

and even there the suggestive power of prior discourse is at work. To say something new, one must use old expressive forms, which have crystallized at the cold pole of tradition." (1996a, 256.)

<sup>10</sup> Although the theoretical approach of Marshall Sahlins appears not to have influenced the development of Urban's conceptualizations, insofar as Sahlins is not referenced until the forthcoming "Metaculture," one cannot help but be struck by the compatibility of the two positions. I note that Jukka Siikala also recognizes that Sahlins "offers a parallel way of thinking about the relationship between social structure and the talk about it" (2000, 14). The principal divergence lies in the groundedness of Urban's approach in a methodological framework; in *how* talk functions.

<sup>11</sup> Urban does not reference Geertz in this particular article, but in a later work he suggests that "Talk encounters a world that is perceptually accessible, and it somehow must make its peace with that world (or worlds). Geertz (1973, 93-94) two decades ago articulated a similar idea in his insight regarding "models of" and "models for." Culture, like DNA strands, is a repository of information about the phenomenal world in which it finds itself. It also creates or modifies part of the world it represents." (1996a, 253.)

<sup>12</sup> In his earlier work, Urban called the people who lived at P. I. Ibirama, Shokleng. However, because of conclusions drawn about the lack of internally perceived boundaries based on ethnicity, he dropped the designation in *Metaphysical Community*.

Greg Urban

## How "We" Moves through the World

He has plundered **our** seas,  
ravaged **our** Coasts,  
burnt **our** towns,  
and destroyed the lives of **our** people.

*The Declaration of Independence of the  
United States of America*

### A tiny pronoun

A pronoun – a single instance of the word "our" written on a page, for example – seems hardly an object in motion, as if it were a particle cutting a trail in a cloud chamber. Yet the cloud chamber analogy is not so far-fetched, or so I propose to argue. Even in the micro-time of a given stretch of discourse, one instance of "our" looks back to another. A tiny trail leads through the vapors, as the reader's or listener's attention engages a present. In the above snippet, the "our" of "ravaged our Coasts" looks back on an earlier "our" – that of "He has plundered our seas." At the same time, the trail winds off into the future, looking forward to subsequent "our"s, including that of "our people." Something is carried across from one instance to the next. But what?

It is tempting to solve this problem

by reference to an extradiscursive object – a people that possesses, in this case, seas, coasts, and towns. But is such a people already there? Of course, the answer to this question depends in part on answers to other questions such as: when and for whom is such a people already there? My concern here is not with details of historical fact, however, so much as with the conceptual problems pertaining to culture in relation to social groupings that this case raises. When, in principle, can a social grouping be said to exist as thing-in-the-world? In the American case, what if the revolution had been unsuccessful? What if the rebellion had been quelled?

Examples of misfired (or still unresolved) rebellions abound, a case in point being the "Republic of Texas" movement, whose goal has been secession from the United States. The "ambassador" of the restored republic, Richard L. McLaren, engaged in a standoff with Texas state officials in April and May of 1997. The secessionists constituted themselves as a government, analogously to the self-appointment by the Continental Congress of the United States of America on July 4, 1776. The new "Republic of Texas" even issued checks, which it claimed were backed by the "full faith and credit of the people of Texas" (Verhovek 1997).

On July 4, 1776, the outcome of the American declaration of independence was itself uncertain. Would it not be anachronistic to imagine that it was simply the prior existence of the object – "the people of the United States," as it is called

in the subsequent constitution – that was the something that was carried over between the various occurrences of the “our” in the above snippet? Jacques Derrida dismissed the idea: “...this people does not exist ... before this declaration, not as such” (1986, 10).

Derrida gives instead a performative account of the foundational paradox. The American “people” only came into existence after the signing of the Declaration of Independence. It was created by the act of signing. As Derrida (1986, 10) puts it: “The signature invents the signer. This signer can only authorize him – or herself to sign once he or she has come to the end, if one can say, of his or her own signature, in a sort of fabulous retroactivity.”

The fallacy of Derrida’s argument, it seems to me, is the apparent assumption that the “people” of the United States of America came into existence at the moment of signature. No more did it come into existence then than did the new “Republic of Texas” upon the occasion of its “official call” on the steps of the capitol building in Austin, Texas on January 16, 1996 (Republic of Texas Web Site, “Official Call,” January 16, 1996).<sup>1</sup> It may be that the United States achieved an existence for the signers of the Declaration, based on their faith in the magic of performative constitution, a belief growing out of a historical pattern of performative constitution in Western discourse, as Benjamin Lee (1997, 323-341) has so aptly argued. But so too did (and does) exist the new “Republic of Texas” for Richard L. McLaren and other followers of the movement.

What is crucially missing from the performativity account is an understanding of cultural motion, of the circulation of

discourse that is necessary for a significant number of individuals to come to articulate their membership in a group, a “we.” The articulators (Thomas Jefferson and the other signatories) produced a piece of writing that, by virtue of its semantic and pragmatic meanings, defined a group of individuals in the world as a free and independent “people,” with the declarers as their rightful representatives. So too did “President” Van Kirk of the “Republic of Texas” claim in his January 16, 1996, speech: “We represent millions of Texans.” (I use quotations around the titles and name of the “Republic of Texas” to emphasize that these social entities exist at the time of this writing only or primarily as discursive entities.)

What is lacking in the “Republic of Texas” case is replication. Not only must the officials of this discursive entity produce a discourse that defines millions of people as citizens of the “Republic of Texas,” but those millions of people (or some significant fraction of them) must produce discourse that defines themselves as part of the “Republic of Texas” – and even that would be insufficient to constitute the “Republic of Texas” as a sovereign nation, independent of the United States. Officials of some other, already recognized independent nation would also have to recognize the new republic, and, ultimately, the United States itself would have to recognize the new republic, if only tacitly by ceasing to employ force to stop the new republic from engaging in self-government outside the union.

What is hard to see is that the processes whereby this happens – whereby a “people” comes to exist as a recognized social entity – are processes of replication,

of the movement of culture through the world. What is being replicated are patterns of discourse, in particular, patterns in the usage of pronouns such as “we” and “they,” and in the use of proper names such as “Republic of Texas.”

This leads me back to the question from the opening paragraph: What carries over between the discrete instances of “our” in the Declaration of Independence? What forms the trace of cultural movement within the cloud chamber? The answer has to be a pattern (or set of patterns) of usage of the pronouns themselves. The pattern, in particular, is an “our” or “us” or “we” that stands in opposition to a specific “he” – the “King of Great Britain” – but also, and, perhaps, more importantly as the discourse proceeds, a “they” – which refers in the Declaration back to “our British brethren:”

We have warned **them**  
from time to time ....  
We have reminded **them**...  
We have appealed to **their** native  
justice...  
We have conjured **them** by the ties of our  
common kindred...

Colonial American subjects would have to have been reproducing in their discourse at the time patterns of usage in the pronouns “we” and “our” that resembled those of the Declaration. The key discourse pattern to emerge out of this process, of which the Declaration of Independence was only one moment, would have to have been a kind of “we” – analogous to the “we” of the human species from Jonathan Schell’s *Fate of the Earth*, but circumscribing a population in certain of the British colonial states of North America. This replicated “we” would have

to set its articulators, collectively, in opposition to various “they”s, but particularly to a “they” of the British.

I expect historians to scrutinize the proposition that a “we” of the American colonies was already in circulation long before the Declaration of Independence, that it grew through replication over time, having broad currency on the eve of the Declaration. A key question is when and how that “we” became opposed to a “they” of “the British.” In the “Declaration of Arms” (July 6, 1775), “Parliament” and the “legislature” are opposed to an “us” of the American colonies, but the opposition is not extended to a “they” of the British more generally, as in the Declaration. Yet surely that opposition was already in place in less official discourses of the times.

As to a “we” of the British colonies of North America more generally, certainly that was in circulation at least two decades prior to the revolution – as a few passages from Nathaniel Ames II, writer and publisher of *The Astronomical Diary and Almanack* (1758), suggest. An interesting “we” of the inhabitants of colonial North America is the following passage:

O! Ye unborn Inhabitants of America!  
Should this Page escape its destin'd  
Conflagration at eh Year's End, and these  
Alphabetical Letters remain legible, –  
when your Eyes behold the Sun after he  
has rolled the Seasons round for two or  
three Centuries more, you will know that  
in Anno Domini 1758, **we** dream'd of your  
Times. (Quoted in Jehlen and Warner  
1997, 718).

More extensive use of the colonial American “we” occurs earlier in this same piece:

**Our** Numbers will not avail till the  
Colonies are united; for whilst divided,  
the strength of the Inhabitants is broken

like the petty Kingdoms in Africa. – If we do not join Heart and Hand in the common Cause against our exulting Foes, but fall to disputing among ourselves, it may really happen as the Governour of Pennsylvania told his Assembly, "We shall have no Privilege to dispute about, nor Country to dispute in." (1997, 717).

This "we" is even oppositional – witness "our exulting Foes." But when and how did this British colonial America "we" come, in the course its replication and movement through people, to be opposed to "the British," in particular?

The Declaration of Independence of the United States of America played upon the discontents of its population, and, undoubtedly, in some measure, replicated already circulating discourse of discontent: "He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people." Just so does the discourse of the "Republic of Texas" play upon already circulating discontents of the people it claims to represent:

We represent millions of Texans that have loved ones in Federal prisons for alleged revenue crimes, created out of a hole [sic] cloth, by a government. Or were the result of a failed, bogus war on drugs, that is not a war at all but a government-perpetuated enterprise.

We represent all who are tired of a government, any government, that when it cannot go swashbuckling around the world to fight someone else's war, it declares war on its own people!

We represent all the people who want to restore common sense in the courts, and laws under which they can live, and live well. The people who yearn for a system of justice where you do not have to hire someone, at exorbitant hourly rates, to explain to them their alleged rights and responsibilities, non-existent in a military, statutory setting, framed by a gold-fringed military flag, and run by tiny men who think they are God! (Republic of Texas Web Site, "Official Call," January 16, 1996).

Nor is it entirely unimaginable that a

discourse of secession for a new "Republic of Texas" could achieve wider circulation beyond the handful of its current followers – in January of 1997 estimated at "perhaps a few hundred people with varying degrees of commitment" (Verhovek 1997). The Official Call appeals to "the people who yearn for a system of justice where you do not have to hire someone, at exorbitant hourly rates, to explain to them their alleged rights... ." To recognize the discourse of discontent on which this statement builds, just think of how many lawyer jokes and stories now circulate in the broader population. Indeed, one resident of Fort Davis, Texas, T. Houston, who was not a part of the movement, remarked: "Actually, it would tickle me pink if we left the United States, but this guy [Richard L. McLaren] is going at it all the wrong way" (Verhovek 1997).

#### Micromotion and macrocirculation

What is it that gets a pattern of "we" usage to circulate? I have already suggested that it is, in part, that the pattern replicates what is already in circulation. This is the principle of inertia. The Declaration of Independence drew on the colonists' already circulating discourse of discontent. Similarly, the "Republic of Texas" movement employs rhetoric that draws upon already existing discontents – already circulating patterns of discourse – among the people it seeks to enlist.

But that cannot be the end of the story. If only inertia were at work, nothing new would emerge except by the action of forces of dissipation on the inertial culture. The "United States of America," at one time a discursive entity analogous to

the "Republic of Texas," did emerge as a recognizable social entity. It was an outgrowth – and represented the continuation – of older circulating discourse patterns. But something decidedly new did come into existence, whether one dates the birth of that new thing July 4, 1776 or 1787 (when the Constitution of the United States was drafted in Philadelphia) or 1788 (when the Constitution was ratified) or 1789 (when the Constitution was put into effect) or even 1865 (when the Civil War ended). How can such a new thing come about?

According to the theory I have been developing here, the transformation of discourse necessary to bring a new pattern into existence requires the application of accelerative force. Some of this force comes, I propose, from the peculiarities of key pieces of discourse – like the Declaration of Independence. The key piece of discourse has properties that attract attention to it. We are familiar with this phenomenon from the pop charts on the radio, where certain songs, because of their intrinsic properties relative to other contemporary music, work their way up the charts as people want to listen to them. But it is hard to recognize that this process is operative in the case of discourse more generally. Some bits of talk or writing, because of their internal organization, achieve greater circulatory prominence.

Not only is the discourse in question prominent in consciousness, but that prominence impels its reproduction. In the case of music, one hums or whistles or sings a tune one has heard or attempts to play it on a musical instrument. In the case of discourse, a similar copying takes place. Patterns of word usage circulate, sometimes through conscious acts

of memorization and reproduction, as in lines from the Declaration: "When in the Course of human events..." or "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal..." More typically, however, replication occurs through unreflective imitation, as one takes words or patterns of words one has heard and reproduces them. The words enter into the rhetorical unconscious and find their way out again in expression.

The Declaration is a highly poeticized text – and it is its poetic structure, at least in part, that, following Jakobson (1960), makes the text stand out. Here I do not want to analyze the general rhetorical structure of the text, which has been the subject of earlier studies. Instead, I want to focus specifically on the poetics of the first person plural pronominal usage, since it is this pattern, I believe, that is crucial to the formation of a new social entity. Members of that emergent collectivity (or a significant fraction of the members) must come to think of themselves as a "we," and coming to think of themselves as a "we" is inextricably bound up with the patterns of deployment of actual pronouns in specific ways.

There are, by my count, 47 occurrences of the first person plural pronoun – including the forms "we" (11), "us" (10), and "our" (26). Only one of these pronouns occurs in the first half of the Declaration – in the famous phrase: "We hold these truths to be self-evident..." What is the discourse meaning of this "we?" On the one hand, it might look forward to the signers. But, on the other hand, it occurs in the context of a discussion of universal rights and human-kind, and thus bears a resemblance to Schell's "we" of the human species – this

is a "we" of rational (human) beings. My inclination is to regard the latter as the correct interpretation, but, in any case, no other first-person forms occur for some time in the unfolding discourse.

When they do occur, however, they occur hot and heavy, and they appear in the grievances section. The first of these occurs in the line:

He has erected a multitude of New Offices,  
and sent hither swarms of Officers to  
harass **our** people, and eat out their  
substance.

The "our" of this line gains its specific meaning through its reference back to an earlier noun phrase, "the population of these States," which, like "our people," occurs in the object position, with "He" – referring back to the "present King of Great Britain" – occurring as subject. The pattern of "He" versus "us" is poetically salient. Repeatedly throughout the grievance section, "He" occurs in agentive subject position. Correspondingly, "us" or "our" – referring back to "the population of these States" – occurs in direct object, indirect object, or object of preposition position. Here are the occurrences from this section, in their immediate discourse contexts:

He has ... sent hither swarms of Officers  
to harass **our** people...  
He has kept among **us** ... Standing  
Armies, without the consent of **our**  
legislatures  
He has combined with others to subject  
**us** to a jurisdiction foreign to **our**  
constitution and unacknowledged by  
**our** laws  
He has abdicated Government here by  
declaring **us** out of his Protection  
and waging War against **us**.  
He has plundered **our** seas,  
ravaged **our** Coasts, burnt **our** towns,  
and destroyed the lives of **our** people.

He has constrained **our** fellow Citizens  
taken Captive on the high Seas to  
bear Arms against their Country  
He has excited domestic insurrections  
amongst **us**, and has endeavoured  
to bring on the inhabitants of **our**  
frontiers, the merciless Indian  
Savages.

There is a palpable rhythm to these passages. Readers or listeners have the pattern drummed into them, so to speak, so that the reality of the discourse object is felt as well as cognized.

There is a section in the middle of these grievances, as well, in which a related parallelism is established in a series of "for" clauses, with the "King of Great Britain" being accused of giving his assent to measures that prejudice the "population of these states." Below, I excerpt just the ones with first person plural pronouns in them:

For cutting off **our** Trade with all parts of  
the world:  
For imposing Taxes on **us** without **our**  
Consent:  
For depriving **us** in many cases of the  
benefits of Trial by Jury:  
For transporting **us** beyond Seas to be  
tried for pretended offences:  
For taking away **our** Charters,  
abolishing **our** most valuable Laws  
and altering fundamentally the  
Forms of **our** Governments:  
For suspending **our** own Legislatures,  
and declaring themselves invested  
with power to legislate for **us** in all  
cases whatsoever.

Again, it is the palpable quality of repetition that lends reality to the discursive object. Clause after clause follows a single pattern: "For [verb]-ing \_\_\_ us (or our \_\_\_)," where a series of verbs supplies the key variation: "depriving," "transporting," "taking away," "abolishing," "altering fundamentally," "suspending," "declaring." A temporal reality emerges in the discourse through the repetition of physical words

"for," "us," and "our" in their appropriate grammatical positions.

What I wish to contend is that this micromovement, based upon intra-textual replication, bears a relationship to the macro- and intertextual movement of a pattern of discourse in the broader population. If one looks only at a single line – "He has plundered **our** seas..." for example – that movement is not apparent. The line projects a discursive image of a collectivity, of an "our" whose referent would be traceable back to "the population of these states." And, by virtue of being a first-person plural pronoun, it would invite readers or listeners to ask of themselves – Am I part of that group? But the repeated occurrence of the first-person plural forms in grammatical positions in which they are acted upon by an external "He" or "they" does something more. It creates a movement – however microscopic – of that collectivity through time, the time of the textual reading or listening. The pattern appears as a temporal trace, with each subsequent occurrence building upon its predecessor and reconfirming the existence of that trace. The collectivity assumes an existence in time, if only the micro-time of the text. But it clearly becomes something more than the projected image of one isolated occurrence of the pronoun. That projected image could be shrugged off. But the palpable durability of the discourse pattern within the text suggests the durability of the thing that that pattern purports to represent.

I want to argue that this making palpable of the temporal durability of the collectivity is one component, perhaps even an important component, of the accelerative force that helps to bring a collectivity

into existence in the first place. The poetic characteristics are not simply a device for foregrounding the text, thereby making possible its circulation in the broader world – although they surely are that, as well. Additionally, the text, as built around an architecture of repetition, contains within itself a miniature version of the movement of a discourse pattern through time. That miniature version lends experiential temporal reality to the object in the world – the collectivity – that each isolated line represents. The feel of reality of movement of the pattern within the text in turn impels the replication of that pattern in those who read or listen to the text.

I do not want to make light of the significant content of this pattern – an aggrieved "we." On the contrary, grievance – complaint about an other or others hurting oneself or one's group – may be among the most effective ways of kindling a sense of group identity. Indeed, it is possible to build a discourse primarily around a "they," with the "we" being largely implicit, as in anti-Semitic rhetoric, or the recent right-wing antigovernment rhetoric. Moreover, the discourse of grievance in the Declaration is critical to building upon an already circulating discourse of grievance in the broader Anglo population of coastal North America. I have been at pains to say that this Declaration did not create something *ex nihilo*. It took the existing movement of culture – the existing circulating discourse of complaint – and sharpened and focused it, making explicit its connection to a "we" that was aggrieved. What I am pointing out here is that the pattern is given a temporal existence (and, hence, reality) through repetition that is present within the text. The poetic repetition adds incremental accel-

erative force to culture that is already in motion.

It is intriguing that, after the grievance section, in which the putative collectivity is aggrieved, the first person plural is then reincarnated as an actor, an agent bringing about events in the world, making them happen. No longer is it simply a patient – the inert thing to which something is done. The grievance section is highly patient-centric. But, immediately after it, an agentive “we” is born:

We have warned them  
from time to time ....  
We have reminded them...  
We have appealed to their native  
justice...  
we have conjured them by the ties of our  
common kindred...  
We must, therefore... hold them, as  
we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in  
War, in Peace Friends.

I want to make it clear that these “we”s circumscribe the same collectivity as the “our”s that came before them – and I will note, shortly, that they are different from the “we”s in the resolution section that follows. Each “we” here refers back to the preceding first-person plural forms, and, ultimately, back to “the population of these states.” These are “we”s of the collectivity.

But there is a difference. These are not the phlegmatic and passive “our”s and “us”es of the earlier section. The collectivity here begins to stir, as if the repeated, unprovoked proddings finally awaken the beast from its groggy slumber; it here begins to lurch into action, warning, reminding, appealing, conjuring, and, finally, holding them “Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.” Those who could identify with the aggrieved “us” of the earlier section are now invited to identify with the

active “we” of a collectivity at war with another.

Once again, however, this active “we” gains palpability by the movement of the discourse pattern through the microtime of the text. The “we”s occur in rapid succession, each building upon the other, each reaffirming the temporal trace of the pattern, and hence also of the entity that the “we” purports to represent – a collectivity capable of agency in the world, of doing things and making things happen, rather than simply responding to them.

The performative magic of this text, with which both Derrida (1986) and Lee (1997) are concerned, does not occur until the next section. The “we” of this section is distinctive; it is the third type of “we” in this text, if the first type – the “we” of “we hold these truths to be self-evident – is a universal “we,” akin to Schell’s “we” of the human species. The second type, which dominates the text, is the “we” of the American collectivity, and the third type is the representative “we,” circumscribing the signers of the Declaration. The shift to it is explicitly announced: “We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America...”

I think Lee (1997) is right to argue that the validity of this discourse tactic, in the eyes and ears of potential readers and listeners, derives from prior discourse – specifically, from the history of performative usage in Western cultures. The self-constitutive acts make sense or become intelligible for people for whom the performative creation of things in the world – social relations through marriage, names through christening, admission into religious communities through baptism – is already understandable.

At the same time, this kind of self-creation or self-constitution as representatives makes no sense if there does not already exist the social body whose people the representatives are to represent. The precondition of self-constitution is the prior existence of a collectivity. This is reflected in the linear unfolding of the text. Self-appointment as representatives occurs only after the collectivity achieves palpable existence as a discourse trace. Microtemporality parallels the macrotemporality of broader discourse circulation, at least as I have been depicting it. The resolution section follows upon a long section of grievances and then a shorter section in which the aggrieved collectivity becomes agentive.

What I am suggesting, therefore, is that the microflows of discourse in textual time parallel or model the macro-flow of historical time. The collectivity takes shape in the text the way it was actually taking shape in the world. The Declaration is a discourse image, written in miniature, of the broader historical flow of discourse patterns through people who occupy the east coast of North America.

But, at the same time, the text is not simply a microcosmic image of these macrocirculatory processes. It also represents an intervention in those processes. It is designed to be persuasive, to have an effect, to pull people into an only incipient collectivity, and thereby to solidify that collectivity. The practical means by which it is able to do this is its stimulation of discourse patterns. It adds an incremental force to the movement of those patterns by persuading people to take them on in their own speech, in the way they narrate their own lives. And in taking on those

patterns, people are encouraged to organize their own behavior in the world so that their behavior might be narrativizable in accord with the patterns. In short, the discourse contributes to the historical movement of culture through which a collectivity is constituted.

If the Declaration contributes to the movement of discourse patterns by modeling that movement and intensifying it on the micro-plane, it follows that the general textual trend ought to be toward an increase in the frequency of first-person forms as the text unfolds. Figure 1 demonstrates that this pattern holds true for the Declaration.

I have charted the occurrence of the first person plural forms (“we,” “our,” “us”) as a function of the linear unfolding of the text. In this case, I have divided the text

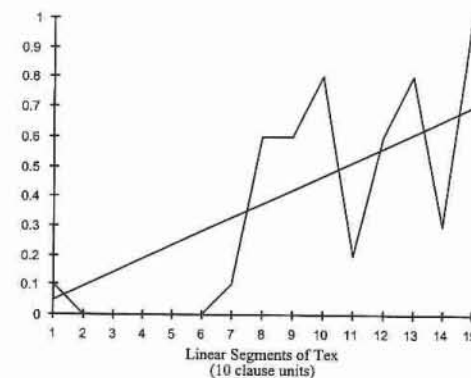


Figure 1: “We”s over Time in the Declaration

in units of ten clauses<sup>2</sup> each. I have then calculated the average number of first-person pronouns per clause within each ten-clause unit. Although there are ups and downs, with some parts of the text more densely populated with "we"s than other parts, the general trend is toward an increase in the frequency of the first-person plural form.

The increase in frequency of "we"s in the broader population of coastal North America – "we"s identifying with an American collectivity – is, of course, also the goal of the text itself. If one could construct an analogous figure for the frequency of the "we" usage of British colonial America over historical time – for example, over the eighteenth century – one would expect to see a similar increasing trend. The statistical pattern of "we" usage over the micro-time of the Declaration itself, as a piece of linearly unfolding discourse, would then appear as a miniature model of the broader historical replication of the pattern over time within British colonial North America.

I have argued, however, perhaps even too tediously, that the Declaration, as circulating discourse, does not simply encode or reflect the historical replication of that discourse pattern in the broader population; it also itself plays a role in shaping the historical course of replication, in deflecting the discourse pattern from its inertial trajectory. The Declaration is agentive, though not in the way Derrida (1986) imagined – namely, as the instantaneous and magical creation of a social entity that had not before existed. The Declaration is instead a rhetorical entity, shaping and accelerating a pattern of "we" usage, and, thereby, helping to bring a social entity

into existence. But that entity depends on the broader circulation of the pattern of "we" usage within the American population and elsewhere. That circulation takes time – historical time – and is not instantaneously achieved. The Declaration may have come at a key moment, may have constituted a key rhetorical intervention, but the groundwork of circulation was laid long in advance and the circulatory processes continued long after, as I will argue below. At the time of the civil war, and, in particular, of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, the "we" of the United States of America was all but unutterable.

The statistical trend of intensification of "we" usage in the Declaration is not, by any means, a unique characteristic of that text. The intensification is actually found in much politically persuasive discourse in America. It is a way of building emotional involvement in the discourse, and is, in this regard, analogous to other techniques, such as the increase in frequency of shot changes in film that goes along with points of peak excitement in the narrative.

In the case of "we" usage, however, what the author or speaker is trying to do is build emotional interest in a specific pattern of that usage. You will recall, from the first chapter, that Jonathan Schell's *The Fate of the Earth* and Caspar Weinberger's "U.S. Defense Strategy" both contain multiple types of "we"s. In each, a particular "we" was dominant: in Schell, the "we" of the human species, and in Weinberger, the "we" of the United States – which, incidentally, is evidence of the continuing replication of the Declaration's "we." If the purpose of statistically increasing the frequency of "we" usage is to cause others to

Human Species "We"

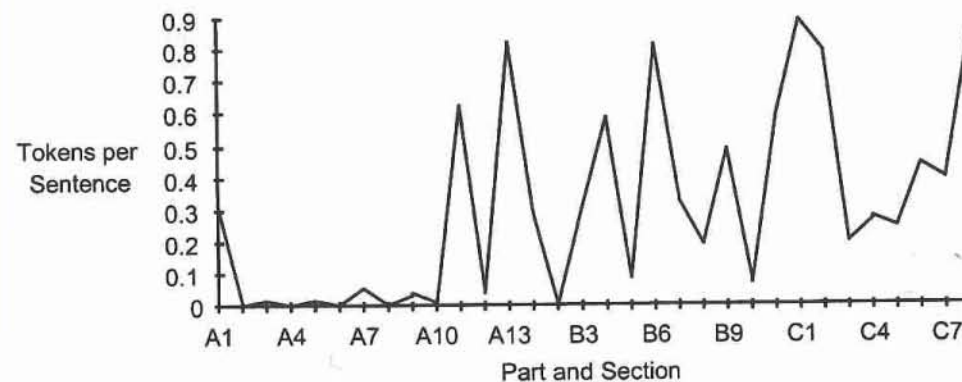


Figure 2: "We"s over Time in Schell (1982)

United States "We"

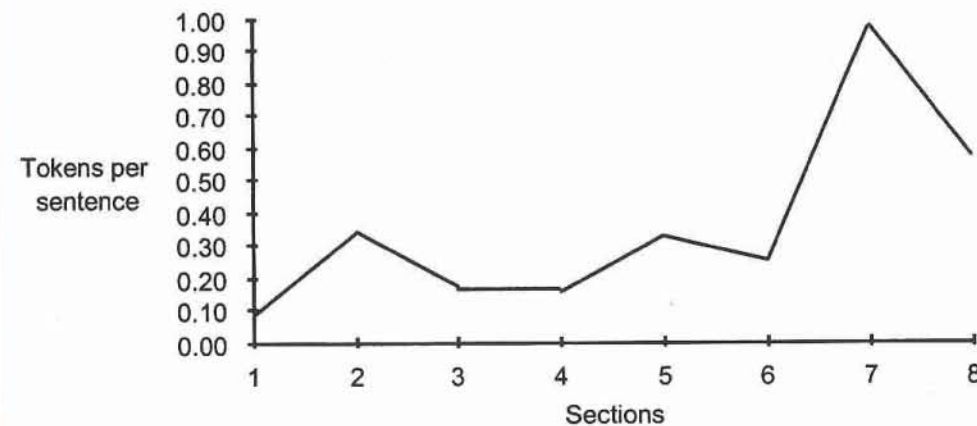


Figure 3: "We"s over Time in Weinberger (1986)

take up that usage, and hence to get it to spread in a broader population, it would follow that the statistical increase ought to apply to the basic "we" – the one that is most prevalent in the text – but not necessarily to the other ancillary "we"s.

To determine whether this is actually so,

I have charted the patterns of "we" usage over textual time for the basic and non-basic types of "we" in both Schell and Weinberger. The results for the distribution of the basic "we"s are shown in Figures 2 and 3.

The pattern is similar in each case to that observed for the Declaration.

## The en-chanting of "we"

Regarding the nonbasic "we"s, some of them occur too infrequently to draw any solid conclusions. The remainder, however, can be studied. Of the nonbasic "we"s in Schell, the author plus reader "we" shows an upward trend – with readers being drawn into the author's point of view. The present-generation "we" shows a nearly flat trend, with only a slight upward incline. The rest show a downward trend. For Weinberger, the nonbasic "we"s include the Reagan administration, ambiguous, Department of Defense, within quotations, and President and I "we"s. The trend in each of these cases is downward.

My conclusion is that what matters in these texts are the basic forms of first-person plural usage that the authors are attempting – whether consciously or not – to stimulate in their readers. Writers or speakers can sense patterns, just as their readers or listeners do, without fully recognizing those patterns in a conscious way. The texts, as interventions in the historical replication of discourse, are designed to promote a particular pattern of "we" usage. In this, they are like the Declaration. But, unlike the Declaration, no social entity came into existence as a result of them, or as what can be seen retrospectively to be a result of them. In the case of Schell, there is evidence that *The Fate of the Earth* exerted some accelerative force in stimulating a "we" of the human species – witness my own unwitting replication of its patterns discussed in chapter 1. But if a social entity like "the human species" is to become readily recognizable in human discourse, the processes of circulation still have far to go – pace the establishment of a "League of Nations" and a "United Nations" during the twentieth century.

There is more to this pronominal story. True, micromotion and macrocirculation gave birth to another social entity; but such births must have happened numerous times in the planet's history. With a "we, the people of the United States,"<sup>3</sup> however, something else emerged, something of epochal significance. It is as if tectonic pressures built up over time by the spread of a metaculture of newness produced a gigantic snap in the crust of society, causing fundamental realignments. If I am correct, what was born on the eastern coast of North America was not simply a new social entity, but a new kind of social entity – one conceived in the context of a novel interpretation and deployment of the pronoun "we." The pronoun – and its nominal counterpart, "the people" – perfectly captured the metacultural idea of newness, and, as a consequence, the American "we" became a world-transforming element. An idea of newness undoubtedly stimulated its birth, perhaps even sired it. However, once born, the new "we" appeared to metaculture as its perfect incarnation, a child conceived after its own image.

What precisely is this new "we?" How can it be detected? To answer these questions, I propose to turn to the first-person singular pronoun ("I"), since the same transformation took place here. Moreover, since the meaning of "I" seems – intuitively, at least – so much more stable, so much less susceptible to metacultural influence, than that of the mercurial "we,"<sup>4</sup> its transformation stands out all the more starkly.

In the theory of motion articulated in

the preceding two chapters, metacultural understanding crucially affects the nature of cultural movement. A metaculture of tradition values the replication of the cultural objects themselves – the transmission of the whole elements – with the valued reproducers being those who have mastered the elements, and demonstrated their ability to recreate them, thereby contributing to their passage through time. In contrast, a metaculture of newness values cultural objects that are not simply whole-cloth replicas of ones that have come before them, but are instead "new" in important ways.

One consequence of the idea of newness is that specific, concrete individuals come to seem to be the controllers or "authors" of their own narratives.<sup>5</sup> It is not narratives – myths, for example, as culture moving through time – that control individuals, but the other way around. In novelistic discourse, an author constructs an "I" of a character or even of a narrator. The "I" is narrativized in such a way that author and audience alike recognize it as pointing to an imaginary character. What is significant, however, is that the imagined character or narrator is thought of, under an idea of newness, as the product of a concrete, in-this-world individual (the author). The "I" has an extra-somatic referent that points to a fictive character, but that referent, that imaginary entity, is a product of the here-and-now body of the author. There is an individual, material, biological agent behind that "I," even if one step removed from it.

"I"s that point to fictive characters, even in a narratorial role, are present under a idea of tradition as well, as discussed at the end of the last chapter. Such narrato-

rial or projective "I"s are by now well documented.<sup>6</sup> In my own research, what is interesting is that the trance-like "I" was not present in every instance of origin myth-telling. When it did occur, however, as I have recounted, the myth-teller seemed to grow distant and his eyes glazed over. It was as if he were possessed by some other controlling force that animated his body.

This particular myth, at the time of my research, was memorized verbatim. Consequently, I was able to record analogous passages from different tellings in which one made use of a the third-person narratorial style (referring to the character as "he") and the other made use of the first person (the character was referred to as "I," as if narrator and character were one and the same):

"Relative Zägpope Pate arrived  
in front of him"  
↓  
"Relative Zägpope Pate arrived  
in front of me"

Why this assumption of the first person?

The characteristic of the "I" used in such cases – as opposed to the imagined "I"s produced by contemporary American authors – is that the mythical "I" is not thought of as an imaginary construct of a real, flesh-and-blood speaker of the "I." Instead, the "I" is understood as the product – as being under the control of – an immaterial being. The immaterial entity seizes the utterer's body, speaks through the utterer. The distinction is crucial. An imagined "I" is just that – the product of an individual imagination. A mythical "I" (or the "I" of trance) is the product not of imagination, but of control over the indi-

vidual by extrasomatic forces or beings.

Perhaps I should quickly dispel a possible misinterpretation of what I am saying. I am not suggesting that Brazilian Indians (and others) are mistaken – that in those cases, as in the novel, individuals really are in control, that they only pretend not to be. How reassuring such an interpretation would be for contemporary westerners. Something far more significant is at work, something meriting closer scrutiny, if we are to understand the world that is out there – its “hard, scientific” reality.

From the point of view of motion through space and time, Amerindian (and other) claims regarding extrasomatic forces capture an unsettling truth. Culture is something that moves through the world. It is something that controls individual bodies. The phonology of a language – not something an individual has created or controls, in an agentive sense – nevertheless shapes, through habituation, the vocal apparatus of that individual as it passes through that individual on its way elsewhere. It is the phonology or phonological pattern, moving through time and space between individuals, that is in control. Any given individual has relatively little influence over it. In the origin myth examples discussed above, the individual tellers have not created or produced the myth. The words they utter are words that have been uttered by those who came before them and they are words that will be uttered by those who come after them. The present utterers are merely conduits for those words, for that culture, as it wends its way through a physical world.

No, this claim does not mean that the view from a metaculture of modernity is false. Even in the case of myth narration,

individuals make a difference, as I have so laboriously tried to show in the previous chapter. The question is: On what does metacultural awareness focus? Does it focus on aspects of the narration for which the individual is responsible (modernity)? Or does it focus on aspects for which the culture, as cumulated learning moving over time, is responsible (tradition)? Correspondingly, what is the effect on culture of that focus? How is culture reshaped by critical observation of it and reflection on it?

Bakhtin mentions “a series of statements that accompanied the emergence of a new novel-type in the eighteenth century” (1981, 9). Among the characteristics of this “new novel-type” are that “the hero of a novel should not be ‘heroic’ in either the epic or the tragic sense of the word: he should combine in himself negative as well as positive features, low as well as lofty, ridiculous as well as serious.” Furthermore, “the hero should not be portrayed as an already completed and unchanging person but as one who is evolving and developing, a person who learns from life.” (10.) These characteristics, and others Bakhtin develops, reflect the emergence of imagined “I”s that are under the control of real individuals. The characters are made to seem more like ordinary individuals, and hence more likely to be the imagined constructs of ordinary individuals – the authors. The “I”s employed look like the “I”s used by here-and-now people.

The imagined “I” is something peculiar in this regard: It is an “I” designed to appear to be under the control of a flesh-and-blood author – the one who produced it. The fictive characters portrayed by that “I” are fictive, but they are fictive

in a way that makes them suspiciously human, the kind of beings any ordinary individual might imagine. They are, in other words, adapted to a metaculture of newness, which focuses attention on the act of creation of the linguistic form by an individual rather than on the passage of a linguistic form over time through that individual. Under a metaculture of tradition, correspondingly, one would expect to find a different kind of character, one less scrutable to ordinary humans, one embodying the power of culture over its human transmitters.

Such an analysis of the first-person singular pronoun could be taken much further, though I can only point out the path here. If newness emphasizes control by a physical person (the author) over the construction of a represented person (the character), so also does the narrator come to be depicted as a kind of human with human-like control over the characters. That narratorial voice comes to look like a voice emanating from a real, concrete person. This, in turn, paves the way for the deflation of the narrator, from a position of omnipresence and omniscience, to – in the present period – just another voice among the many within the novel. The unreliable narrators are proof of humanness, and, hence, of construction by humans rather than by some mysterious force that passes through humans on its way elsewhere.

You may be wondering by now what all of this has to do with the first person plural pronoun. The answer is that the same transition is at work in the case of “we.” An imagined “I” of a novelistic character – understandable metaculturally as the creation (and under the control) of a

real flesh-and-blood author – has a counterpart in “we.” If an imagined “I” – unlike the mythical “I” – represents itself as the product of an individual, so does a metaculture of modernity represent “we” as a product of a collection of individuals, a group of “I”s. The “we” is under the control of those individuals.

The latter is an especially odd phenomenon, whose oddness deserves to be underscored. Monty Python’s film *The Life of Brian* plays up the ironies of such agentive control. The main character – a Christ figure – is pursued by throngs of supporters. He takes refuge from his admirers in a building. Throwing open the shutters, he shouts to his followers: “Go away! You are all individuals.” And they begin to chant in unison: “We are all individuals. We are all individuals.” One voice from the back of the crowd says: “I’m not.”

The peculiarity of a “we” is that it can be the expression of one individual – if we focus on individual control – as in the case of Jefferson’s drafting of the Declaration of Independence. (Here I will ignore the history of words and discourse on which Jefferson drew and on the contributions made by other members of the Continental Congress in the course of rewriting Jefferson’s draft (see Maier 1997) – central factors, if one were to examine the Declaration from the perspective of tradition). By focusing on the creative moment, what appears odd is that words that originated elsewhere (with Jefferson) come to seem to be the expression of those through whom they are merely passing (a broader population endorsing the Declaration). Since agency comes from individuals – under this kind of metacultural interpretation – each reutterer of an expression containing



a “we” comes to seem to be the creator and controller of that expression, even though they themselves have made no contribution to its actual formulation. Such a “we” really is culture moving through them, but it is made to seem (by metaculture) as something under their control, as expressions of them.

The image of a crowd chanting in unison a “we” slogan – so pervasive in contemporary social movements – captures this irony, as in the Vietnam war era chant:

Hell no, we won't go!  
Hell no, we won't go!

Or in chants at political rallies:

We want Bush!  
We want Bush!

Or in chants at sports events:

We're number one!  
We're number one!

In each case, the words are circulating words. They have come from elsewhere. But they are taken up by individuals as if they were the expressions of those individuals.

In this regard, it is noteworthy that the Declaration of Independence was signed by fifty-six individuals. Why did they do so? They were not only engaging in dissimulation, or even, as Derrida suggested, in a “fabulous retroactivity” (1986, 10). They were, instead, signaling their own agency, and with it their interpretation of the agency behind a “we” as that of a collection of individual agents who have a collective “voice.”

What makes a community “imagined,” from this perspective, is not only that

individuals can imagine others whom they “will never meet, or even know” as essentially like themselves, pace Benedict Anderson ([1983] 1991). It is also, and perhaps more importantly, that individuals can understand or interpret – thanks to a metaculture of modernity – an expression containing the first-person plural pronoun as one emanating from themselves, even though they have not created it. The metacultural understanding obscures the circulatory process that brought that “we” to them and that is passing through them on its way elsewhere. In doing so, it gives agency to a group or collectivity.

### Physical thing, Spiritual meaning

As I sit here, I thumb through a slim 14-by-10 inch booklet entitled the *Liberty Collection*. Its front cover bears a tiny copyright: 1963, the year I acquired it as an eighth-grade student in Oak View Elementary School. This is a booklet I have carried around for thirty-five years. Through the peregrinations of my life, it has maintained a strangely special quality, something to which I am attached by unconscious ties. Never once have I seriously considered jettisoning it, despite geographical displacements that have forced me to dispose of other childhood treasures. Why did this one maintain a hold on me?

It now seems so hokey, with a label pasted inside bearing the name “Polk Bros.,” a department store of little note long since forgotten, that used this giveaway – no doubt as a promotional. (Or could it have been for genuinely patriotic reasons?) The pages were made to look old, like parchment (see Plates 1-3), and the very first one contains lines deeply

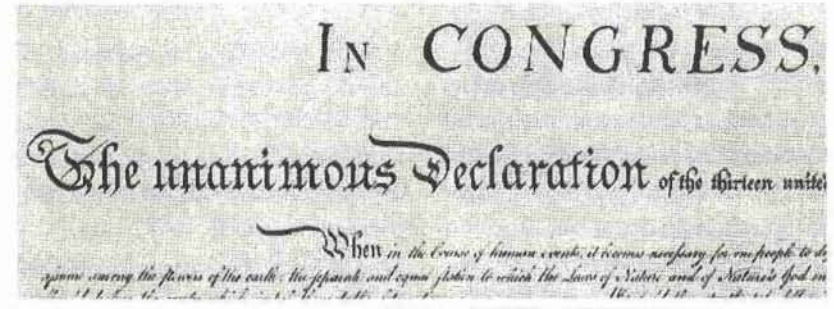
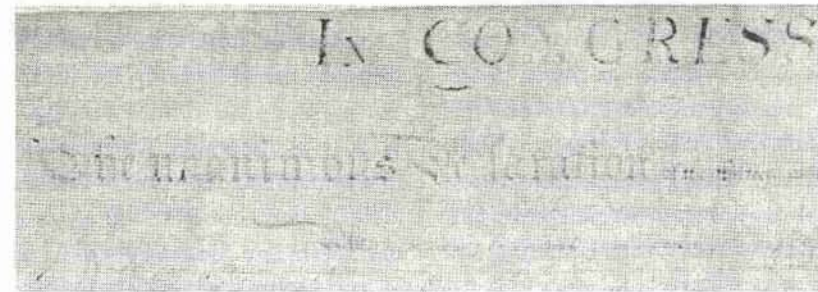


Plate 1. Small section of the original (now badly faded) 1776 Declaration of Independence; note the physical appearance, not only of the titles, but also of the first word of the text (“when”).

Plate 2. Analogous section from a print made of the 1823 William J. Stone engraving, the most widely reproduced image of the Declaration of Independence; note that the physical form of the text, not just its semantic meaning, is replicated here in great detail. The word “when” appears in identical form.

Plate 3. Analogous section of the 1963 reproduction, contained in the “Liberty Collection,” and distributed gratis by Polk Bros. The physical form of the title is reproduced, but note the distinct script employed in the body of the text, beginning with the word “when.” The new script is designed to render the text more readable by a modern audience. Transmission of meaning here begins to take precedence over the transmission of physical form of the object, although the text is identical, insofar as its words are concerned, with the original.

etched in my individual memory – and, I believe, in the collective memory of the nation: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among those are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”

These are dusty words, and, as I dust them off, I find myself asking what they meant to that thirteen-year-old boy. Why had he so carefully guarded them? Pauline Maier describes the relative disregard in which the now-enshrined parchment was held: “In 1776 the Declaration of Independence was not even copied onto a particularly good sheet of parchment, just an ordinary type of colonial manufacture that could be easily found on sale in Philadelphia and was perhaps improvidently selected, being improperly cured and sized.” (1997, xi). It was then dragged around and battered, the inky signatures at the bottom fading. In 1841, it was put on display in the State Department, and then later exhibited in Philadelphia at the centennial, when concern for its longevity began to set in: “The documents [the Declaration, Constitution, and Bill of Rights] were finally placed in their current airtight thermopane containers with an electronic device to detect helium loss in September 1952” (Maier 1997, xiii).

Looking back on it today, as an anthropologist, it is clear that the documents, as physical things, had, by the time of my childhood, if not long before, become symbols of my collectivity. They were the analogs of *churingas*, strange pieces of wood or stone fashioned by Australian aborigines, that Emile Durkheim, in his work *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*

([1912] 1969), described as material entities thought to embody the immaterial, but nevertheless effective-in-this-world, essence of the group. They were physical things that had taken on spiritual significance as the concrete representation of that intangible social entity that perdures over time called “The United States of America.”

This led to me to recognize that, as an anthropologist, I was on familiar terrain. Here was something fundamental about my culture, and yet part of a class of phenomena I had been studying in my researches abroad. In my Brazilian work, indeed, I had documented a process much like that I have just described – words, valued initially for their meanings, that over time came to assume value as physical things. In the Brazilian Indian case, the process involved dreams that were narrated, and which, over time – a century and a half, by my estimates – came to lose their connection to the realm of dream narrative and enter the realm of myth. As the stories circulated more widely, their form of expression – the actual words and the physical nuances of their pronunciation – came to be fixed. And those words, as physical things being replicated over time through oral transmission, became unglued from their original meanings. At the farthest pole of migration toward fixity, they became ritualized in their telling, the actual performance of the origin myth – done in dyadic syllable-by-syllable fashion – coming to be a collective rite.

Of course, in my childhood, growing up in the Midwest, I was steeped in anticommunism. In the same drawer in which I kept the *Liberty Collection* as a boy, I also stored various political pamphlets I

had received. One, I recall vividly, told me how to recognize a communist and had sketches of dangerous-looking red men hiding under beds and in closets. And I was genuinely worried about communists. At the age of nine or ten, as I recall, I thought up a scheme: we could build a tunnel underneath the Kremlin and place a bomb there; its detonation would end the threat from communism once and for all. Maier writes that the shrine in the National archives in which the Declaration was held came to seem “an assertion of American values...against fascist and communist enemies” (1997, xv).

True though this was in my case, yet there was more. The *Liberty Collection* remained in my possession long after the anticommunist political materials from my boyhood drawer had disappeared. I entered college during the tumultuous period of the late 1960s, when the country was wracked by an anti-war movement with protesters burning the American flag. My hair grew long, so much so that I was unrecognizable to Mr. Kennedy, our local policeman and father of one of my schoolmates. And yet I kept hold of the *Liberty Collection*. In the 1970s and 1980s, I found myself in Brazil for extended periods, living in Indian villages. During my travels abroad, I kept the *Liberty Collection* in storage; now it became part of my “history books.” I recall looking at it in 1994, while packing up to move from Austin, Texas, to Philadelphia. My thought then was: “Well, I might actually use this in my research.”

The general point is that, despite my personal situation, and whatever changing relations to the booklet I have had, somehow the *Liberty Collection* (consist-

ing, incidentally, of facsimiles of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the Monroe Doctrine, the Gettysburg Address, and the Star-Spangled Banner, eight pages in all) has remained with me, almost as if it were a part of me. So, in some ways I am not at all surprised that many hard-bitten westerners who reside in rural Nevada, keep, according to Susan Lepselter’s research (personal communication), copies of the Constitution and Bill of Rights in their homes – and respect those documents over and against a government which, they believe, has come to betray them. Are not the documents, more than the incumbent government, the embodiment of the collectivity?

But if the totemic quality of the Declaration is familiar to me from my anthropological research abroad, how to think about other aspects of the role of the Declaration, which seem in important respects distinct? Could they be related? My Brazilian research suggested a lead. There I detected two types of cultural motion. One type, pertaining to “news,” involved the carrying over of meaning between specific instances of discourse, despite divergences between the words (or formal expressions) used to capture those meanings. The most extreme case is the dictionary definition of a word: one word, as a physically recognizable thing, is conveyed in terms of other words. The word to be defined is not repeated in the definition. Thus, the meaning of the word *document* could be replicated as “a written or printed paper that bears the original, official, or legal form of something and can be used to furnish decisive evidence or information” without the replication of the initial word. Yet something immaterial – a mean-

ing – is carried over between the two.

The other type of cultural motion involved the replication of physical form, with the presumption, apparently, that the (or, perhaps, a) meaning will thereby carry over as well. In the Brazilian Indian case, such replication is found in myth telling, where an entire origin myth may be recited in virtually word-for-word fashion. A young boy who learns this myth learns it through memorization of the words. The retelling is verbatim.

If the first type of cultural motion is “paraphrase,” the second type is “repetition.” In the one, meaning is transmitted, in the other, material form. My general thesis on the Brazilian case was that dream narratives, when they first began to circulate, fell closer to the side of paraphrase. What was of interest to people, initially, was the carrying over of meanings from an “original” to a “copy” – “What is the dream all about?” However, as the motion proceeds, the forms of expression – the actual words – tended to become fixed. This is not a uniform process, and some words, like those of reported speech, fix more readily than others, like background descriptions. But the important point is that, as words become the property of a larger community and are handed down over time, their physical characteristics become important. One wishes to experience the words because of their effects, which are tied to their material qualities and relations as well as to their meanings: Tell it again; Tell the story about \_\_\_\_.” But why would one want to hear “the story about \_\_\_\_” again? The paraphraseable meaning has already been transmitted. Isn’t the process then complete? Why retransmit it? The listener must be interested in the experience of

hearing itself as well as or more than the paraphraseable meaning.

A corollary of this is that, insofar as culture is carried in publicly occurring signs, such as the origin myth in this Amerindian community, then the persistence of the culture depends upon transmission of the ability to produce the signs. What distinguishes a group as a social entity is the fact that it carries along, over time, a particular set of public signs. At the same time, the reproduction of those signs over time can involve subtle shifts, as the signs are reproduced. The culture moves along but simultaneously changes in the course of that movement, readapting to new circumstances of the putative group.

But what about the Declaration of Independence? The editorial work on Thomas Jefferson’s initial draft is a case of micro-change over time. Maier mentions also some differences between the signed Declaration and the excerpt that appears on the Jefferson Memorial on the mall in Washington, D.C.: “The punctuation was changed; ‘unalienable’ went back to ‘inalienable,’ a ‘that’ was removed so that the last statement became a separate sentence, and the final phrase of what was in the original a linked sequence ... was eliminated altogether” (1997, 210). Still, the Declaration generally fails to participate in the gradual, subtle changes undergone by myth. A textbook author can explicate and paraphrase the Declaration, but there are limits placed on the evolution of that paraphrase itself. Any paraphrase ultimately looks back to the signed copy kept in Washington as its authority.<sup>7</sup>

In the case of myth, the authority shifts over time. Each new telling becomes potentially authoritative, if it generates

other tellings. The impression is that one is dealing with the same myth, even though an objective recording of variations over time shows significant differences. This may be true even of the Christian Bible, which has had many translations, no one of them (apparently) absolutely authoritative.<sup>8</sup> The Bible appears, from this point of view, to be an immaterial thing that runs through its various incarnations.

But in the case of the Declaration, one physical object, the signed copy kept in Washington, D.C., is absolutely authoritative. One can argue over its interpretation, and power becomes lodged in the metadiscursive struggle over interpretation – although plain-speaking Nevadans might reject those interpretations (which are crucial to the functioning of government) in favor of the “transparent” meaning of the text. But there is still a text as a physical thing that cannot evolve discursively – that is, as culture – even if it can evolve metadiscursively. The culture that might, as in the case of myth, evolve through the reincarnations or reproductions of the public signs in which it is carried, is, so to speak, locked in the physical thing.

The only way for culture to get out of the Declaration in which it is locked, and to move through historical time – and this is part of the modern character of the Declaration – is for the original whole cultural object to be disassembled into its constituent strands and for some of those strands to be used for the purpose of constructing a new object – such as the Gettysburg Address, produced by Abraham Lincoln in 1863. Even the “Official Call” of the “Republic of Texas” in 1996 is such a putatively “new” cultural expression, under a

metaculture of modernity, and here also one might include Vine DeLoria’s book, subtitled *An Indian Declaration of Independence* (1974). But the ones with which I will start are the Declarations of Causes, which initiated the secession of several southern States from the United States of America in 1860 and 1861.

### Litanies of complaint

What can it mean to disassemble a cultural element “into its constituent strands?” What strands are in the Declaration that might be used in “new” cultural elements? One is the pattern I’ll dub the “litany of complaint.” I have already described it for the first-person plural pronoun, and I think it is most rhetorically effective when employed in this way. However, the key discursive characteristic of this pattern is that it consists in a series of distinct complaints against some single other – “the King of Great Britain” or “the British” in the Declaration – and the complaints are expressed in no more than a sentence or two each, and perhaps as little as a clause or a verbal phrase. Here is a short excerpt from a longer litany in the Declaration that I gave earlier:

He has abdicated Government here by declaring **us** out of his Protection and waging War against **us**.  
He has plundered **our** seas, ravaged **our** Coasts, burnt **our** towns, and destroyed the lives of **our** people.  
He has constrained **our** fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country

My claim is that this pattern – the “litany of complaint” – is a strand of culture that has found its way out of the Declaration

and into new cultural elements as it moved through space and time. However, this pattern may not have originated with the Declaration. A discourse of complaint was widespread in the colonies prior to the Declaration, and even the Declaration of Arms, from just about a year earlier (July 6, 1775) includes its own litanies. Here is an example from that document:

His [General Gage's] troops have butchered **our** countrymen, have wantonly burnt Charlestown, besides a considerable number of houses in other places; **our** ships and vessels are seized; the necessary supplies of provisions are intercepted, and he is exerting his utmost power to spread destruction and devastation around him.

Still, the bulk of this document is written more in the form of a continuous narrative of events, not of a chant-like litany. One characteristic of the Declaration's litany, and of the strand of American culture I am trying to describe more generally, is that the specific grievances, in their chant-like unfolding, do not represent a historical sequence so much as a juxtaposition of complaints having no definable timeline. Moreover, even in the above excerpt, the grammatical parallelism found in the Declaration's litany is not maintained. The first few clauses have General Gage – referenced through an anaphoric "he" that looks back to an earlier noun phrase – as the grammatical subject. The next two clauses, however, are in the passive voice, and then "he" reemerges as grammatical subject in the last one.

There can be little doubt that, as Maier (1997, 50-57) has argued, the Declaration of Independence, and other similar documents, hark back to the English Bill of

Rights of 1689. The litany of complaint has precedent there, with the charges against the King organized in a similar unfolding of clauses. Here is the relevant section:

Whereas the late King James the Second, by the assistance of divers evil counselors, judges, and ministers employed by him, did endeavour to subvert and extirpate the protestant religion, and the laws and liberties of this kingdom.

\* By assuming and exercising a power of dispensing with and suspending of laws, and the execution of laws, without consent of parliament.

\* By committing and prosecuting divers worthy prelates, for humbly petitioning to be excused concurring to the said assumed power.

\* By issuing and causing to be executed a commission under the great seal for erecting a court called, The court of commissioners for ecclesiastical causes.

\* By levying money for and to the use of the crown, by pretence of prerogative, for other time, and in other manner, than the same was granted by parliament.

\* By raising and keeping a standing army within this kingdom in time of peace, without consent of parliament, and quartering soldiers contrary to law.

\* By causing several good subjects, being protestants, to be disarmed, at the same time when papists were both armed and employed, contrary to law.

\* By violating the freedom of election of members to serve in parliament.

\* By prosecutions in the court of King's bench, for matters and causes cognizable only in parliament; and by divers other arbitrary and illegal courses.

\* And whereas of late years, partial, corrupt, and unqualified persons have been returned and served on juries in trials and particularly divers jurors in trials for high treason, which were not freeholders.

\* And excessive bail hath been required of persons committed in criminal cases, to elude the benefit of the laws made for the liberty of the subject.

\* And excessive fines have been imposed; and illegal and cruel punishments inflicted.

\* And several grants and promises made of fines and forfeitures, before any conviction or judgment against the persons, upon whom the same were to be levied.

So my argument is not that the litany of complaints originated with the Declaration of Independence, but rather that it constitutes a strand of culture that has moved through time and gradually been shaped into a specific form.

But the Declaration undoubtedly had an accelerative effect on that strand of culture, helping to make it a more general part of the discourse of America. Moreover, it and related discourses of the times – though this might have been part of the accelerative force of the Declaration itself – added a twist to the litany, or, perhaps, combined the form of the litany with another cultural strand, namely, the parallelism around a first-person plural pronoun. Furthermore, that first-person plural pronoun itself was of a peculiarly modern type, one which anyone subscribing to it could see as an expression of themselves, as being under their control – which it is, of course, since those individuals exercise the control of rearticulating it or not, and hence contributing to further circulation or not.

A brief inspection of the English Bill of Rights of 1689 reveals that its complaints section contained no first-person plural pronouns at all. The litany of complaint that, I am arguing, has come to be an American form is built around an aggrieved first person, an "us" or "our" to whom various bad things have been done, and one, consequently, that makes its articulators feel justified in taking (as well as empowered to take) collective action. The result of this mixture is a particularly gripping discursive form. The litany of complaint, coupled with an aggrieved "we," accelerates the circulation of "we," and that circulation itself constitutes a de facto social entity.

A modern example – just one of many I've collected – concerns an African American "we." I dubbed this particular example from a National Public Radio show that aired on March 31, 1998, on "All Things Considered" at 5:40 P.M. EST, about reactions among African American college students in the U.S. to President Clinton's trip to Africa at the time. The tape-recorded words were attributed, in the report, to a nineteen-year-old student named Adonna Smith, who was responding to Clinton's not-quite apology for slavery:

And I would have liked it more if he would have continued that apology, because **we** need to be apologized to. I mean **we** went through Hell for like four hundred years.  
**We** went through Hell.  
**We** got killed.  
**We** got tortured.  
I mean, it's like racism is like so prevalent here in **our** society still.

An important characteristic of this piece of oral discourse is the shift in emotional intensity that occurs as the litany begins – in the second line, right after the "because" – and the intensity diminishes markedly immediately with the last line, once the litany is over. The intonation contours in the middle section are steep, the volume of the voice increases, and there are noticeable changes in tempo as compared with the opening and closing lines. My contention is that the emotional intensity is kindled by the litany of complaint, when that complaint concerns wrongs done to a "we." The emotional intensity, in turn, stimulates interest in the discourse, and impels its circulation among those who can identify with that "we."

I am not arguing that this particular example is a direct outgrowth of the Declaration's litany of complaint, but I do think

that the prevalence of this discursive form in America is a legacy of the general culture of complaint that goes back to at least 1776. There is something central about the circulation of an aggrieved “we” in the litany form. The discourse is powerful, capable of rallying people around it. Possibly because the limits of circulation of this kind of “we” coincide with the referential value of that “we” – the group that the “we” picks out – the litany of complaint found in the Declaration is a particularly effective device for creating new social entities.

If this example is not a direct outgrowth of the Declaration, other key examples can be found that more clearly grow out of the Declaration, that provide evidence that strands of culture did break out of the Declaration and furnish material for new cultural elements. Some of the obvious examples come from the “Declaration of Causes” that, in 1860 and 1861, explained the reasons for the secession of several southern states from the United States of America. The references back to the Declaration (or to other documents related to the Declaration) are made obvious. Here is the opening of the Declaration:

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another ... a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

Here are the analogous sections of the secession documents for Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina:

The people of Georgia having dissolved their political connection with the Government of the United States of America, present to their confederates

and the world the causes which have led to the separation. [Georgia]

In the momentous step which our State has taken of dissolving its connection with the government of which we so long formed a part, it is but just that we should declare the prominent reasons which have induced our course. [Mississippi]

And now the State of South Carolina having resumed her separate and equal place among nations, deems it due to herself, to the remaining United States of America, and to the nations of the world, that she should declare the immediate causes which have led to this act. [South Carolina]

To be sure, none of these is a word-for-word copy. If the emphasis is on creating something “new,” one would not expect such a copy. Where semantic replication is concerned – the pole of “news” I discussed earlier – one would expect the new encoding of the old meaning to be paraphrasal rather than repetitive. At the same time, the wording is, in certain parts, at least, strikingly similar, as shown in Figure 4.

Partly, the carrying over of wording is a way of invoking the authority of the Declaration. The separation from Great Britain had its analog in the separations of the southern states from the union. The replication of wording indicates the similarity without making a focus of the explicit semantic meaning of the text. But the question is: What other discursive elements of the Declaration carry over into the secession documents? In particular, do the secession documents reveal the litany of complaint pattern built around a southern “we” as opposed to a northern “they?”

Of the three secession documents I have studied – the South Carolina, Mississippi, and Georgia declarations – the South Carolina document, which is also

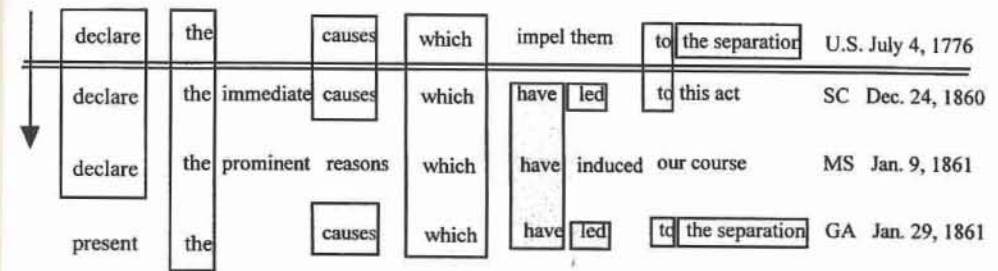


Figure 4: Micro-discursive replication of a sentence from the Declaration in secession documents.

the earliest, makes the most explicit reference to the Declaration of Independence, but it carries over at least the rhetorical patterns. That document, in particular, uses the historical facts surrounding the U.S. independence, and the principles articulated in the Declaration of Independence, to make its case:

A struggle for the right of self-government ensued, which resulted, on the 4th of July, 1776, in a Declaration, by the Colonies, “that they are, and of right ought to be, FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES; and that, as free and independent States, they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which independent States may of right do.”

They further solemnly declared that whenever any “form of government becomes destructive of the ends for which it was established, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government.” Deeming the Government of Great Britain to have become destructive of these ends, they declared that the Colonies “are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved”....

The document subsequently asserts: “We hold that the Government thus estab-

lished is subject to the two great principles asserted in the Declaration of Independence.” In contrast, the Georgia and Mississippi documents make no direct reference to the Declaration.

At the same time, the South Carolina document shows the least evidence of the litany of complaint style. The following passage is the best exemplar in the South Carolina document of that style:

Those [non-slave holding] States have assumed the right of deciding upon the propriety of **our** domestic institutions...  
**they** have denounced as sinful the institution of slavery;  
**they** have permitted open establishment among **them** of societies, whose avowed object is to disturb the peace and to eloin the property of the citizens of other States.  
**They** have encouraged and assisted thousands of **our** slaves to leave their homes; and those who remain, have been incited by emissaries, books and pictures to servile insurrection.

The emotional intensity is built here by a pattern of repetition analogous to that in the Declaration, but the pattern is not sustained and the invocation of a “we” as

opposed to a "they" occurs only twice.

Compare this to the Mississippi document, which makes no overt mention of the Declaration of Independence other than through similarities of wording, but which employs a directly analogous litany, each unit beginning with an agentive "It" (which refers to the abolitionist movement) aggressively opposed to an aggrieved first-person plural:

It has invaded a State,  
and invested with the honors of  
martyrdom the wretch  
whose purpose was  
to apply flames to **our** dwellings,  
and the weapons of destruction  
to **our** lives.  
It has broken every compact into which  
it has entered for **our** security.  
It has given indubitable evidence  
of its design  
to ruin **our** agriculture,  
to prostrate **our** industrial pursuits  
and to destroy **our** social system.  
It knows no relenting or hesitation  
in its purposes;  
It stops not in its march of aggression,  
and leaves **us** no room to hope for  
cessation or for pause.  
It has recently obtained control of  
the Government, by the prosecution  
of its  
unhallowed schemes,  
and destroyed the last expectation  
of living together in friendship and  
brotherhood.

The Georgia document is less pronounced in its deployment of the Declaration's litany of complaint style, but one can see there as well the opposition of a "they" to an "us" or an "our:"

**They** have endeavored to  
weaken **our** security,  
to disturb **our** domestic peace and  
tranquillity,  
and persistently refused to comply  
with their express constitutional  
obligations to **us** in reference to  
that property,  
and by the use of their power in the  
Federal Government have striven to  
deprive **us** of an equal enjoyment

of the common Territories of the  
Republic.

If my analysis is correct, if the Mississippi litany of complaint is a strand of culture contained in the Declaration of Independence that found its way out of that document and into the secession document, what has carried over? On the one hand, what carries over is a matter of discursive form – a pattern of atemporally listing complaints against someone, with each complaint at most a few clauses in length and with the aggressor as grammatical subject and agent; the aggrieved party expressed as a first person plural pronoun; and the grammatical object an indirect object, object of a prepositional phrase, or possessor of one of those objects. With this kind of description, one could mechanically construct a litany of complaint or program a computer to do so. In this case, what carries over from original to copy is a discourse pattern.

On the other hand, what carries over with this pattern is a feeling – perhaps the inspiration or spirit behind the original. The formal pattern invites listeners or readers to identify with the aggrieved "we," and the list kindles a sense of outrage in those who can identify with that "we." That sense of anger over wrongs that have been done to a collectivity of which one feels oneself to be part is, or so I am arguing, central to the solidification of a collectivity as a socially recognizable entity. If the feeling carries over from the Declaration to the secession documents, it is because that feeling is the basis for accomplishing the social goal that the two texts, as cultural elements, share – separation and the establishment of a new social grouping.

At the same time, the South Carolina document – the earliest of the secession documents – while carrying some of the feeling of outrage, has that feeling (and, indeed, the litany of complaint as discursive pattern) in only muted form. What seems to have carried over here, in much greater measure, are the ideas contained in the Declaration understood as semantically intelligible discourse. The explicit quotations from the Declaration are part of this self-conscious reflection on that document.

My sample is minuscule – three secession documents in relation to the Declaration – but the pattern is intriguing. The attempt to liberate ideas from an original cultural element results in a new element that refigures those ideas, but loses the emotional force behind the original. Correspondingly, the attempt to liberate the feelings from an original cultural element results in a new element that communicates those feelings, but loses track of the ideas originally associated with them. In both cases, the movement of culture reveals its modern character – the secession documents are all "new" cultural objects, not reproductions of older objects. Is it not also a fact of modernity that feelings and ideas cannot move together, but get separated into distinct strands?

### Seneca Falls: the Declaration as traditional culture?

In contrasting the South Carolina and Mississippi secession documents from the point of view of the modern movement of culture through time, I have suggested that the one carries forward the ideas of the Declaration, the other the discursive

form. In this, I have made the two appear to resemble the different phases involved in the circulation of dream narratives in Amerindian Brazil as the narratives migrate from the pole of "news" – where paraphrase is an acceptable method of carrying over the semantic meaning or "news" – to the pole of "myth" – where word-for-word repetition is the method of carrying the myth through time. But I have crucially mischaracterized the secession documents, if I leave it at that.

Most importantly, the South Carolina document does not just work by paraphrase of the Declaration. In the passages I have reproduced above, it quotes the Declaration word for word. This has analogies to the circulation of dream narratives, since a kind of quotation device frames the dream narrative: "Wāñpō dreamed this" or "this was Wāñpō's dream," after which a third-person narrative begins. But the quotes from the Declaration are used to make a new argument, unlike the dream narrative. In the latter case, A narrates the dream to B, and the dream is made known to B – and, hence, socially transmitted – via the narrative. The movement of news involves the making known of information to persons who previously did not possess that information. Hence, paraphrase becomes an acceptable way to facilitate that movement through space and time.

In the case of the South Carolina document, however, something very different is going on. In that case, A (the authors of the document) are not making known to B (the readers) some "news," that is, something they did not know before. On the contrary, the assumption is that B is already familiar with the Declaration. The Declaration is not "news" to B. But if A

is not communicating the content of the Declaration to B, then in what way is A facilitating the movement over time and space of the semantic content of the Declaration, as I have suggested? The process of movement must be distinct from that of the spread of "news."

The solution to the problem goes back to the central mystery of the movement of culture under a metaculture of modernity. In the case of the South Carolina document, A is not a conduit for the transmission of traditional culture. A (the document's authors) is creating a putatively "new" cultural element. But a new cultural element is never created *ex nihilo*. Rather, the new element is constructed out of already available materials. The author is a *bricoleur*, in the sense coined by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966), who was, ironically enough, attempting to characterize "savage" or "primitive" thought. My suggestion, however, is that this kind of *bricolage*, where one takes pieces of primarily existing cultural elements, and synthesizes them into a new expression, is actually the hallmark of the movement of culture under modernity. *Bricolage* is a modern form of cultural motion.

Granted that the South Carolina secession document is a new piece of culture, why should it make explicit reference to the Declaration rather than simply paraphrasing it? Quotation does more than carry forth ideas from the Declaration into a new piece of discourse. It is a device, or so I want to argue, for enhancing the circulation of that new discourse. Especially when ideas – such as the idea of secession – are hotly contested, their movement in the world meets resistance from opposing ideas. To get those ideas to circulate more

widely, it is necessary to apply accelerative force to them. My claim is that quotation is one way of adding accelerative force to discourse.

One might say that the quotation allows the new document to draw on the circulation of the old document. It says, in effect: "If you liked the Declaration of Independence, you will like what we are saying here." The quote is a device that defines the lineage of a given new stretch of discourse, that tells the reader or listener how to situate that new discourse relative to other discourse. It thus plays a metadiscursive role, positioning the new document with respect to discourse that has come before it.

Here I come back to the image of traces left in the cloud chamber. The quotation, like the citation in a scholarly publication,<sup>9</sup> is an attempt to draw conscious attention to the trace. It does so not by simply proclaiming its connection to the original, but by demonstrating that connection, making it palpable, through the use of words that come from the original. By manifesting a connection to the Declaration, the South Carolina secession document hoped to capitalize on the circulation of that other piece of discourse. The accelerative force is imparted by drawing conscious attention to a linkage with already accepted culture. The force behind the acceleration is the force of consciousness.

In this regard, the movement of culture reflected in direct quotation is distinct from the movement that occurs through the litany of complaint. There, because the same words are not used, a reader or listener is less aware of the temporal trace connecting the secession document to the Declaration. True, the connection

is hinted at in the similarity of wording in the sentence I analyzed earlier. But most readers or listeners would be blissfully unaware of the continuity embodied in the litany form itself. What is relevant in the latter case is the effect of the form. The litany of complaint stirs up feelings about a "we" and its aggrievement. The form moves through the world as a true piece of culture, being replicated for what it does. Accelerative force is not supplied to the discourse because of the conscious attention the litany of complaint draws to the Declaration; rather, accelerative force is supplied because of the efficacy of that litany in stirring people up.

However, the operation of the quotation as a device for imparting accelerative force is, so to speak, metacultural. If you can make another see that your argument is really the same as an argument which the other already accepts, then you have hopes that the other will accept your argument.

Of course, if you took this position to its logical extreme, you could never make a truly new argument. If your argument is really just the same as one that came before it, then there is no point in making the "new" argument, since it is not new. The strategy of quotation, taken to its logical extreme, becomes antimodern, and this antimodernism is a form of tradition. In the latter case, one represents oneself as never doing anything new, but merely carrying on venerable traditions. For this reason, one is always telling the "same" myths. But just where does one draw the line?

A fascinating case, in this regard, is Elizabeth Cady Stanton's "Declaration of Sentiments," issued at the woman's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York, in

July of 1848, which subsequently "became the rallying cry for generations of women as they campaigned for their enfranchisement" (Lutz 1971, 343). Because of its historical boundary-marking function as initiating the "woman movement," it is fitting that the Seneca Falls declaration should have been based on the Declaration of Independence of the United States itself.

What is remarkable about the document, however, is that, unlike the South Carolina secession document, the Declaration of Sentiments does not quote from the Declaration of Independence. It rather *is* the Declaration of Independence – it uses the same words as the Declaration – but with key passages changed. The Seneca Falls declaration does not try to define itself as something "new." Rather, it buries its radical newness in something that by then was already old. In this regard, it is an attempt to do something new, but to do that new thing in an old way, that is, traditionally. On the following page is a side-by-side comparison of the opening paragraphs in each.

The similarities between the original and the replica are here not a matter of quotation. The Seneca Falls document does not stand in the same relationship to the Declaration of Independence that the South Carolina secession document does. What is distinctive here is that the Seneca Falls declaration does not attempt to identify itself, overtly, as something new. Its appeal is through a metaculture of tradition rather than modernity. It says, in effect: "I am just what we have been saying all along." In this regard, it is more like an Amerindian Brazilian myth, which undergoes only small changes in the form of linguistic expression as it is retold, and,

**Declaration of Independence**  
July 1776

When in the Course of human events,  
it becomes necessary for one people

to dissolve the political bands  
which have connected them with another,  
and to assume  
among the powers of the earth,  
the separate and equal station

to which the Laws of Nature  
and of Nature's God entitle them,  
a decent respect  
to the opinions of mankind  
requires that they should  
declare the causes  
which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident,  
that all men are created equal,  
that they are endowed  
by their Creator  
with certain unalienable Rights,  
that among these are Life, Liberty,  
and the pursuit of Happiness.  
That to secure these rights,  
Governments are instituted among Men,  
deriving their just powers  
from the consent of the governed.  
That whenever any Form of Government  
becomes destructive of these ends,  
it is the Right of the People  
to alter or to abolish it,  
and to institute new Government,

laying its foundation on such principles  
and organizing its powers in such form,  
as to them shall seem most likely  
to effect their Safety and Happiness.

**Declaration of Sentiments**  
July 1848

When, in the course of human events,  
it becomes necessary for one portion  
of the family of man

to assume  
among the people of the earth

a position different from that  
which they have hitherto  
occupied, but one  
to which the laws of nature  
and of nature's God entitle them,  
a decent respect  
to the opinions of mankind  
requires that they should  
declare the causes  
that impel them to such a course.

We hold these truths to be self-evident:  
that all men and women are created equal;  
that they are endowed  
by their Creator  
with certain inalienable rights  
that among these are life, liberty  
and the pursuit of happiness;  
that to secure these rights  
governments are instituted,  
deriving their just powers  
from the consent of the governed.  
Whenever any form of government  
becomes destructive of these ends,  
it is the right of those who suffer from it  
to refuse allegiance to it,  
and to insist upon  
the institution of a government,  
laying its foundation on such principles,  
and organizing its powers in such form,  
as to them shall seem most likely  
to effect their safety and happiness.

hence, which makes an inertial appeal for circulation – it purports to merely embody something that has already been in circulation. Perhaps this, in part, explains the troubles this document had in its initial reception in newspapers, where an expectation of newness was already firmly rooted.

Another respect in which the Declaration of Sentiments is mythical in character is that it purports to replicate a whole cultural element. Elizabeth Cady Stanton did not take a piece of the Declaration of Independence and fuse it together with other materials from other sources. She took the document as a whole entity and rewrote parts of it – including, note, making changes in grammar and punctuation here and there (e.g., a comma after the initial “when,” and a “that” instead of a “which”). These changes are presumably not part of the new assertion of rights that document was meant to proclaim. Rather, they reflect the kind of microtinkering that we find in the retelling of myth. It is true that the document diverges in wording from the Declaration of Independence more and more as one proceeds through the text, and it has a lengthy “resolutions” section which is unlike the performative section of its model. Still, the document – right down to the litany of complaints – is made to look like the Declaration of Independence.

When is “we” inappropriate?

Having noted that the Declaration of Sentiments represents itself as a replica, I now draw attention to a crucial difference. The use of the first-person plural is attenuated in the new document. Whereas the Dec-

laration of Independence contains, by my count, 47 occurrences of the first-person plural form (11 “we”s, 10 “us”es, and 26 “our”s), the Declaration of Sentiments – which is actually a longer document – contains only 11 occurrences (6 “we”s, 1 “us,” and 4 “ours”).

Most importantly, in the litany of complaints, where the Declaration of Independence builds a sense of an aggrieved “we” through repeated usage of the first person plural form, the Declaration of Sentiments contains not one single occurrence of the “we” pronoun. As in the Declaration, each complaint clause begins with an agentive “he,” though here the “he” is not “the King of Great Britain,” but rather “man.” Crucially, however, the grammatical object is not “us” or a possessive “our,” but rather “her:”

He has never permitted **her** to exercise **her** inalienable right to the elective franchise.

He has compelled **her** to submit to law in the formation of which **she** had no voice.

He has withheld from **her** rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men, both natives and foreigners.

Having deprived **her** of this first right as a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving **her** without representation in the halls of legislation, he has oppressed **her** on all sides.

He has made **her**, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead.

He has taken from **her** all right in property, even to the wages **she** earns.

Nancy Cott observes that “nineteenth-century women’s consistent usage of the singular *woman* symbolized, in a word, the unity of the female sex. It proposed that all women have one cause, one movement. But to twentieth-century ears the



singular generic *woman* sounds awkward, *the woman movement* ungrammatical" (1987, 3). This usage of the term "woman" is certainly consistent with the choice of "she" and "her" in the litany of complaint section. Cott also reminds us of Simone de Beauvoir's assertion, in *The Second Sex*, that "'women do not say 'we', except at some congresses of feminists or similar formal demonstrations; men say 'women,' and women use the same word in referring to themselves. They do not assume authentically a subjective attitude'" (1987, 5).

It is not that the Seneca Falls document makes no use of the first-person plural pronoun. There is the same "we" of reasoning beings in the line "We hold these truths to be self-evident." The majority of first-person forms occur in the paragraph before the resolutions section:

In entering upon the great work before us, we anticipate no small amount of misconception, misrepresentation, and ridicule; but we shall use every instrumentality within our power to effect our object. We shall employ agents, circulate tracts, petition the state and national legislatures, and endeavor to enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf. We hope this Convention will be followed by a series of conventions embracing every part of the country.

However, this "we" does not refer to all women, or even to all women in the United States, but rather to the task-oriented "we" of those at the convention and/or those subscribing to the document. Unlike the Declaration of Independence, moreover, those at the convention do not performatively constitute themselves as representatives – as in "We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America." The scope of the Seneca Falls

"we" would seem to be coextensive with the scope of the newly constituted "woman movement."

How to understand this absence? Here are a few of the complaints with a first-person plural form substituted for the third-person female:

He has never permitted us to exercise our inalienable right to the elective franchise.

He has compelled us to submit to law in the formation of which we had no voice.

He has withheld from us rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men, both natives and foreigners.

Rhetorically, the use of such a "we" appears to be a more effective device – or so the comparative evidence with the Declaration and other documents would tend to suggest – in kindling strong feelings, a sense of outrage, capable of marking a sharp boundary for a social entity. Why was it not used in this document?

This question goes to the heart of the difference between the Seneca Falls document and the Declaration or the secession documents. The social entities they were attempting to create are radically distinct, and, in this sense, the Seneca Falls document does call for radical change. By way of comparison, the task of the secession documents was essentially similar to that of the original Declaration of Independence. Both deal with transformations that resemble mitotic cell reproduction. Daughter cells arise from the alignment of materials internal to a single parent cell, and then those materials pull apart spatially, with the original boundary rupturing and two new boundaries taking its place. The two new cells are functionally

independent. Just so did the United States of America emerge from something internal to Great Britain, with a new boundary being formed between them, and just so did the southern states imagine their separation from the Union.

But there is no analogy here to the principle put forth by Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Her idea is not to construct a new social entity, distinct from another entity – as if women and men would become separate sociopolitical groupings, each self-organizing and independent. Because the attractive forces of difference continued to be seen as the social glue of a single collectivity in which both men and women would participate, with the family as the core institution of social reproduction, the proper biological analogy here is to meiotic cell reproduction, where the process of cell division leads to gametes – spermatozoa or ova – that are mutually dependent on each other for any future reproduction. The Stanton proposal is to change the internal structure of the social organism itself. Hers, in these respects, is thus the more radical proposal.

The question is: Who is to take up her proposal? Is it only women to whom Stanton is appealing? I think the answer is: No. To be successful, the proposal for a change in structure would have to be taken up by men, as well. This means designing a discourse so as to insure its circulation not only among women, but also among men. The pronouns would have to be those that men could take on as their own, as well.

The problem with the rhetorical force of a "we" (of women) is that it is out of keeping with this kind of circulatory process. "We," so to speak, envisions the boundary within which it is to circulate. Its content,

as a referring linguistic sign, is foreseen as the population in which it is to move. Insofar as the specific discursive construction of that "we" matches the extant discourse in the population to which it refers, in that measure it does have a ready-made basis for circulation within that population. But its internal success is inversely correlated with its external success. That is, if the "we" truly picks out an extant pattern of circulation – ventriloquates the voices of that population – then in that measure is it unsuccessful outside those boundaries.

While a first-person plural rendition of the Seneca Falls litany of complaint sounds more rousing, that measure might also defeat its purpose. Since the discourses to which it is designed to give rise would have to have currency among men as well as women, a "we" of women would slow the discourse down, creating resistance to its movement outside its boundaries. Paradoxically, the emotional intensity necessary for movement would undermine movement.

For the discourse to take hold, therefore, a more distanced, seemingly more rational approach would have to be adopted. A "he" versus "she" approach places the reader/listener in the position of judge, outside the point of view of one of the participants in the discourse. Indeed, the image of a discourse designed for inspection by a judge (male or female) is not a bad characterization of the Seneca Falls text. The beginning of the "resolutions" section reads: "Whereas, the great precept of nature is conceded to be that 'man shall pursue his own true and substantial happiness.' Blackstone in his Commentaries remarks that this law of nature, being

coeval with mankind and dictated by God himself, is, of course, superior in obligation to any other..." The reference is to the eminent eighteenth-century legal theorist, and codifier of the English common law. These passages read like a legal argument before a judge. Perhaps it is not coincidental that Elizabeth Cady Stanton's father was himself a judge on the New York State supreme court.

As I remarked earlier, however, it is not that the Declaration of Sentiments lacks a first-person plural pronoun. In the paragraph quoted above, there is a "we," but it is of a specific type. Indeed, all of the "we"s of this document, except that of "We hold these truths to be self-evident," are of the same type. They are "we"s of the movement: the "woman movement." To effect the kinds of changes it seeks to effect, this "we" must look forward in its circulation to a "we" of the United States. This is a "we" of the radical reimagining of the collectivity spawned by the Declaration of Independence, and the circulation of broader discourse patterns out of which it arose.

Obviously, the "we" of the movement must include men as well as women, and hence could not be only a "we" of women. One need only realize that the chair of the Seneca Falls convention was a man – James Mott – and that the demand for women's suffrage put forth by Elizabeth Cady Stanton "was eloquently defended by Frederick Douglass," ardent abolitionist and escaped slave (Lutz 1971, 343). The "we" of the woman movement, unlike the "we" of the Declaration or the various "we"s of secession, had to be a forward-looking "we" imagined as one day articulable by every American, male or female.

Indeed, this is perhaps the essence

of any internal movement "we" within a broader "we" that seeks structural change rather than simple secession. While a "we" of women is certainly articulable, when its intended circulation is only through and among women, a "we" that purports to change the role of women without separating women from men altogether must project itself as a possible "we" of the nation. The "we" of an internal movement represents a claim on the "we" of a nation. It looks forward to that date when it can reshape the "we" of the nation.<sup>10</sup>

#### A once and future "we"

The "we" of an internal movement, such as the woman movement, is a peculiar entity – not the "we" of a nation or a would-be nation about to bud. The internal movement "we," as if gazing into a crystal ball, attempts to imagine its own future, and foresees amidst the smoke and haze and however dimly, a time when it will grow and become coextensive with the "we" of a nation or other larger grouping. If all "we"s imagine the audience in which they hope to circulate, the "we" of a movement is a realistic "we," one that imagines its present audience on a modest scale. It is not grandiose, assuming itself already acceptable to a larger population. Yet, at the same time, it does not hunker down in a narrow present, seeing itself as under siege from that larger population. Rather, it is determined and hopeful. The "we" of an internal movement, echoing Nathaniel Ames, says to a future population, "we dream'd of your Times."

Just so does the "we" of the Seneca Falls Declaration set its gaze upon the future. Each occurrence of a first-person plural

form in that document – with exception of the initial "We hold these truths to be self-evident" – in some way, typically through association with a grammatical future, looks forward to something on the temporal horizon:

we insist that they have immediate admission...  
the great work before us  
we anticipate no small amount of misconception...  
we shall use every instrumentality within our power to effect our object  
We shall employ agents...  
and endeavor to enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf  
We hope this Convention will be followed by... the speedy success of our cause depends upon...

The goal of an internal movement "we" is the acceleration of culture over a longer span of historical time. It is distinct from the litany of complaint "we" in this regard. The litany "we" is interested in securing the circulation of the discourse of which it forms part, but it does not, at least not intrinsically, shape a trajectory for other discourse in a more remote future. The only outlet for such a "we," taken in and of itself, is, thus, secession.

The "we" of an internal movement, however, is bound up with a future and with imperatives – with the transformation of the social world. It thus attempts to change and reshape the social world in such a way that a new kind of "we," based on the movement "we," is able to circulate in a larger population. The movement "we" looks forward to its transformation, one day, into a "we" of the United States of America that no longer anticipates "misconception, misrepresentation, and ridicule," but that now takes the transformations to which it is committed as already accomplished, as historical fact.

In the case of the abolitionist movement, the projected future came together with the retrospective "we" in Lincoln's Gettysburg address – the document itself now as much an American *churinga*, or totem, as the Declaration of Independence; indeed, it forms part of the *Liberty Collection* of my youth. There can be little doubt about the inspiration behind the Gettysburg Address. The document looks back to the Declaration of Independence.<sup>11</sup> Here is prime evidence of how the culture or social learning locked up in the Declaration – the inspiration that motivated the Declaration – was able to find its way out of there and into a new, yet equally inspiring, cultural element. The reference back to the Declaration occurs in the famous opening line:

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

In the widely memorized and recited opening line of the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln refers back to 1776, the date of the Declaration, but he also appropriates the specific words of the Declaration: "that all men are created equal." This is significant because the idea encapsulated in those words was already in circulation prior to July 1776 in both Europe and in the U.S. Maier (1997, 166 and elsewhere) points to the June 1776 draft of the Virginia Declaration of Rights drawn up by George Mason on which Jefferson drew. That document contained the line "that all men are born equally free and independent." Important as the Mason wording may have been for various state bills of rights in the late eighteenth century (Maier 1997, 165), it

was not that line, but rather the Declaration's, that Lincoln picked up. The Declaration reshaped extant culture and extant discourse, but it did so in such a way as to produce a new cultural element that had inspirational force. It is that inspirational force that reemerges in the Gettysburg Address.

Jefferson's words here, however, are not simply repeated; they are taken and placed in a new context, such that the resultant cultural element appears as a wholly new entity. Readers of the Gettysburg Address hardly notice that Lincoln's words were also Jefferson's words. For Jefferson, "that all men are created equal" was a "self-evident" truth. For Lincoln, by contrast, it was a historical proposition on which "our fathers" founded a nation.

What is especially intriguing is the change that the first-person plural pronoun undergoes in the Gettysburg document. The phrase "our fathers" means, evidently, "the fathers of the United States of America;" hence, the "our" is meant to encompass the United States as a social entity. In this sense, it carries over one meaning – the referential meaning – from the Declaration. But what I find fascinating is that the "our," as part of a discourse pattern within the text – as a trace within the cloud chamber – is actually a new "our" that only appears to be identical with the "our" of the Declaration's litany of complaint section. The latter is defined by its opposition to a "He" of "the King of Great Britain," and later, to a "they" of "the British." But who is the "they" or "he" or "it" to which the Address's "our" stands in opposition?

The initial "our" hints at an answer: "Our fathers brought forth on this conti-

nent ..." The "our" is backward-looking. But the hint is only subsequently developed. The next sentence adds clarity to the trace: "Now we are engaged in a great civil war." If the first sentence looks back to the founding of the United States, with "our fathers" suggesting possession by a present-day collectivity of a past, the second sentence focuses on that present-day "we" – those "engaged in a great civil war." In the third sentence, the scope of the "we" narrows: "We are met on a great battlefield of that war." This "we" refers – does it not? – to the present listening audience. Witness the following sentence: "We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live."

Now it is true that, because of the linear unfolding of the text, the initial "we" of the present-day United States of America lingers on, in ghost-like fashion, through a kind of metaphor, in this narrow "we." But what is significant also, from the point of view of a discourse trace, is that this "we" comes to be contrasted with a "they," namely, "those who here gave their lives." The initially only hinted-at present-day "we" becomes clarified, as it moves through the text, as a present-day "we" set against a backdrop of those who have died. The contrast becomes even sharper as the text proceeds: "We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground." While "ground" becomes, again through metaphorical extension, the land occupied by the United States, the "we" attempting to consecrate, dedicate, and hallow it is a "we" of the living occupants of that American soil as opposed to the "they" who died on that soil.

What defines the positive quality of the Gettysburg "we" is the special relationship the people it names have to those who have died – their cultural, if not also biological, ancestors. Lincoln makes the opposition apparent in the second-to-last sentence: "It is for us the living," he writes, "rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced" – "us the living," that is, the present generation of Americans.

There is a melancholic quality to the chant-like deployment of the first-person pronoun in this text – and, to be sure, the pronoun is prominent, occurring 15 times in this short document. The "we" looks back on the strewn bodies of the dead, not only at Gettysburg, but across the battlefields of the Civil War. Metaphorically, it also looks back on the aging face of America, no longer flush with youth.

At the same time, this melancholic, backward-looking "us" or "we" here begins to turn, however sluggishly, toward a future, a metamorphosis that the final sentence – in which the "we" of an abolitionist movement has fused with a "we" of the nation – brings to completion: "It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us" – the "us" here becoming aligned with a future, with crystal-ball gazing – "that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion" – the "we" resembling the movement "we" of Elizabeth Cady Stanton – "that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the

people shall not perish from the earth." The "we" that initially looked back on a once here turns to confront a future and to shape that future. It is, truly, a once and future "we."

Over broader historical time, the Gettysburg "we" continues the "we" of the Declaration of Independence. Both have, in some sense, the same referential scope, picking out a people of the United States of America. Here is the mysterious movement of culture revealed in the microscopic matter of pronominal shapes maintaining a referential value. But at the same time, we see here the modern character of that movement. The replicated "we" has a distinct discursive shape; it is the same "we" referentially, but it is distinct discursively. The Declaration's "we" was opposed to an aggressor. But there is no aggressor in the Gettysburg "we," only an opposition to a "they" who have come before "us." This is a "we" of the living who now have a history because of those who are now dead. The dead are backdrop to that "we" in the way that  $\alpha$  is backdrop to  $\omega$ .

How different this is from Adonna Smith's projection of an African American "we" across time: "I mean we went through Hell for like four hundred years." Paraphrased into the discourse of Gettysburg, this might read: "I mean, they went through Hell for like four hundred years, so that we might live." Why the Gettysburg's presentistic "we" poised between a past and a future?

Strangely, this "we," the living, was familiar to me; indeed, in an ethnography I wrote about a Brazilian Indian community (Urban 1996, 28-65), those very words formed the title of one chapter. A "we" of the living was the principal form of the

first-person plural in currency in that community. Why was it there?<sup>12</sup> The answer is to be found in circulation. Because of the thorough-going factionalization of everyday life, no particular individual could formulate a political past for the community. Because political actions are justified by stories about the past, as in the litany of complaint, any explicit statement defining who "we" are in terms of a past would be contested. Contentiousness bred a caution in discourse. To have a story about the past accepted by others, the more distant third-person form had to be used. The ancestors were always a "they." The proximity of a "we" to the utterer would lead to its rejection by those who considered themselves opposed to the utterer. The only "we" that could be widely circulated was a "we" of the living.

Just so do I think that the "we" of the Gettysburg address functioned – and continues to function. It asserts a "we" of succession or continuity as a basis for a collectivity. If we cannot agree on anything else, can we not agree that we are the descendants of people who called themselves "we?"

But if the Gettysburg "we" represents a minimal assertion of collectivity – expressible primarily if not exclusively through metaphor – it also represented the merging of a "we" of the abolitionist movement with a "we" of the nation. In this sense, it was the inheritor not just of the Declaration's "we," but also of a smaller, yet ambitious "we" that realized its projected future at Gettysburg. The movement "we" was forward-looking, seeking through its own replication to accelerate American culture across historical time. Foreseeing in the crystal ball an end to slavery, it found

a voice at Gettysburg that could elevate it from a referentially modest but ambitious "we" to a "we" coterminous with "the people of the United States of America."

### Whither the "we?"

What is transportable about nationalism, as it emerged in the U.S.? If anything, it is the form of semiotic self-representation of the nation – as a "we" expressing the "voice" of a "people."<sup>13</sup> Jefferson's words were passed on to others who signed their name to them as if those words were, in some sense, created by each of those individuals. The prior history of the words is erased by the act of signing or affirming or rearticulating. The characteristic of the modern form of "we" is its appropriation by individuals as their own creation, their own personal expression, despite the fact that it, and the words traveling together with it, have come from elsewhere. The individual articulators of the "we" represent themselves as in control of it, as its creators.

This distinctly modern characteristic of "we" derives from a metacultural focus on "newness." The words coming out of the mouth of the utterer or off the pen of the writer are a personal expression of the utterer or writer, despite the fact that the words may have been already in circulation, part of the flow of culture across time. Metaculture zeroes in on the control articulators have over words rather than the control words have over articulators. From the point of view of tradition, words are merely passing through the utterer. From the point of view of modernity, the utterer is producing those words as if they were unique and individual expressions.

The voice of the people is the additive sum of n number of expressions – identical to one another as they may be – articulated by n distinct "I"s. "Hell no, we won't go!" = "Hell no, I<sub>1</sub> + I<sub>2</sub>, + ... + I<sub>n</sub> won't go."

From the point of view of the nation as a transportable concept, this modern "we" is a cultural element in circulation. It can be taken up by a ruling elite for their own local purposes, and it can pass from one elite to the next. However, this does not mean that the "we" instantaneously spreads throughout a population whose leaders have adopted it. The leaders of a population may be merely representing the "we" of their articulations as an inclusive collection of "I"s, without the rest of the population assimilating that "we." The appearance is given, thereby, that the population over which the rulers rule is really a collection of consenting "I"s, each articulating the "we," when in fact the "we" is the product of those elites, and under their control.

Yet at the same time, there is a telos to the modern first-person plural form. Representing utterances as if they emanated from a collection of "I"s leads to non-elite claims to participation in the "we." This is particularly clear in the American case, which began with a "we" represented as modern – as the expression of all those to whom it referred – even though it was, in fact, the property of a ruling elite. The "we" became a collective expression to which others could lay claim. The historical movement of "we" has been democratizing, as new articulators come to see themselves as controllers of it on a par with its initial articulators. That is the pattern of spread that I have endeavored to explicate here. The process continues to

churn in the United States, where it has perhaps gone farthest, but it is at work also elsewhere.

Where will the movement of "we" lead over historical time? One can imagine a wearing thin of the metaculture of newness, with its spread slowed by recognition of tradition, of the movement of culture through individuals rather than, or in addition to, its creation by individuals. There is some evidence of this in the rise of post-modernism as a metacultural ideology.<sup>14</sup> Further evidence might be sought in patterns of "I" usage in literature and other expressive genres as well as in the usage of the plural pronoun itself. But assuming that the modern "we" – the voice of a people – continues to spread, what kinds of social entities are likely to emerge from it? Three kinds of circulatory processes seem to me to be relevant to that question.

One process grows directly out of the discourse of aggrievement that spawned the American "we" in the first place. The litany of complaint is a powerful discursive form whose circulation is insured by the discontents into which it taps. This circulation gives rise to secessionist impulses. The United States of America, obviously, is itself – at least, in part – a product of these impulses. And the secessionist processes continued in the United States after the revolution, leading to the Civil War. Nor have they disappeared, as witnessed by the "Republic of Texas" and other contemporary secessionist movements.

If culture is a form of motion that results from social learning and social transmission, discontent can be harnessed to set culture in motion. The secessionist "we" is a prime example. Utterances of discon-

tent are replicated because of the feelings into which they tap. But correspondingly, secession limits the movement of culture – at least of the “we” that is at its heart. It circumscribes a smaller population than the “we” from which it came. This narrowing of circulatory scope runs counter to another circulatory process, namely, the tendency for culture to spread ever further, unless it is checked by forces opposing it.

A consequence of this process is that other new “we”s tend to be spawned that create larger imagined groupings, larger bases of circulation. I refer back, in this regard, to the global “we”s of the human species that have popped up, achieving greater frequency in discourse during the 1980s around the antinuclear and ecology movements.<sup>15</sup> These tend to be based not directly on the litany of complaint, but on a closely related pattern – the discourse of danger, danger that a “we” might be destroyed by some “it” or “they.” The feeling provoked is that “we” must be protected; it is in harm’s way. Here is an example of the discourse of endangerment, one of many, from Jonathan Schell:

Now we are sitting at the breakfast table  
drinking our coffee...  
but in a moment we may be inside  
a fireball whose temperature  
is tens of thousands of degrees.  
Now we are on our way to work,  
walking through the city streets,  
but in a moment we may be standing  
on an empty plain under a darkened  
sky looking for the charred remains of  
our children.  
Now we are alive,  
but in a moment we may be dead.  
Now there is human life on earth,  
but in a moment it may be gone.  
(1982, 182.)

The poetics of this passage are obvious – a “Now \_\_\_\_\_, but in a moment \_\_\_\_\_”

pattern is repeated, and the pattern is used to build up a sense of endangerment for a “we” of the human species. As in the case of the Declaration of Independence, by making that “we” palpable as physical form (the actual pronoun) that is repeated, *The Fate of the Earth* contributes to the reader’s sense that the human species is something real, that it is a meaningful social entity. Readers come to see themselves as articulators of these words.

National “we”s represent an equilibrium formation between these two opposed tendencies. Indeed, in some measure left-right politics in the contemporary United States arrays asymmetrically around “we” usage, with a “we, the people of United States” defining the very broad center, secessionist “we”s appearing with greater frequency on the right, and global “we”s on the left.

These two opposed tendencies of movement find themselves up against a third process – the tendency of culture (in this case, of a referentially-defined “we”) to stay in motion, over historical time, not just through inertia, but by inspiring people to actively perpetuate culture in the face of possible dissipation. While secessionist movements continue to this day, and while global “we”s continue to spring up, the “we, the people” that emerged with independence has endured as a referential entity. It has endured in the United States, in part, because of its relationship to internal movement “we”s – the “we”s of the future of cultural motion. The “we” of the United States took on at Gettysburg a once and future quality – it could look back on a past history of circulation of that pronominal form, but also peer into a hazy future at its possible reconfiguration, its

mergers with other future-oriented movement “we”s.

From this point of view, it is interesting to look at the international communist movement, which spawned its own global “we”s of the “workers of the world” – witness the *Internationale*, the communist hymn inspired by the Paris Commune of 1871:

So comrades, come rally  
And the last fight let us face

The *Internationale* unites  
the human race.

In the *Communist Manifesto*, by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, however, there is not a single first-person plural pronoun in the original 1848 edition that circumscribes “the workers of the world.” By my count, there are in that work 38 first person plural forms (“we” = 21; “our” = 9; “us” = 8). Most of them (perhaps 22, with allowance for ambiguity) are of the author-plus-reader type that one would expect of a scholarly publication. The remainder are of the “we communists” type, with two being something more like “we of the new communist society about to be born.” These are internal movement “we”s, analogous to the “we”s of the Seneca Falls declaration and that of the abolitionist movement. No wonder that when Communist revolutions did occur, the “we”s looked forward to merger with other “we”s of particular nations.<sup>16</sup>

The “we” of the modern nation is peculiarly tenacious, indeed, not just because, once established, it tends to inspire its own loyalties, its own perpetuation. The latter is true of culture more generally. Perhaps, more importantly, national “we”s, because of their relationship to internal movement

“we”s, are forward-looking, as in the Gettysburg address. While a glance backwards produces melancholy, a nostalgia for a past that has slipped away from “us,” the “we” of a nation also peers forward in time, envisioning its own new, even more dazzling future – its city upon a hill. It draws on images of things to come, grand things. This is part of the continuing social life of the Declaration of Independence and of the cultural learning that inspired it. On the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., on August 23, 1963, in what was still another inspiring redeployment of the original linguistic material, Martin Luther King said: “I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.’”

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Actually, as my subsequent argument will reveal, there is reason to suspect that the "United States" had greater social reality, both before and after the Declaration, than did the "Republic of Texas" after the Official Call – the issue here is breadth of circulation of the idea within the relevant population. However, my point is that the Declaration was only one moment in that process of circulation of the idea of an independent "United States of America."
- <sup>2</sup> I chose clauses, in this case, rather than sentences – as I used in some other cases discussed later – because of the extremely

variable nature of sentence length in this document. Clauses here seemed to give a better picture of the pacing of first person pronouns over the duration of the text, but other forms of durational segmentation can be used as measures (such as number of words) with essentially the same results.

- <sup>3</sup> The phrase "we, the people of the United States" appears in the Preamble to the Constitution. The Declaration's phrase is "We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America."
- <sup>4</sup> For the different senses of "we" as used in the American context, see Hollinger (1993). There is a substantial and growing literature on the first plural pronoun in relationship to group membership, concerning which see Grimshaw (1994, 311-371) and Singer (1989).
- <sup>5</sup> This is a seemingly elementary idea. If one views a given narrative – or any other cultural object – as  $\omega$  rather than  $\alpha$  culture, then the source of its  $\omega$ -ness must be sought in something outside of culture, at least, in terms of culture construed as the replication of  $\alpha$ 's. Simple though the idea is, yet it has far-reaching implications, which, I believe, conform to the insights about the modern self laid in the masterful work by Charles Taylor (1989), *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Taylor's conclusions derive from a study of philosophical, political, and religious literature, but they are, or so it seems to me, compatible with those I have reached by studying microscopic aspects of discourse in relation to the macro-movement of culture. Particularly relevant to the transformations in narrative, as well as in the use of the pronoun "I," discussed in this section, is Taylor's account of modern "inwardness." He sums up the difference, for example, between Augustinian and Cartesian inwardness by saying that "Descartes situates the moral sources within us" (1989, 143). Those sources, of course, are the basis for individual control necessary for the production of  $\omega$  culture. Indeed, Descartes's *cogito* can be rethought from the perspective of cultural motion under a metaculture of newness. If the specific utterance of the *cogito* is viewed as an  $\omega$  object – that is, not as an  $\alpha$  replica of something one has heard others say – then its utterance could be meaningfully interpreted as affirming the existence of an inner subjectivity. Ironically, however, for all of us who live in the shadow of Descartes's words, the *cogito* becomes ersatz  $\omega$  culture – stale culture that has been handed down across the

generations. Our present-day assertion of it might as well be the replication of some aspect of traditional culture, that is, unless we construe that assertion through the filter of a metaculture of newness, namely, as something unconditioned by its prior articulations, something that is a unique expression of our selves.

6 Laura Graham (1995) has documented a similar pattern of projective "I" usage for another Central Brazilian Indian group. And Alan Rumsey (2000) has analyzed the chiefly "I" in Polynesia, where a single individual speaks in the first person as a long-since-dead ancestor. The "I" of possession trance, where spirits inhabit the concrete body of the person entranced, falls into this class of "projective" "I"s, as well.

7 A given translation (The King James Version, for example) may be taken as definitive by some people; and a literalist approach may locate the truth in the actual words of that translation (see Crapanzano 2000); but, even in those cases, one copy of the translation is equal in value to another.

8 Of course, from an anthropological perspective, if the Declaration continues to have value 800 years from now, and if American English continues to evolve at the usual rate, the document will no longer be fully intelligible. 2,000 years from now it will appear to have been written in a different language.

9 See G. Markus (1987) on citation in scientific publications.

10 Here I make a distinction between an internal movement "we" and a secessionist "we." The latter is also a movement "we," but it does not pose the problems found in internal movement "we"s, where acceptance of the "we" has to be imaginable among a larger grouping of individuals than those immediately aggrieved.

11 It is well-known that both sides of the slavery controversy of the 1840s and 50s drew on the Declaration of Independence for authority, as in the case of the Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1854 (Maier 1997, 203).

12 In discussing the Amerindian case, I want to head off a possible misunderstanding. My argument is not that the modern "we" is based on living/dead opposition. It is rather that a modern "we" is viewed as under the control of its current articulators. Its relationship to "we"s that have come before it is rendered insignificant by the idea of control. Correspondingly, a traditional "we" can seize upon the living/dead distinction, as I argue here. What is crucial to its status as a traditional "we" is that its utterers see the utterance of it

not as something they themselves have created, but rather as something that has been passed onto them by those who have come before.

Still, there is a fit between the modern "we" and the living/dead opposition precisely because the living are the ones in control of current utterances. Such a formulation makes sense from the perspective of the utterer, it is harder to imagine a "we, the living" as having come from the ancestors, just because those ancestors are excluded from the referential scope of that "we." I say harder, but clearly not impossible. WE could see ourselves as having received many things from THEM, including a pattern of "we" usage that excludes THEM.

13 Within the huge literature on nationalism (see Calhoun 1997 and Eley and Suny 1996 for an orientation), the connection between nations and modernity has long been recognized (see, for example, Kohn (1944), whose work foreshadows that of Benedict Anderson (1991 [1983]) in many ways). Gellner (1983), in particular, sees the modern form of nations as linked to the industrial revolution, as people from diverse backgrounds migrated to industrial centers. A common culture or way of life had to emerge among them, despite differences as regards the inherited culture with which they came. Hence, a national identity came to take precedence over (and, in some cases, dominate) other sources of identity, including the family and ethnic group (see, in this regard, Berlant (1997), Berlant and Warner (1998), Mosse (1985), and Ramaswamy (1997)). I take this latter characteristic to be the defining feature of nationalism: the tendency of people to regard their national identity as their principal identity. And, of course, some people are more fervent, in this regard, than others, although at some points almost everyone must reckon with these ardent nationalists and their beliefs and actions. It is to this aspect of the nationalism literature that the present chapter, as well as other parts of this book, especially chapter 6, endeavors to contribute. For I am concerned with the foundations of such identification in the orientation to pronouns, not just the first person plural, as I have proposed, but also the singular. A distinctive orientation to "we" goes hand-in-hand with a distinctive orientation to "I."

At the same time, this micro-focus on the motion of culture suggests that the rise of nationalism is not a function of economic transformation per se, as if the latter were

an acultural infrastructure. Rather, the close-up inspection of pronominal identification suggests that the changes leading to nationalism are – like the rise of capitalism itself – part of the processes of cultural motion. In particular, they are part of the restless side of culture, as it is spurred on by a metacultural idea of newness, namely, that abstract underlying culture must move from an old object to a new one that is not a precise replica of it, and that it must seek out new people who would not otherwise acquire it through inertial motion.

From this perspective, the work of Charles Taylor (1989, 1998) appears most compatible with the present formulation. In his monumental study, *Sources of the Self*, Taylor traces the rise of new subjectivities, associated with modernism, that are not simply a reflex of infrastructural transformations, but that make possible a Cartesian cogito, as contrasted with an Augustinian one, and that lay the groundwork for civil society and also for the nation and nationalism.

The view put forth here is that nationalism and capitalism both have the same root cause: the ascendance of a metaculture of newness. Hence, I am not inclined to subscribe to Gellner's formulation, in which nationalism is a consequence of capitalism per se, although the fact that both spring from the same cause indicates a close connection between them. For this reason, I am not entirely unsympathetic to some of the criticisms of the linkage between nationalism and modernity – for example, A.D. Smith's (1998[1986]) contention that nations have an older time-depth than modernity theory suggests; or Partha Chatterjee's (1993) claim that, while the material aspects of Indian nationalism were linked to Indian response to colonialism, the

spiritual aspects have deeper roots, not tied to colonialism. From the point of view of the present formulation, however, nationalism – as a voluntary alignment with the nation, an alignment that takes precedence over other traditional ascriptions of identity – is clearly tied to modernity, insofar as it (like capitalism itself) is grounded in a metaculture of newness. True, such a metaculture probably surged to the fore in other places at other times. But it has been especially prominent in the last five hundred years of European (and, from there, world) history. The modern form of nationalism grows out of it.

14 As I indicated in Chapter 2, f.n., 22, postmodernism can be construed either as hypermodernism, a way of being newer than new, or as a form of neotraditionalism. It is the latter construal to which I am referring here. Arguments that reduce truth to power reduce it, ultimately, to tradition.

15 It has been documented also by Hugh Mehan (1997) for the debate over illegal immigration in California.

16 Even in the *Internationale*, pronominal deployment appears to be that of a movement. Its point of view is activists telling the workers to rise up, not that of workers speaking to the world:

*Arise ye workers from your slumbers  
Arise ye prisoners of want  
For reason in revolt now thunders  
And at last ends the age of cant.  
Away with all your superstitions  
Servile masses arise, arise  
We'll change henceforth the old tradition  
And spurn the dust to win the prize.  
In this regard, the hymn appears haughty  
and contemptuous, demanding of the  
workers that they cease being who they are  
and become what the communist movement  
wants them to be.*