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Becoming Other-Wise

Conversational Performance and the Politics of Experience

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Cultural studies is predicated on the assumption that, in addition to being configured *macroscopically*, deployed strategically, and driven economically—if not determined in the last instance—sociocultural phenomena are also managed *microscopically*, performed tactically, and realized politically. A crucial project for cultural studies, conversational studies, and critical theory is to theorize, track, and critique conversations as courses of action, lines of flight, paths of resistance, and openings for transformation. Conversations foreclose as well as disclose ways of escaping from and relocating to different subject positions; at the same time they redraw ideological boundaries. Theorizing conversations in such a fashion renders dominant practices and their transparent codes as audible fictions that put into practice novel as well as mundane modes of resistance and surrender. Paying genealogical attention to discursive formations and their discontinuities and ruptures is one way this critical-experiential-political work proceeds. This essay develops a theoretical rationale for thinking through the microphysics of power in terms of the micropractices of conversation.

Conversations as Micropractical Flows and Microphysical Traces

Conversations, as assemblages of strategic and tactical micropractices, are dialogical as well as dialectical—intimately political. Certainly conversation can, and does, take on a disputational organization. Left as dialectical formats, however, conversations are often hollow. Here is Bakhtin's (1986) characterization of dialectics and dialogics: "Take a dialogue and remove the voices . . . remove the intonations . . . carve out abstract concepts and judgments from living words and responses, cram everything into one abstract consciousness—and that's how you get dialectics" (p. 147).

Dialectically organized conversations, then, are contradictory and oppositional; dialogically organized conversations can be, and often are, contradictory and oppositional as well as heteroglossic and unfinalizable. They are digital, synchronic translations of analogic, diachronic desire. Julia Kristeva (1984, pp. 21–106) might formulate this feature of conversation as the practices of producing symbolic language from semiotic desire. For Kristeva, subjects-becoming—*thetic subjects*—leave a chaotic, fluid, turbulent, and oceanic domain of the *semiotic chora*—that which comes before language—and enter into the domain of the symbolic, of language, logic, order, patriarchy, and hierarchy. The tensions between the semiotic and the symbolic never ultimately resolve themselves. Instead, a thetic subject, as Kristeva insists, is a subject in process/on trial. Individuals are not fixed, unitary subjects; they are, rather, multiple, fluid, in process, and nonlinear (Martin, 1988, pp. 117–214). Translating the semiotic into the symbolic, that which cannot be said and is beyond language, is the desire that produces that which must be said and cannot go without saying (Tyler, 1987, pp. 103–145). In this sense, *conversational micropractices discursivize practical consciousness*, as Giddens (1979, pp. 9–48) theorizes it. These micropractices are practical insofar as they say and do what must be said and done.

It would be a mistake to theorize conversation as a totality, as some coherent, bounded, unitary phenomenon. One of my critical tasks is to deconstruct conversation into its multiple voices and diverse micropractices, some of which install and position individuals into discursive formations as conversed and conversing subjects, and some of which cut off individuals from discursive possibilities. The installation of an individual, as a conscious subject, into the regime of language is, in large measure, the marking of identity and difference, of presence and absence, of sound and silence, of self and other. In the realm of language, an individual is alternatingly, and often simultaneously, subject *and* object. Subject/object divisions and oscillations are coded

in conversational formats and performed by means of exchanges—taking and giving turns (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974, pp. 696–735). The boundaries of division and the movements of oscillation are learned in a (m)other's arms, in touching, voicing, listening, and nurturing—or their absences—and are produced and reproduced in contextually sensitive formats that articulate subjects adept at performing in accord with the logics of sociocultural exchange systems (Miles, 1991). Such discursive micropractices interpellate individuals—as interlocutors—into the speaking voices of performing bodies. Installed into these discursive universes, an individual is positioned, as interlocutor, to address *self* and one or more *others*. So positioned, interlocutive subjects are in positions to give and take turns and to engage in the practices of division and oscillation that constitute the circuitries of common sense and the conventional wisdom of everyday life.

I am referring here to a matter of scale; *practices* are notable and observable to common sense, whereas *micropractices* are observable only to more finely attuned ears and eyes. It is by means of their apparent invisibility that power is exercised; who would think of conversational practices and micropractices as suffused with power? Isn't the real world one of actions and pronouncements? Actions speak louder than words, don't they? Conversations and the fantastic arrays of realities they perform are material manifestations of consciousness. As such, conversations are overlooked/overheard and not attended to, not only because they are so densely pervasive, but also because they are assumed to be inconsequential, the small change of everyday life. This is precisely where their effectivity lies; they formulate and speak us; they are conventional formats and mundane performances. They produce us and, in so doing, leave us with seemingly unmistakable impressions that we are originating authors of our ideas and thoughts.

Conversational micropractices situate, identify, produce and trace these interlocutive subjectivities. When speaking ceases, conversed subjectivity dissolves into silence; no visible traces are left behind unless recorded. As a microtechnology of subject(ive) experience located within voices' bodies, conversations are indexical referencing devices. To lose one's place is to lose one's identity; keeping track of one's identity has material and spiritual consequences in the seemingly mundane daily affairs of living. This is a theme that many feminisms have made historically and continue to make in a variety of ways in ongoing contestations with dominant and dominating patriarchal authorities. When one is not speaking, it is vitally important to listen or other-wise to attend well enough to follow along. Knowing one's place as an interlocutive subject—staying in it and keeping track of it—has undeniably real political and personal consequences.

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In their performances, conversations are nonlinear phenomena; they resemble rhizomes much more than hierarchies (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, pp. 3–25; Deleuze & Parnet, 1987, pp. 30–35).

That's it, a rhizome. Embryos, trees, develop according to their genetic performance or their structural reorganizations. But the weed overflows by virtue of being restrained. It grows between. It is the path itself. The English and Americans, who are the least "author-like" of writers, have two particularly sharp directions which connect: that of the road and of the path, that of the grass and of the rhizome. . . . Henry Miller: "Grass only exists between the great non-cultivated spaces. It fills in the voids. *It grows between—among other things.*" The flower is beautiful, the cabbage is useful, the poppy makes you crazy. But the grass is overflowing, it is a lesson in morality. The walk as act, as politics, as experimentation, as life: "I spread myself out like a fox BETWEEN the people that I know the best" says Virginia Woolf in her walk among the taxis. (p. 30)

Like rhizomes, conversations grow from the middle, given that there are no beginnings and endings other than those imposed from the outside. Granted, conversational micropractices are ideologically formatted and hege- monically circumscribed; nevertheless, conversations wander down blind alleys, slam into dead ends, topple off sheer cliffs, get turned around, become asphyxiated, repeat aimlessly, and suddenly break off. They circle around and fold back onto themselves; they retrieve and recreate, recall and adumbrate in ways that elude the assumptive foundations of formal logics and dialectics.

Much of the theoretical and cultural significance of conversational micropractices lies in their performative locations along the seams of speech/ language. On the one hand, conversations partake of both speech and language; on the other, they have little to do with either. Insofar as language is that which its (collusional) members assume they know in common—that which goes without saying—language is a practical consciousness, an implicitly held common sense. Speech, on the other hand, is a discursive consciousness—an individuated, explicit performative sense—insofar as it is that which must be said because it cannot be assumed to pass in silence. Speech can be thought through as the discursive appropriation of, and at the same moment the discursive formulation of, practical consciousness, in what Mikhail Bakhtin (1986, pp. 133–157) calls a dialogue of *utterances*.

Michel de Certeau (1984) locates distinctions between speech and language in the problematics of enunciation, which he characterizes in terms of its four properties. First, language takes place by means of speaking; speech *realizes* language by actualizing portions of it as potential and possibility. Second, speaking *appropriates* language in the very act of speaking it. Third,

speech presupposes a particular *relational contract* with an “other”—real or fictive. And fourth, speech instantiates a *present* as the time for an “I” to speak (p. 33). In these ways, conversational micropractices produce and reproduce sociocultural structures and formations by means of binding time to space. They are more or less transparent mediational practices of and for structuration. The question I set for myself in this essay is: How do these conversational micropractices—so seemingly innocuous and innocent of power—produce and consume ideologies of everyday living?

Conversation is a term designating a large but finite assemblage of discourse micropractices that produce and reproduce cultures and their social formations. How is this performed conversationally? Both ethnomethodology generally and conversation analysis particularly have invested heavily in the finely grained descriptions of the indexicality and reflexivity of everyday life (Garfinkel, 1967; Heritage, 1984; Turner, 1974). There are growing research literatures that describe arrays of interactional sociolinguistic and ethnomethodological devices and procedures instrumental in the co-production of conversation. Sociolinguistic variation, ethnomethodological conversational analysis, extended standard theory, and ethnography of communication share several theoretical and methodological assumptions (Schiffrin, 1994). However, situating any of this work in the intimately political worlds of the conversants themselves is still relatively rare. Conversational moves, devices, and properties (e.g., greetings, repetitions, questions and answers, accounts, correction invitations, address terms, stories, paraphrasing, quoting, pronouns, gossiping, visiting, politeness, hosting, telephone talking, among others) are seldom explored as modes of consciousness, structures of feeling, or shapes of experience; nor are they often fitted into the dominant, residual, and emergent features of their sociocultural traditions, institutions, and formations. Anita Pomerantz (1989) makes a clear distinction between two different frameworks for analyzing conversation as she reviews a collection of conversation analytic studies: the Sequence framework and the Interactants’ World framework. They are two different ways of writing conversation analytic work. The former can be thought of in more structuralist terms, whereas the latter makes more sense as phenomenology. The former positions itself outside the phenomenon and describes its structural features and properties. The latter positions itself within a phenomenon and works to describe it from an interactant’s subject position. I want to take a different course and follow several lines of cultural studies, performance theory, and conversational studies to foreground some pivotal differences distinguishing these traditions.

Everyday conversations are identified, reified, described, and analyzed, but rarely are they abstracted back into the material and spiritual relations

of the political economics of the daily lives of their interlocutors. One is left with little sense of how these conversational micropractices produce and reproduce the structural and poststructural conditions of the experience of late-modern life. V. N. Volosinov's (1973) theoretical and critical work in the philosophy of language, Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981, 1984, 1986) work in speech genres, poetics, and dialogics, and Michel Foucault's (1979, 1986, 1988, 2001) and Julia Kristeva's (1975, 1984) theorizations of the revolutionary potentials of poetic language serve as a theoretical and dialogical context for conducting a socioculturally oriented examination and critique of conversation, work that goes beyond analytics and dialectics to dialogics.

Rules, Rituals, and Performances as Art and Practice

In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein (1963) encapsulates many of the current dilemmas confronting theories of discourse that invoke rules to explain communicative practices:

What do I call "the rule" by which he proceeds?—the hypothesis that satisfactorily describes his use of words, which we observe; or the rule which he looks up when he uses signs; or the one which he gives us in reply when we ask what his rule is?—But what if observation does not enable us to see any clear rule, and the question brings none to light?—for he did indeed give me a definition when I asked him what he understood by "N," but he was prepared to withdraw and alter it. So how am I to determine the rule according to which he is playing? He does not know it himself.—Or, to ask a better question: What meaning is the expression "the rule by which he proceeds" supposed to have left to it here? (pp. 38–39)

For Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1990), the theoretical status of a rule is the presupposed solution to these very difficulties, the difficulties posed by an inadequate theory of practice. Insofar as there is no adequate theory of practice, there is a compensating emphasis on rules and codes as devices for explaining practices as accomplished social facts, as products of, rather than processes of, production. Rules are the structural keys to the engines of social praxis; the difficulty is that rules themselves are products of discursive knowledge. Rules are discursive inventions whose value lies in their retrospective accounts of social practices. Insofar as our understanding of practice is incomplete, rules are rationalistic devices that supposedly account for practical outcomes. Yet to have a code of rules as a model for performative practice is to fall far short of saying much at all about the everyday practical circumstances of the production and consumption of conversation.

To account for everyday conversational practices in terms of conversational rules—whatever the relation between rule and practice is taken to be—is to hold to the position that practice is a product of rules, which has the consequence of privileging synchronic competence over diachronic performance. Discourse, as systems of rules and codes of relations, is thereby in the master position. It is for speech to be obedient to those discursive rules, consequently reproducing and more deeply inculcating the epistemic bias and its unresolvable paradoxes, chief among them being that to explain conversational performance in terms of codes and rules is to undermine the very possibility of ever theoretically accounting for everyday conversation. This condition is a direct consequence of a discourse whose voice takes a position of observer and one that conceptualizes everyday conversational practices as representational objects of observation. Conversation comes to be theorized from a position of outside observer rather than from an interlocutive position.

Practicality, Temporality, and Spatiality: Common Sense and Conventional Wisdom

Given that conversation is a turn-taking system, I want to open this section with the problematic of subjectivity and how to locate subject positions and agency in such systems. Pierre Bourdieu's (1977, pp. 30–71; 1990, pp. 1–141) concern with the individual operations of exchange systems (of whatever kinds—land, cattle, women, challenges, gifts, utterances)—locates the practicing subject within the moment of a practice's production rather than outside practice and time. He aims at a science of the dialectical relations between theoretical and practical knowledges that include, for him, scientific as well as everyday practices. Instead of positioning the practicing subject outside everyday temporality, he locates it as close to the seam of space/time as possible—the better to construct the generative principles of practices.

Time is the medium through which spatio-structural contradictions are worked through/out, and analytic concerns shift to practices of and for making time take place. For Bourdieu, these practices are strategies; for Certeau, they are tactics. Both refer to temporal practices that materialize in space but are not inscribed in space “once and for all time.” Intervals between durations of actions constitute the temporal embodiments and amplifications of contradictions that are resolved more or less precisely by these unfolding discursive tempos. Variable intervals of time between actions accommodate the acceptable arrays of contradictions to be taken account of practically, to be appropriated and worked through time, and that materialize as practices. Bourdieu (1977) writes:

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To restore to practice its practical truth, we must . . . reintroduce time into the theoretical representation of practice which, being temporally structured, is intrinsically defined by its *tempo*. The generative, organizing scheme which gives . . . improvised speech its argument, and attains conscious expression in order to work itself out, is an often imprecise but systematic principle of selection and realization, tending through steadily directed corrections, to eliminate accidents when they can be put to use, and to conserve even fortuitous successes. (p. 4)

As these broadly deployed micropractices of selection and realization—of bricolage and performance, of temporal practices for producing and reproducing the tempos of everyday life—conversations resolve appropriate contradictions and discrepant understandings and suppress the materialization of others. As multiply mediated, conversations can be likened to the play of a spontaneous semiology that orchestrates regulated improvisation of practices whose regions of performance lie somewhere between the seemingly open set of mundane practices of everyday life and the more constrained practices of custom, ceremony, and ritual: between individual style and social custom (Turner, 1969, 1974, 1982, 1987).

It is important to note that, for Bourdieu, such improvisational performances only *appear* to be free and easy. The object of Gregory Bateson's (1936; 1972, pp. 159–239) theorizing of play, for example, is this very domain of the metacommunication of the practical knowledge of micropractices that enable subjects to act on the differences between *for play/for real*. In fact, an apparently improvisational process has its play regulated by a more or less definite set of precepts, aphorisms, formulas, and codes. Improvisation is not random, unprecedented free activity but rather innovative play both *of* and *on* conventional(ized) forms. Conversations consist of those micropractices carried along by, and, on occasion, carried away with and carried beyond, practical knowledges, which are the practical resources of and for the performance of conversational discourse.

Consider Bourdieu's (1990) notion of the material installation of *habitus* (which Bourdieu always italicizes). *Habitus*—or *opus operatum* (i.e., a product of practice)—consists in the structures constitutive of a particular environment, whereas *disposition*—*modus operandi* (i.e., modes of practice)—is both the distinctive mark of *habitus* and a way or style of being. The domestic organization of the house, the social organization of the agrarian calendar, and the sexual organization of labor, for example, are homologues constituting the *habitus*: “*Disposition* expressed first *the result of an organizing action*, with a meaning close to that of a structure; it also designates *a way of being*, a *habitual state* (especially of the body) and a *predisposition, tendency, propensity, or inclination*” (p. 214).

Consider the practices of children's performances of games, which occur in all societies to structurally exercise children's practical mastery of the dispositions necessary for them to participate in an assortment of exchange systems (Sawyer, 1997). Here—in the riddle, the challenge, the duel, the put-on, the tease, the dare, the con—children learn the logics of challenge/riposte, the *modus operandi* of a protean *habitus*.

Before newborn *Homo sapiens* enter the *habitus* of eventual sociocultural formations, they are readied, more or less, in the *habitus* of family. An infant enters a family system as a sociocultural signifier with its status and oppositionality already largely fixed. Already, it has been overdetermined, largely without explicit deliberation, how a newborn is to be raised and tended, by whom, for how long, in what places, at what times, and in relation to whom. An infant immediately, and not usually as a result of conscious intention, becomes an emerging and developing embodiment of *habitus*, the material locus of dispositions and their principles of regulated improvisation:

[I]t is in the dialectical relationship between the body and a space structured according to the mythico-ritual oppositions that one finds the form of the structural apprenticeship which leads to the embodying of the structure of the world—the appropriating by the world of a body thus enabled to appropriate the world. (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 89)

The domestic organization of the house, or whatever the structure of domestic space in which an infant finds itself, is both engendered and sexualized, both spatialized and temporalized, and politicized through and through. “The house, an *opus operatum*, lends itself to a deciphering which does not forget that the ‘book’ from which the children learn their version of the world is read with the body, in and through the movements and displacements which make the space within which they are enacted as much as they are made by it” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 90).

To summarize his argument, and thereby to compress it drastically, Bourdieu contends that social space in general, and its primordially minimalist gesture—the house—in particular, is organized according to an ensemble of homologous relations—fire:water :: cooked:raw :: high:low :: light:shade :: night:day :: male:female :: inside:outside, and so forth. The primal *habitus* of house marks the infant with these homologous signs, and the child becomes the embodied dispositions reproducing the structured relations into which it was born. A socioculturally embodied subject reproduces practices that are products of a *modus operandi* over which the subject has little discursive consciousness. The *modus operandi* often has an objective intention or logic that both is larger than and outruns a subject's partial consciousness.

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Contradictions are inevitable among homologous relations organizing the social cosmology and the bodily cosmogony.

One of the suggestive implications of this line of theorizing is that corporeality, as sociocultural embodiment, as the object of the seemingly trivial and inconsequential practices of dress, demeanor, bearing, manners, and style, is the materiality of memory. The body is the text of signs written by experience and recorded as marks of character, and a mnemonic medium in which are inscribed the principles of the content of culture:

The principles embodied in this way are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness and hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation, cannot even be made explicit; nothing seems more ineffable, more incommunicable, more inimitable, and, therefore, more precious than the values given body, *made* body by the transubstantiation achieved by the hidden persuasion of an implicit pedagogy, capable of instilling a whole cosmology, an ethic, a metaphysic, a political philosophy, through injunctions as insignificant as “stand up straight” or “don’t hold your knife in your left hand.” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 94)

The Political Economics of Conversational Turn Taking

A *turn* is self-reflexive; it materializes as itself only in relation to another turn. And such a self-reflexive relationship is the basis of ideological transparency. An alternative formulation of conversation is a mimetic form. The Greek term *mimesis* captures the existential validity of transparency (Taussig, 1993). *Mimesis* translates as self-imitation or self-present-in-motion. Here is Alasdair MacIntyre’s (1981) conception of it:

In conversations we do not only elaborate thoughts, arguments, theories, poems, dramas; we gesture, we draw, we paint, we sing. In so doing we give structure to our thought; we interpret a reality that was already partially constituted by the interpretation of the agents engaged in the transaction and our interpretation is more or less adequate, approaches or fails to approach truth more nearly. What was the free play of conversational transaction becomes structure *mimesis* and *mimesis* always claims truth. (p. 43)

Given *turn* as a constitutive feature of conversation, and given the self-reflexiveness of a turn, that which is constituted in and through the taking of turns is itself self-reflexive. Conversation imitates itself by inscribing itself in the movement of a turn’s *taking place*. To take a turn is to orient and

attend to a sociocultural life-world by inscribing space/time in and through the acoustic/kinesthetic movements of conversing. A turn and its space, time, and movement are co-extensive. A conversational move is to take a turn, and the micropractices of taking turns inscribe worlds of subjects, objects, and their interpenetrated relations of power. Turns are values and as such are sought, avoided, given, and taken, and the ways in which turn taking distributes its participating members can be thought through in political-economic terms. As with any political economy, the organization of turn taking reproduces the very distributional structures of that which it organizes. I am referring here to a kind of "circular organization" that theoretical biologists and cognitive scientists call *autopoiesis* (Varela, 1979), a term coined to refer to the dynamics of autonomy proper to living systems, systems that reproduce themselves.

Conversational micropractices are the structures of sharing and community, as well as of hoarding and alienation; turns are distributive. Much of sociocultural dynamics is structured in and around the taking of turns, and producing turns ranges from the metonymic to the metaphoric. Everyday life is punctuated *turningly*, and crucially, much of the time those punctuational systems are transparent arrangements for assessing who has what rights and obligations in the seemingly ordinary schemes of things. To illustrate: *Common goods* is a fundamentally different mode of distribution than is *individual portioning*. The analogy is to buffet dining as opposed to à la carte dining. For a buffet, the choices are all present and available, whereas for à la carte someone presupposes the right to determine for you how much you get and how often you get it. The more fascist the dining, the more the regime presumes the right to serve the portions. The more anarchic the dining, the more the individual diners presume the right to serve themselves.

The analogy is apposite for conversation. In a family system, turns are distributed somewhere along a common goods/à la carte continuum. The diversity of a subject's styles of taking turns is either maximized or minimized, empowered or suppressed. Passivity is the ultimate income of fascism; chaos is the ultimate outcome of anarchism. Somewhere along these lines, family systems articulate their conventional practices in the material forms of rights and obligations, pursuant to turns, in competition for dominance and control (of the system). Structures and codes of turn distribution become conventionalized as common sense. A subject's identity, in large measure, is a conventionalized assemblage of discursive micropractices, tactics for giving and getting, taking and surrendering turns. A turn, given this line of thinking, is an opening, a possibility. But what is done with turns is integrally related to how and when turns materialize and how turns are embodied and fleshed out. Individuals are installed in discourse as conversed and conversing

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subjects of distributed conversations. Coming to discourse as a conversed and conversing subject, then, is coming to pragmatic, ethical, aesthetic, political, erotic, and spiritual consciousness at one and the same time.

And so there is in the very production and consumption of conversational micropractices a morality whose ideology appropriates space/time and informs the power relations of production and consumption. The hegemonic effectivity of conversational micropractices is actualized in the production and consumption of quotidian common sense and common places. The temporality of this everyday life is produced as if experience were sequential and linear rather than archeological and nonlinear, if not chaotic. Time is commodified and is capable of being scheduled, regulated, organized, routinized, measured, and controlled (Foucault, 1979, pp. 170–194). Nevertheless, even in moments of scheduled ordinariness, there is palpable, undeniable fear and terror on the faces of their embodied bearers; everyday practices, at such times, seem to be losing their common sense in the misfires and tragicomic ruptures of everyday life (Koelb, 1990, pp. 189–215).

Conversational micropractices articulate conventional wisdom with circumstantially punctuated experience. The properties of conversational micropractices most responsible for the production and reproduction of this ordinariness and mundanity are its transparent methods of *cutting out* and *turning over*—of both *informing* and *performing*—sociocultural forms of life. In his critique of Foucault's microphysics of power and of Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*, Certeau argues that each theoretical discourse *cuts out* a particular phenomenon from its context and inverts it or *turns it over*. In Foucault's case, "it" is the microphysical practices of surveillance and discipline, and in Bourdieu's case, "it" is the domestic practices of *habitus*. The discourse takes one of its features out of its (con)text and turns it into a principle that explains (almost) everything. Turn taking is a universalizing practice for locally and micropractically producing, allocating, and regulating power and desire. Such formats regulate patterns of dominance and submission by enforcing codes of rights and obligations. So, a turn takes what it finds—and what it finds are living relations to the real conditions of existence, interpellated subjects as interlocutors, subjects cut out as speakers and conversed as authorities—and it fashions an utterance, which necessarily rearranges those everyday material conditions.

Once the analogic relations of practical consciousness are digitalized by way of their transfiguration into the discursive practices of conversation, different gaps and absences become apparent; speech digitalizes the analog of semiosis. But speech cannot exhaust language, conversation cannot exhaust discourse, any more than a digital recording can exhaust an analog signal. The continuity of practical consciousness becomes the discontinuity of discursive practice. The turning and reversing of conversation break up

analogic experience into digital, circumstantial experience, the codes and formats of which are the performative structures of conversation. What must be said and done to fill in the gaps and ruptures between formats of changing circumstances, and what stitches together the seams of temporary coherence into transparent common sense, changes with each utterance, necessitating another turn to address and redress the newly produced gaps. *Utterance*, here, is the name for the ways and means—the styles—of turning; it is the name for the practices of making time take place in the conjunctures and fissures of everyday circumstances.

Taking a turn by producing an utterance is at one and the same moment radical assertion and repressive conformity. It asserts change and difference in the same movement as it punctuates reality in formats of tradition and convention. The conversational micropractices of making time take place are simultaneously fascistic and anarchistic. They are fascistic insofar as individuals are obligated to be subjects of conventional turns as emblems of membership and good faith. And they are anarchistic insofar as turns can be taken to violate convention and foundationally transform both practical and discursive consciousness. Barthes (1977) puts it this way: “Language, as performance of the language system (*langage*), is neither reactionary nor progressive. It is quite simply fascist; for fascism is not the prohibition of saying things, it is the *obligation* to say them” (p. 14).

As ways of inscribing time in place, utterances are both presences and absences, both assertions and repressions. As such, turns are moves in relations of power. Coded rituals and ceremonies take on the appearances of relationships and communities. From this vantage, rules of politeness can be read as the specification of rules for what must be articulated so that face-threatening circumstances are either avoided altogether or blunted and camouflaged simultaneously. Unstated in Brown and Levinson’s (1978, pp. 56–289) catalog of conversational relations, for example, is the hegemonic power lying dormant, but always at the ready, to ensure that only the appropriate is articulated with practice. To violate the rules of politeness is to risk embarrassment and shame, certainly, but also madness and death at the extreme hegemonic edges.

Power relations, then, materialize in the most microscopic of sociocultural practices realized in the process of collective living, articulating differences that become, upon their materialization, signs of values, commodities marking status differences and thereby power relations. To live in the everyday world of late-modern capitalism is to live in a world of constantly shifting alliances among signs. Conversational micropractices are ways of modifying one’s positionality among signs of power, means of shifting alliances, methods of accommodating individuated benefits and of taking care of practical affairs.

The Embodiment of Memory and Practical Consciousness

To take part in the turn-taking political economy of conversation is to trust in some kind of covenant of sociality. And that trust presupposes memory and imagination; they both remember and represent. Illuminating the outlines of memory and imagination, conversation's taking place in turns reaffirms the covenant (tense) of the present. As an infant enters the symbolic realm, the analogic world of the semiotic begins to break up, to digitalize, into discontinuous experience. The gaps marking off these discontinuities are the spaces in practical consciousness that summon (interpellate) the voices of discursive consciousness. Such spaces are the locations for turns to take place, for discursive consciousness to be performed in and through the formats of conversational micropractices, and for those formats to interpellate their interlocutors onto the landscapes of practical affairs.

Circumstances play on the bodies of subjects who may, in turn, respond to these material and spiritual conditions by giving voice to them. Immanent circumstances give voice to the wisdom and folly of memory, which is not simply some recording, storage, and retrieval apparatus. Rather, memory is played by the presences and absences of circumstances. Material and spiritual circumstances play the bodies of memory's subjects as the embodiments of practical consciousness (Cohen, 1994; Csordas, 1994). Circumstances disclose the ruptures that summon conversation to make time take place and to transform circumstance into experience. In the same moment as they bridge circumstantial gaps in practical consciousness, conversational micropractices produce ruptures, as circumstances, again to be transformed into the formatted experience of conversing subjects. Memory's voices are repeated as conversational micropractices that interpellate interlocutors as the embodiments of experience.

I want to suggest that *conversational micropractices are performed memory*, and responsible for reproducing the infrastructures of sociocultural formations. Memory is neither a general nor an abstract idea. A master, for example, is a subject surrendered to experience, someone whose experience produces micropractices demonstrating principles of economy. Experienced micropractices obtain maximum effect from minimum effort. A master makes it look easy. An experienced pianist, for example, is one whose discursive practices evidence practical consciousness; she knows her way around the keyboard (Sudnow, 1978, 1979). Memory is embodied in the temporality of its micropractices, in the discursive formats of practical consciousness. It is the micropractical body that knows, and the experience of such embodied knowledge takes place in time. The same can be said to be true of conversational

interlocutors. As an interlocutor, an “I” speaks what an “I” thinks, and it thinks what it knows; and an “I” knows its own experience as memory that is formatted in the very conversational micropractices it speaks. An “I” is unable to converse out of or beyond what it knows—acknowledging for the moment the multiple ways of knowing. An “I” speaks prior experience as thoughts, and an “I” experiences those structures of feeling as the continuity of an “I’s” own identity. Memory, materialized as conversational micropractices, reproduces itself in the spaces of time as continuity and identity. Improvisation consists of performing aesthetically pleasing variations on the structures themselves, already known to memory. What is outside memory is no-thing and non-sense—Kristeva’s *semiotic chora*; it is unthinkable and unspeakable (Tyler, 1987, pp. 103–145).

Insofar as memory is embodied in the temporality of practice, and a turn is the material embodiment of memory in circumstance, micropractices carry memory into the spaces in which an “I” finds subject positions for living its everyday life. Memory temporarily animates those spaces, promising to weave them together into moments of coherence. It is in this manner that continuity and tradition are reproduced. Current circumstances play memory and call up micropractices whose formats reproduce sociocultural formations in time.

Certeau reminds us that memory has no prefabricated, ready-made, or totalizing organizational structure but rather is mobilized relative to what happens. Memory plays on and is played by circumstances that produce experience in places that belong to the other. The places memory irrupts into, and occupies temporarily, are gaps in the boundaries of the codes of practical consciousness. They digitalize language, and memory irrupts into and plays on these indexical spaces that beckon conversational practices to bridge the gaps. These gaps and fissures that a turn produces are the places of the other. Speaking breaks out experience that produces other gaps and spaces; the process is infinitely self-recursive. These practices of memory are responsible for organizing the occasions of everyday modes of action, for transforming ways of thinking into styles of doing, for evidencing experience in practice, and for discursivizing practical consciousness.

Micropractical Production and Reproduction of the Ideology of Everyday Life

The configurations of cultural contradictions and paradoxes are suppressed and camouflaged on the micropractical level of conversation. The seemingly obvious, mundane, routine, normalizing practices and knowledges of everyday life constitute the ontological and epistemological infrastructures of

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common sense. And common sense is hegemony's material manifestation at the micropractical level. The critical study of conversation and the critical study of hegemony at this point become one and the same enterprise. The silences of what cannot be spoken mark the boundaries of conversation. Conversational micropractices, in other words, perform and reproduce ideological codes that normalize the contradictions contained within hegemonic boundaries, usually without calling them into question. Any given embodied subject, as interlocutor, however, is in process.

Volosinov (1973) argues that the notion of a qualitative difference between "inner" and the "outer" is invalid. The structure of experience is as social as the structure of ideology. An utterance is a two-sided act; it is directed simultaneously toward the addresser and toward the addressee. The two sides constitute the two poles of a continuum along which experience can be apprehended and structured ideologically. The "I-experience," at its extreme, loses its ideological structuredness and with it its apprehensibility. It approaches the physiological reaction of animality in losing its verbal delineation. At the other extreme is what Volosinov calls the "we-experience," characterized by a high degree of differentiation, the mark of a change/expansion of consciousness. The more differentiated the collective in which an individual orients herself, the more vivid and complex her consciousness.

For Bakhtin's (1986) essay "The Problem of Speech Genres," the editors write:

Ideology should not be confused with the politically oriented English word. Ideology as it is used here is essentially any system of ideas. But ideology is semiotic in the sense that it involves the concrete exchange of signs in society and history. Every word/discourse betrays the ideology of its speaker; every speaker is thus a ideologue and every utterance an ideologeme. (p. 101)

Native language learning is an infant's gradual immersion into conversational communication. Volosinov argues that experience and its outward objectifications are articulated in embodied signs. Again, experience does not exist independent, somehow, of its embodiment as signs. It is not a matter of experience organizing utterances; rather, the reverse is the case. Utterances organize experience. And it is the immediate social situation and its broader sociocultural milieu that determine, from within themselves, the structure of each utterance. Utterances then form and orient to experiences of the speaker's partial consciousness.

Conversation, in short, is inherently ideological. It is into and against this ideological world that speaking subjects come to partial consciousness. Realized utterances, as gesture and speech, influence experience by tying

inner life together and sharpening differentiations. Volosinov uses the term *behavioral ideology* to delineate our unsystematized speech, which endows every act, and therefore our every conscious state, with meaning. For Volosinov, “Language acquires life and historically evolves precisely here [in its concrete connection with a situation] in concrete verbal communication, and not in the abstract linguistic systems of language forms, nor in the individual psyche of speakers” (p. 95). Consequently, “Marxist philosophy of language should and must stand squarely on the utterance as the real phenomenon of language—speech as the socioideological structure” (p. 97).

Let me now turn to the sociological side of discourse and the matter of ideology. Complementing the conception of consciousness as dialogical is Thompson’s (1984) conception of ideology as the thought of the other, the thought of someone other than oneself, thought that serves to sustain relations and structures of domination:

To characterize a view as “ideological” is already to criticize it, for ideology is not a neutral term. Hence, the study of ideology is a controversial, conflict-laden activity. It is an activity which plunges the analyst into a realm of claim and counter-claim, of allegation, accusation and riposte. (p. 14)

To characterize conversation as ideological is to grant it its own agency and autonomy. Conversation is no more neutral than is ideology. Utterances of the ongoing stream of conversation are, by their very existence, ideological, and when conversation is dialogical and more truly heteroglossic, it summons a response. An utterance stands as a summons or challenge to precedent; it summons a response from another interlocutor giving voice to partial consciousness. Behavioral ideology entails the speaking of experience into autonomous self-consciousness, and such self-consciousness rests on a foundation of opposition, difference, contradiction, claim, and counterclaim. In these ways, Thompson and Volosinov concur on the relations between conversation and ideology:

To explore the interrelations between language and ideology is to turn away from the analysis of well-formed sentences or systems of signs, focusing instead on the ways in which expressions serve as a means of action and interaction, a medium through which history is produced and society reproduced. The theory of ideology invites us to see that language is not simply a structure which can be employed for communication or entertainment but a sociohistorical phenomenon which is embroiled in human conflict. (Thompson, 1984, p. 2)

Recall that for Bourdieu, dispositions are learned—without being explicitly modeled, taught, or instructed—in and through daily participation in the

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practices of everyday life. They are the material embodiments of everyday practices. As everyday discursive practices, conversation articulates the experience of subjects' consciousness with the meanings of sociohistorical conditions. And it is the articulation of meaning with experience, and thereby the closing off of meaning, that constitutes the ideological nature of dialogical conversation. Insofar as ideology consists of the ways and means by which meaning and signification serve to sustain relations and structures of domination, conversing articulates meaning with experience, which produces consciousness as embodied subjects at the same time that it produces history and reproduces sociocultural formations. Dialogical conversation is a double articulation; it mediates consciousness and ideology.

Reflexivity, Indexicality, and Implicativity

The focus of my work in conversational studies has been critically ontological, which is to say that it records and then deconstructs, reconstructs, and reperforms everyday conversations. Rather than traveling to other places to investigate other ways of life lived by exotic others, these studies are autoethnographic—self-reflexive, self-indexical, and self-implicative interrogations of the conversational politics of everyday experience. To reflect, index, and implicate one's subjectivity (i.e., experience) and one's self (i.e., identity) in the choices (i.e., agency) that one calls one's "life" is to begin considering what Nietzsche referred to as the doctrine of eternal return: the constant affirmation of the intensities and forces of becoming—of life as flow, as difference. One steps back from actual perception to the singularity of those perceptions, creating a gap that enables reflexivity, indexicality, and implicativity. The ethics of eternal return affirms life by moving beyond present perceptions to an imagined eternal whole of difference (Colebrook, 2002, p. 176). To affirm becoming-life is to make a self-reflexive turn, to locate one's self (i.e., identity) and subjectivity (i.e., experience) indexically, and to ask about the ethical rather than the moral implications of one's life choices (i.e., agency) is to make a self-implicative turn. Questions of self-implication, which are ethical questions, do not necessarily entail questions of incrimination, insinuation, accusation, and confession, which are moralistic questions. Self-implication, in a methodological sense, is a reflexive and indexical process of taking on (i.e., assuming) the implications of eternal return.

A subject begins to understand that its identity consists in multiple selves that collaborate and collude in co-producing the conditions of its circumstances. As a subject changes its practices and lines of actions, its conversational dynamics, of necessity, change as well. Deleuze and Guattari argue

that macropolitical forces and generalities consist in micropolitical parts and singularities, the implication being that changes on the macropolitical plane of activity can be brought about only by changes on the micropolitical plane of power. Conversation, in this frame, is a powerful microdiscursive medium for resistance as well as transformation/transportation (Schechner, 1985, pp. 117–150). Mikhail Bakhtin (1986, pp. 60–102) calls the process coming to partial consciousness; Deleuze and Guattari (1988, pp. 252–294) call it “becoming.”

For the past 15 years I have been collecting, analyzing, and critiquing recorded two-person family conversations—more than 250 of them thus far. During those years I conducted a seminar in conversation, dialogue, conflict, and culture. Each seminar participant tape-records and transcribes a conversation with someone with whom they have an intensely affective relationship that is currently deadlocked. Not surprisingly, participants most often select their interlocutor from what they consider to be their family—a parent, sibling, spouse, relative, or mate. The project is described at the seminar’s outset, and its several stages are laid out along a 15-week time line. Participants select their interlocutors and ask for and if necessary negotiate their interlocutors’ agreements not only to have a conversation but to tape-record it. Neither I nor the other seminar participants listen to each other’s tape-recorded conversations; the interlocutor, who does not attend the seminar, is so informed and, assuming he or she agrees, signs the consent forms. The transcribed version of the conversation is then rehearsed and reperformed in the seminar.

These conversations often, but not always, take place in experiential spaces of considerable anxiety. Many participants are anticipating an imminent conversation they have been avoiding, displacing, dissociating, or otherwise distancing themselves from for as long as 30 or 40 years. Now they are stepping into an unknown present from a dreaded past that has been stratified in imaginary time. And the often dreaded and yet wildly anticipated conversation is about to be recorded, territorialized no longer in a compartmentalized past but rather deterritorialized and dispersed in space and time, available to be relistened to and witnessed. It is an experience of being thrown into the immanence of desiring production, of the intensities and excesses of abundant connections, of being flush in the moment. Within a matter of minutes into their conversations, if that long, they are no longer conscious of the tape recorder’s presence. Many indicate that the conversation carries them along once they are thrown into it. Some are not temporally aware again until they hear the “click” of the tape recorder signaling the tape’s end. Often, the conversation continues long after the recording is finished. Many report, in widely different ways, that the conversations,

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surprisingly, were less dangerous in actuality than they feared in virtuality, and for many the conversations are remarkably liberating in ways that are difficult to come to terms with.

Participants then begin a lengthy process of transcribing their tape-recorded conversation. Most have no transcribing experience or any experience in listening closely, repeatedly, interruptedly, and reflexively to the sound production of their voices in conversation with the voice(s) of these particular interlocutors. Each participant begins with a relatively crude transcription that resembles script notes. From this draft transcript, participants continue listening to and transcribing successively microscopic and inevitably micropolitical planes of their conversations. The objectives are to transcribe all recorded sounds from the tape recording without resorting to technical linguistic/phonetic transcribing conventions and to deterritorialize one's conventional modes of listening to one's own as well as to one's interlocutor's conversational discourse production. Transcribing conventions and techniques are provided and suggested; additionally, participants are encouraged to invent their own transcribing conventions as necessary, making a record of their invented conventions and explaining the ways in which these were deployed. The objective is not to train technically competent linguistic transcriptionists; it is, rather, to listen deconstructively and repeatedly to one's conversational discourse production.

Participants are simultaneously apprehensive about and drawn into this work. The projects involve the often difficult, awkward, and vulnerable work of reflexing (i.e., theorizing one's practices retrospectively), indexing (i.e., identifying how one interprets utterances of one's interlocutor) and implicating (i.e., locating one's identity in the matrices of desire, experience, will, resistance, and resolve) by demonstrating how these strata inform, and in the same moment perform, relations with self and others as these relations are articulated with overdetermined social institutions and cultural formations. As the conversational discourse is transcribed into sequences of sounds and silences in the process of representing them as textual bits and pieces, identity becomes decoded and deterritorialized as well. How participants imagined themselves, their interlocutor, and their understanding of agency and choice (i.e., what is taking place as a product of their choices and how it is happening) becomes increasingly problematic. Time flexes, bends, dissolves, and reconfigures as the speed of experience varies in unconventional cadences. The attraction/repulsion of this work registers affectively as boredom, frustration, curiosity, vertigo, embarrassment, shame, narcissism, wonder, fatigue, disorientation, liberation, transformation, and futility (i.e., as forms and substances of desiring-production). Participants write of their transcribing experience, both during the transcribing process and during

subsequent rehearsals. Transcribing is finished when it becomes all too apparent that transcribing is never finished once and for all; participants come to terms with the empirical fact that they could continue to fall into their dissolving conversational discursive sounds virtually and indefinitely.

On this micropolitical plane of conceptualization, participants begin to hear their complicities with and their collusions in the productions and reproductions of meanings, and they begin to ask how their conversations construct and locate their experience, identity, and agency within relatively fixed relations of power. What voices, forces, and agencies animate their subject positions, interests, and values? Which of these identified voices, forces, and agencies are they willing to interrogate? Whose voices are they, and what are they saying? In short, this reflexive, indexical, and implicative discursive work focuses on the relations between questions of power, knowledge, and practice—that is, questions of choice and selection, of content and expression, and of form and substance.

All participants continue writing and rewriting reflexions, indexes, and implications of their planes of experience and affect about a conversation that is no longer coherent as the form and substance of the conversation they experienced prior to transcribing it. Participants write whatever contents and expressions in whatever forms and substances make sense. This writing is usually nonlinear and temporally variable; it usually folds back and forth on itself in ways most participants have little or no experience writing about. Initially, their writing productions look incoherent to them—some have described it as schizophrenic, without knowing or necessarily referring to the *DSM-IV* clinical diagnostic category for that term. And at the same time, most find this writing liberating in surprising ways, even those who report not liking to write anything, much less something reflexive, indexical, and implicative. Participants eventually read aloud from their writing during the seminar at any time of their choosing.

Conversational transcripts are reformatted to specify what for some are a disconcerting assemblage of part-voices, certainly a heteroglossic experience for many. Richard Schechner (1985, pp. 16–21) describes this process of deterritorializing stratified assemblages as the workshop phase of performance, in which texts are reconfigured in novel and unconventional ways. Rehearsal is the place where these deterritorialized transcriptions are read reflexively, indexically, and implicatively, moving from common sense toward pure difference in order to interrupt, intervene, interrogate, embrace, and resist what otherwise passes as normal(izing) discursive practices. In the process of transcribing, reformatting, and rehearsing transcribed part-voices, the seemingly innocent and transparent ways families pass on and pass down their worlds of beliefs, values, prides, shames, pretenses, secrets, common senses,

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aphorisms, knowledges, resentments, sentiments, prejudices, and affects can be heard now as anything but innocent and transparent.

At this juncture of the seminar, each participant selects two other participants to reperform his or her transcribed conversation under his or her direction. In effect, each participant entrusts his or her conversation to two seminar participants who have never heard, and will not hear, the tape-recorded conversation. The transcript's author—one of the two tape-recorded interlocutors and the only one of the two who is participating in the seminar—is free to direct the two reperformers in any ways he or she desires. Each group of three participants then proceeds to rehearse the conversation by reading it aloud, asking questions about and making suggestions for how to rehearse the reperformance. There is no necessary expectation to reperform the tape-recorded conversation; in other words, the objective is not to copy and reproduce the tape-recorded conversation—as though that were even a possibility. In fact, these rehearsals are productive of surprises for the participant-becoming-director as he or she hears the two reperformers making discursive sense of his or her transcribed conversation. For the reperformers, initially, there is little that is familiar about this anonymous conversation. A tape-recorded conversation that the participant-becoming-director experienced as intensely angry, for example, may come to be reperformed as more detached and ironic, sometimes humorous, or even painfully nostalgic.

These rehearsals continue for three weeks. The participant-becoming-director experiences a range of affects with varying intensities as she or he comes to different terms with the recorded and transcribed, and now multiply rehearsed, conversation. Not only has each participant experienced falling into the microsonic abyss of their conversation as its sense dissolves into the imperceptible differences of sound fragments, but each also experiences listening to two others bring very different and singular reflexive, indexical, and implicative senses to that conversation. It is this relativizing of sense and affect that destratifies the limitations and constraints of contracted and centered meanings and their grounded and unitary identities, which are effects that also deterritorialize identity and agency. In such performative spaces, subjectivities becoming multiplicities open up previously bounded, unitized, and categorized senses to previously imperceptible differences, overlooked subtleties, and virtual possibilities.

In much of this work I am interested in how subjects identify agency and enact choices as alternative ways of intervening into and altering conversational flows and forces, ways that engage and transform unevenly distributed opportunities for relations of power. I am interested in when and how subjects surrender and when and how—with what forms and substances—they resist. Many of these lessons are already inscribed as flows of intensities

and structures of feeling learned in the worlds of family—as newborns, infants, and children—long before these bodies are inserted, as becoming-subjects, into institutional(izing) worlds and their formal(izing) pedagogies. Listening reflexively, indexically, and implicatively to reperformances of their conversations, participants come to hear some of the voices of their histories and memories of their inherited traditions and conventional wisdoms.

The concerns subjects usually begin with are the practical, moral, political, aesthetic, and erotic issues entailed in the ethical dilemmas of producing an audiotape recording of a high-risk conversation. Subjects come to understand that they have remained in the territorialized spaces of their daily lives to record these conversations, only to experience some of the intensely held affectivities of identity and the collusive and complicitous ways they insist on the forces that hold them firmly in spaces that produce unwanted effects. There are, of course, the demanding tasks of transcribing and identifying (with) the voices, forces, and agencies of parents, teachers, authorities, guardians, oppressors, perpetrators, officials, and leaders, all of whom are coded in partial narratives as villains, heroes, victims, tricksters, allies, and strangers, as well as models of all sorts of prehuman forces. And there are the challenges of rehearsing and reperforming these part-voices, directing other subjects to reperform the conversation, coming to reflexive, indexical, and implicative terms with the inherent unresolvability and fluidity of identities while realizing previously virtual agentive possibilities and choices.

Most reperformances are readings from seated and standing positions, although some involve walking, movement, music, other sounds, or other nonspeaking bodies that may be motionless or in motion in various ways. The spaces of these reperformances vary from institutional university classrooms to small auditoriums and outdoor, open-air spaces. Following each reperformance, seminar participants engage the participant and the reperformers in dialogue—that is, questions, affirmations, reactions, affects, effects, interpretations, and associations. Reperformers often comment on their experience of bringing life to an anonymous transcript, how they came to find themselves in the various spaces of what seemed to be an incoherent conversation, how they struggled to familiarize themselves with it, brought their lived experience to it, and were terrified of, or repulsed by, attracted to, incredulous about, or all too uncomfortably familiar with what they experienced as subjectivities in these processes and whatever senses and values were produced as its effects.

Schechner (1985, pp. 35–115) refers to this work as *behavior restoration* and claims that restoring behavior is not a discovery process but rather a process of research and fieldwork and of rehearsals in the most profound

sense. Theater, for him, is the art of specializing in the concrete techniques of *restoring* behavior. Conversation studies are performative as well as analytic in commitment and enactment. They produce conversational dialogues that transform discursive possibilities by peeling off strips of conversations, reconfiguring them as dialogical (con)texts of interiority, and then rehearsing them as (sub)texts of exteriority. In these senses, the seminar is a collection of practices of and processes for recording, transcribing, editing, deterritorializing, reterritorializing, and reformatting conversational discourses. This focus results in a dispersed sense of self (identity) and multiplied subjectivities (experience). It deterritorializes texts into more de-stratified assemblages of part-voices and discursive forces. To repress these knowledges and practices is to foreclose on virtual possibilities of and for subject groups (Colebrook, 2002, p. 60).

Finally, seminar participants write extended commentaries on their conversation projects. The objective is to encourage participants to think in a Deleuzian style and manner: to reflex, index, and implicate their thinking in a manner that is more nomadic, nonlinear, and fragmented than the thinking they have been taught for much of their lives (Deleuze, 1995; Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, 1994; Deleuze & Parnet, 1987, 2002). Said another way, the objective is for seminar participants to concretize and particularize their subjectivities, identities, and agencies. Immanent issues during this work are the commonsense dilemmas and paradoxes of daily life. The details and features of these everyday discursive practices are politicized in the course of the project's unfolding.

Conclusion

Schechner (1985, pp. 35–116) writes of the liminoid space of the not(me) . . . not (not me) produced during a performance following workshop and rehearsal preparation. Authors get senses of this liminoid space as they experience being at odds with their recorded voices. They begin to hear and to recognize the voices that articulate self with other, voices that speak presumptions of a unitary, univocal, singular identity. Bakhtin's treatments of *polyvocality* and the *inherent unfinalizability of the subject* can be understood this way. Participants begin to realize that these multiplicities and this destabilizing, deterritorializing experience are both unnerving and empowering. A conversation studied in these ways becomes a discursive reperformance enacted in the intensities and forces of the present.

Popular culture increasingly requires that subjects live spatially to cultivate alternative aesthetics and spiritualities befitting contemporary historical

and material conditions. Conversations are the material media through which much of this gets worked out, even if never finally accomplished.

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