of the [poor] economic situation in Herzberg and Ebersbach, nearly every young adult has thought about leaving the region, most of them while still at school. Everyone has relatives, [and] knows former schoolfellows, colleagues, or neighbours, who have moved away. Here a young person does not have to justify going away, but [does have to justify] staying. That is already clear in the reaction of Mr. J. (24), trained as a house decorator, unemployed, with girlfriend and child, to the simple question of whether he feels well in the region: ‘Definitely. That’s just exactly why we’re still here. (*Auf jeden Fall. Deshalb sind wir ja auch noch da.*)’ (p. 16)

At one extreme the authors take us back to the indefinite ‘everyone’ (*jeder*), as adduced by Gertrude Stein, and so make a gesture across a whole populace. Yet, like Stein, the authors connect that ‘everyone’ straightaway to the world of intimate acquaintance — ‘everyone has relatives’ etc. — and so brings that generality back to the intimate, if not yet to the particular. Then they rock back and forth a second time, but now in a distinctively documentary style. First there is the generic ‘a young person’ who would have to justify staying in the East. Then there is a very specific Mr. J., who illustrates the point. It is true that we are not given the full form of Mr. J’s name, for his particularity is shielded from us by the etiquette of ethnographic ethics. Moreover the further particularising data we are given — age, educational and marital status — are presented only in part to lend him individuality, and rather more to fit him into the appropriate general category. It is only when Mr. J is quoted that we touch, if only momentarily, glancingly, on Mr. J. as a consociate.

Let me examine this moment more closely. Above all, we are to assume that the quotation is a *recording*; and there are a number of further assumptions behind that key premise. We have to assume that, in the absence of the actual recording (itself standing already at a remove from the event), the words as written down are a fair reflection of what happened in the conversation, even without any further knowledge of the speaker’s accent, emphases, stresses, and gestural and bodily responses. We have to assume, too, that no further information about the conversation as a whole, or the setting, are relevant. Given these assumptions — which I do not dispute — then we are meant to take this recording as a depiction of a response in an actual face-to-face exchange.

So what happened in this exchange? The ethnographer (one of four involved in the research) asked a relatively anodyne, if somewhat leading, question. The answer to the question was an affirmative, and could have been transferred as a single value,

‘yes’ rather than ‘no,’ straightaway into an otherwise impersonal, typifying, generic, census-like database. The accumulation of such simple affirmatives would then show, as the ethnography indeed does, the plain yet — at least to West German readers of the Report — somewhat surprising reminder that people in East Germany may wish to remain there because it is their home. The full quotation, however, cuts in another direction altogether, for it has the character of something intimately and particularly known which resists generalization. It manages to imply, first, that Mr. J.’s is a strongly emphatic affirmation, so that staying home is for him not just a second best, but a positive decision for the best; second, that the decision was made by a ‘we’, him and his partner; and third — this is suggested by the readiness of Mr. J.’s answer — the question has already been thoroughly rehearsed and discussed by Mr. J. and his partner. Yet, fourth, by its placement in the argument — set in the context of the collective experience, and discussion, of emigration that the authors have already adduced — the emphatic decisiveness of Mr. J. and his partner counts also as a further demonstration of the wider climate of opinion against which they are reacting so strongly. So the rhetor/researchers have opened with this brief quotation a we-experience, and a glimpse of a we-relationship, for the reader, looking at a situation and a climate of opinion from *within and alongside*, so to speak, rather than from afar. The intimacy which was simulated earlier by mere mention of ‘relatives’ and ‘colleagues’ is here simulated in another way, with a far more penetrating effect. Yet the ethnographer/rhetors have also led the reader to understand that intimate effect in a more generic sense, as an example of a more generic phenomenon.

As the Report rolls on the ethnographer/rhetors expand their repertoire around the quotation of recorded speech. One of their rhetorical techniques is to introduce their own typifications, which are meant to bring some sense of order into the range of individual responses to the economic situation. Thus they write, for example, of those who are ‘embittered and resigned,’ and of those who are ‘modest stay-at-homes’ (*genügsame Zurückbleiber*). When they come to ‘defiant doers’ (*trotzige Macher*), we meet not only a described type, but also a quoted conversation, and indeed an argument between two persons carried out before the researchers. This argument takes us deep into the we-experience and the we-relationships in the situation. The relevant characters are Mr. S., a small businessman who is managing to prosper in a limited way, and his domestic partner:

... S. talks, like many here, about emigration — at best, directly out of the country. He creates the impression that he is about to take off. [But] he himself does not at all fit into the picture he paints, as his partner makes clear. ... ‘He is a homebody,’ she says. Mr. S. had previously brought the concept of ‘homebody’ [*Heimchen*] somewhat sarcastically into the conversation, meaning people who remain in the place merely because they cannot separate themselves from their family. ‘I am certainly no homebody, I have no-one here any longer!’ replied the young man. ‘You have your business!’, said the partner. ‘Yeah, the business, that is for sure something else, that is for other reasons...!’ Mr. S thought for a moment: ‘If I were honest, I couldn’t leave here so easily. Just packing everything up — that would be pretty hard for me. ... If something went wrong there, I would collapse... .’ ‘You need that All-Round-Carefree-Security Package!’, said his partner. ‘Yes, that’s the way

it is!', Herr S. admitted. (p. 19-20)

Let me note first that the researcher/rhetors bring a certain literate facility to this passage that is not universal among ethnographers. They note that Mr. S. 'creates an impression' and that he had 'spoken sarcastically.' They also interject the observation that, when contradicted, Mr. S. 'thought for a moment.' These are evaluations of emotional tone and dramatic timing that we are familiar with from the reading of fiction and, just as they are effective in that setting, so they are effective here in setting the scene and creating a sense of presence, of immediacy. I make the point, not because I think these are 'merely' fictional devices, but rather because I think they are devices which, if used with skill, can help the rhetor/ethnographer simulate more effectively the intimate particularities of an interaction.

In the recorded segment, Mr. S. begins with what we have by now learned is a commonplace of discourse among young adults in these East German towns, namely that one must emigrate for work and success. And here we learn that to be called a 'homebody' is, in that way of talking, a bit of an insult. But when Mr. S.'s partner contradicts his apparently energetic urge to leave, we suddenly see that such a way of talking can also be an affectation, a mild sort of machismo: Mr. S. has not wished to be seen by the researchers as someone so weak and indecisive. So in the first place we are brought *within and alongside* the researchers, who now can understand that an apparently direct reaction to the collective situation can in fact also be an affectation.

We are also brought in contact with the we-relationship between Mr. S. and his partner. Of course this is in part idiosyncratic and so not illuminating of a larger situation. Still, insofar as their relationship is revealed as one of mutual affection and negotiation, it is just this which facilitates our discovery of the negotiability of the ethos of emigration. Above all, we are here very far from a knowledge that can be embraced in purely collective categories and the simplified bare narratives that must perforce accompany such generalities. Thus we discover, again from alongside and within, the domestic interiority of any decision to emigrate, and the unforeseen mutual entanglements that may complicate the apparent simplicity of a decision to seek one's fortune elsewhere ... or that may enable one to remain, despite a generally bleak economic situation. This is not in its nature at all an easily generalisable knowledge, except insofar as it suggests an awareness of other, equally idiosyncratic but equally entangling, circumstances that may arise between and among people.

I want to complete this presentation of a particularly fluent and vivid example of ethnographical rhetoric with a demonstration that the movement from particular to general may not be a rhetorical skill of the ethnographers alone, but also of those ethnographised. Thus, in their nuanced presentation of the numerous and complex reasons for young women's willingness to emigrate, as opposed to young men's tendency to stay home, the researchers in the Report present this:

In the conversation with the mayor of Herzberg, Michael Oecknigk, we happened on a further reason for the disproportionate emigration of women. At the end of the interview a female employee of the mayor, who had been present during the conversation, spoke up: 'I think many men do not have the spirit and the guts to leave here.'

They have their friends here and their circle of acquaintances, and if they went, who knows if they could build something up over there. ... I believe that it is the mothers' fault. We bring our daughters up to be more independent than our sons. When I look at the mothers of sons around my age ... all the things they don't need to do, and don't have to be able to do, because the mothers say: wait, I'll do it! Our daughters must obviously do everything themselves. And so they are also more engaged.' (p. 17)

This utterance has a double nature. On the one hand, it is plainly composed of a lifetime's experience as a consociate among consociates who have raised their families in Herzberg. But on the other, the woman has herself moved from the particular mothers and daughters, and mothers and sons, that she knows, to a generic view across mothers and children as such. She has moved from intimate experience to one that characterises an unspecified, but wide swathe of the populace, beginning in Herzberg but conceivably stretching well beyond that small city to East Germany as a whole. One might say that there is a 'folk sociology' at work here, well beyond the professional haunts of sociology in academe and some corners of government.

Moreover, the ethnographer/rhetors let this recording stand for both intimate knowledge and generalization at once. It is worth remarking the importance, from a rhetorical and interpretative point of view, of the ethnographer's standing aside and letting this 'female employee' speak up. The overall argument of the Report is highly complex, and within that the space for any single point of view or argument is relatively small. So in giving this verbatim quotation so much space, the rhetor/researchers are also giving the 'female employee's' utterance considerable weight. And indeed they go on to argue that the general encouragement of girls' self-reliance is a substantial contributor to their emigration.

Closing

The theory fragment I have set out here, expressed in the diagram of inchoate pronominality, is one which depends from the very beginning on an assumption that human life plays out against a background comprised in part of ignorance and in part of inexpressibility. Kant is perhaps the most obvious patron of this perspective, since he found, in pouring his energies into explaining how human beings understand the world, that he was driven nevertheless to posit the 'thing-in-itself', the reality which stands beyond the devices of human understanding, but toward which human understanding orients itself. The far more modest theory fragment here also requires a not-entirely-reachable reality. In the case of the 9/11 attack, the ignorance was occasioned in the first instance by events, by historicity: journalists were very simply ignorant of what was happening, and were bending their energies to finding out who was involved, and what their story was. And there was another ignorance as well, an ignorance that was expressed by many Americans in the aftermath of the attacks when they asked, why did they attack us? This was an ignorance of a larger global setting of which many in the Islamic world were keenly aware.

There were ignorances in my other examples as well. Gertrude Stein's 'civil servants ... really do believe what they are supposed to believe,' and so acted in ignorance of their effect upon 'daily life'. And the researchers of the Report found that

Although such a great discrepancy in genders may seem enormous [73 women to 100 men in Ebersbach, 82 women to 100 men in Herzberg], only a few of the people we asked noticed something of the inequality. Many, especially the men, even doubt [its existence]. A few women, at least when asked, remarked that the mismatch had occurred to them. 'Yes, now that you mention it, it's true, there are more guys (*Kerle*) here.' (p. 12)

At the other end of my diagram of pronominality lies the territory of the intimately known but (nearly) inexpressible. I know my own mother, my own father, my own wife intimately, not only by the modalities of the visual, but also the tactile and olfactory; and not only by the names they have been called, but also by the vivid episodic memories that attach to them and no others, and which, like dreams, are falsified the moment I express them. By the same token, there will be much in the 'female employee's' experience of mothers and daughters and mothers and sons in Herzberg that simply cannot be encompassed in her rhetoric.

So the diagram of pronominality I have set out hangs between ignorance and inexpressibility. Within its spectrum it presents a transition from the vaguely known, to the general and generically known — the knowledge of types —, to the more detailed, and finally to the very specifically known. Sometimes the play of pronominality involves just the replacement of, say, one term with another at the same level of generality: thus 'residents' became 'community' in order to suggest one sort of decay in East Germany. But elsewhere the play of pronominality works across the spectrum, bringing broad typicality to intimate specificity, or vice versa. When DS mentioned 'families,' with a barely perceptible catch in her voice, she was using a generic term, but evoking the emotion of intimate knowledge and attachment. For a different purpose, Stein catalogued 'everybody's mother ... father ... sister ... daughter'; and the ethnographers displayed the extensiveness of people's intimate experience of emigration through a similar mention of 'relatives' and 'colleagues.'

Ladislav Holy (1996) and Michael Herzfeld (1997) have shown to great effect how such linking of the intimate, modest and domestic with the broad and generic can energize nationalism and patriotism; and it is easy enough to see that the same means could be used to create other forms of broad solidarity, such as those of religion or ethnicity. But the examples I have used cut in another direction. Gertrude Stein in particular rejected any connection with a larger nationalism. For her, the 'history' of the 'big heads' was precisely *not* the round of domestic, daily life where she placed decisive worth. Nationalism is wholly irrelevant to the ethnographers of the Report, and the nation-state appears only as the provider of certain services. And even the American television journalists had not yet, at least at the time we left them, found any use for a nationalistic language. Each of the cases of rhetoric I have set out is documentary, an attempt to dispel ignorance, rather than nationalistic or partisan political, which so often cultivates ignorance.

But such documentary rhetoric as I have analysed here still arises in, and is troubled by, the world of many nation-states with their public spheres. For in this world, the

situation of any one of us tangles with that of a great sprawl of others who are related to one another through the same agencies and forces; and to the extent that we come to know of this broader situation, we do so because it is in some way *published* within our public sphere — and indeed all of the documentary rhetoric I have analysed appears in a *publication*. Now Michael Warner (Warner 2002) shows us how a public — that is, all those related to one another through attention to some particular publication — consists in a relation between people who are at once strangers and not strangers. They are strangers in that we do not meet them in person, but they are not strangers in that we come to discover or imagine, with one degree of vividness or another, some commonality with them. Or again: we hear/read the voices of the journalists, Gertrude Stein, and the ethnographers, and so they are to a degree known to us; but in other respects they are still strangers. As Warner goes on to point out, if we knew personally, and so had an established relationship with, everyone in a nation, or a public, or a market, then those institutions would not be a nation, a public, or a market respectively. So in that sense strangeness, and the typifying of strangers, partly constitutes our world.

Yet, as my cases have shown, knowledge confined to typifying is not adequate in itself to human understanding of the human world. Indeed it is not just that we tend to seek more intimate knowledge, but also that, as a species, we are very well fitted for intimate knowledge: we can grow and prosper in conditions comprised almost wholly of known and familiar others, such as may exist, or have existed in the past, in the absence of stranger-institutions such as the nation-state or the public sphere. We need not move very far away from the inexpressibility of the intimate toward personal nouns, pronouns and the generic categories of kinship to live together well enough. And in fact the forms of published documentary which I have covered here — journalism, memoir, ethnography — could hardly arise in so closely-knit a world. They would have little meaning there. In our world, however, with its inescapable presence of so many otherwise unaccountable strangers, documentaries may seem inevitable, or necessary, to comprehend that larger world of both strangers and familiars.

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