



Recombinant selves in mass mediated spacetime

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Abstract

Bakhtin proposed that novelistic “chronotopes” (depictions of place-time-and-personhood) implicitly frame readers’ acts of construing a novel’s plot and explicit content in ways that potentially transform everyday chronotopes presupposed by readers. Generalizing from the case of novels (and other genres of written discourse), this article develops an account of “cultural chronotopes,” namely depictions of place-time-and-personhood to which social interactants orient when they engage each other through discursive signs of any kind. Particular attention is given to a chronotope termed “mass mediated spacetime” and to a feature of subjectivity (the formation of “recombinant selves”) characteristic of the mass-mediated public sphere. The chronotopic phenomena explored in the seven accompanying articles (this issue) are discussed in the light of these proposals.

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Keywords: Mass media; Subjectivity; Social relations; Chronotopes; Public sphere

In taking up the comparative study of chronotopic representations, the articles in this collection show that entextualized projections of time cannot be isolated from those of locale and personhood. Time is not a semiotic isolate. It is textually diagrammed and ideologically grasped in relation to, and through the activities of, locatable selves. Since this point is already implicit in Bakhtin’s account of the *novelistic* chronotope, making it explicit is all the more important for the more general case of *cultural* chronotopes with which these articles are concerned.

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A chronotope is a semiotic representation of time and place peopled by certain social types. The case of the novelistic chronotope (Bakhtin, 1981) is the special case where the representation is formulated by a literary text. By virtue of its mass circulation a novelistic chronotope is also a mass mediated chronotope, but this too is a special case. Let us consider the general case first.

Every chronotopic representation has two essential aspects. It links representations of time to those of locale and personhood. And it is experienced within a participation framework: The act of producing or construing a chronotopic representation itself has a chronotopic organization (of time, place and personhood) which may be transformed by that act. The transformation may be more or less palpable, more or less significant, but it always unfolds one participation framework at a time. In the case of mass mediated chronotopes, the number of participation frameworks in which the chronotope unfolds (and hence the number of participants acquainted with its depictions) is sufficiently large that the notion of a ‘mass’ of persons becomes sociologically relevant.

1. Forms of personhood and participation in the chronotope

Since the term *chronotope* combines etyma that denote time (*chronos*) and space (*topos*) it is essential to see at the outset that Bakhtin’s conception of the chronotope (even of the *novelistic* chronotope) involves more than depictions of time and space. A chronotopic depiction formulates a sketch of personhood in time and place; and, the sketch is enacted and construed within a participation framework (or, in the mass mediated cases, through diverse participation frameworks semiotically linked by its textual form, as I now show.)

Bakhtin (1981) observes that ‘[a]lthough abstract thought can, of course, think time and space as separate entities’ (p. 243), discursive textuality invariably unites them in two concrete ways. First, a novelistic chronotope locates time within a larger unity: It links depictions of time to those of space, and to a concrete ‘image of man’, an image that is ‘always intrinsically chronotopic’ (p. 85). Bakhtin is quite clear that the concept of chronotope applies to ‘other areas of culture’ (p. 84) as well, though he does not discuss them in great detail. Second, towards the end of his essay, Bakhtin explores (what we now call) participation frameworks by linking the novelistic world to its interactional text. He does this by considering relations between ‘the world of the author’ and ‘the world of the listeners and readers’; these, he says, ‘are chronotopic as well’ (p. 252). The novel mediates a connection between two participant roles, ‘author’ and ‘listener-reader’; the novelistic chronotope connects the world of the author to the ‘chronotopic situation’ of diverse listeners–readers due to the physical materiality of its textual form—and, we might add, due to dependent features, such as its intersubjective perceivability (audibility, visibility), its physical reproducibility across media (vellum, paper, speech), its convertibility into different experienceable formats (bound book, newspaper serial, theatrical performance, radio broadcast, film), its historical transmissibility through a series of recensions, its physical transportability (and thus sale and consumption) across geographic locales—thus semiotically linking moments of experience in diverse participation frameworks (unfolding consecutively or sequentially, near or far) to each other in space and time.

Pressing this argument to its limit (to the question of ‘the boundaries of chronotopic analysis’) Bakhtin concludes that all semiotic representations are chronotopic because they

occur in space and time (and, we might add, within participation frameworks). His reasoning is this: In order for ‘meanings’ to be experienced by persons a representation ‘must take on the *form of a sign* that is audible and visible’ to participants. Insofar as representations have a ‘temporal-spatial expression’—that is, must occur as sign-tokens in space and time in order to be experienced—they connect the chronotopes they depict to the chronotopes in which they are experienced. Hence ‘every entry into the sphere of meanings is accomplished only through the gates of the chronotope’. This point remains elusive unless we focus on the second feature of chronotopic representations noted above. The gateway is a participation framework.

The participation framework of a representation may be small or large, depending on semiotic medium and genre. In the case of dyadic conversation it consists of two people. In the case of a TV broadcast, it often consists of millions of people who form its mass mediated audience; here the participation framework is geographically dispersed but semiotically unified by the audience’s orientation to a common televisual message at the moment of reception. Such moments can also be linked to each other through communicative chains into processes which, through the inter-linkage of smaller scale semiotic encounters and participation frameworks, yield larger scale sociohistorical trends (Agha, 2007, pp. 64–83).

The circulation of chronotopic representations through artifacts and genres has obvious social consequences. For instance, a chronotopic model of a period can come to be accepted by many persons in that period, but resisted by others; or it may formulate an official picture in some genres, yet count as raw material for humor in others. The dispute between Darwinians and Creationists is a dispute about *which* competing chronotope (‘evolutionary history’ or ‘biblical time’) better accounts for the place of parties to this dispute within the Order of Things; each chronotope informs an official picture of the world (linked to canonical texts and institutions) in one circle, and is an object of derision (and sometimes rage) in the other. More generally, whether or not a chronotopic model is widely known, is felt to be legitimate, is uniformly accepted by those acquainted with it, or whether it fractionates into positionally entrenched variants, the process as a whole proceeds *as a social process* through modes and moments of participatory access to the model itself (i.e., through semiotic activities that unfold within participation frameworks) and through forms of alignment to *that* model (or variant) to which participants orient in some modality of response (registering uptake, maintaining its presuppositions, countering its features, proposing alternatives, etc.) through their own semiotic activities. Chronotopic contrasts become most vivid when they are voiced—as in the dispute between Darwinians and Creationists—as contrasts among institutionalized forms of life.

2. Contrast, unity and ideology

The concept of chronotope is of vanishingly little interest when extracted from a frame of contrast. And, it finds its most pressing utility in the problematics of cross-frame alignment (discussed below). When extracted from a frame of contrast, a chronotope is a ‘possible world’. But every utterance projects a deictically configured possible world (Agha, 2007, pp. 37–54). It is the re-configuration of such projections into higher-level textual unities—and, in turn, their habituation and ideological codification into genres, practices, ‘fashions of speaking’ (Whorf, 1956; Silverstein, 2000), and the institutionalized forms of

life to which these give rise—that provide the most sociologically salient frames of contrast.¹

The dominant frame of contrast in Bakhtin's account is the contrast between known genres of the novel.² But he also contrasts novelistic chronotopes with the chronotopes of everyday life. For instance, he argues that, through his literary treatment of the human body, Rabelais seeks to disaggregate the ideological chronotopes of the medieval world ('the feudal and religious world view', and, in particular, 'those remnants of a transcendent world view still present in it') and to replace it, in the space of novelistic depiction, with 'a new chronotope for a new, whole and harmonious man' (p. 168) by locating the human body in 'a new and unexpected matrix of objects and phenomena' (p. 175) and, thus, by making available new chronotopic formulations to readers in subsequent periods of European history.

Here the frame of contrast is not a contrast between novelistic chronotopes but a contrast between chronotopes of the novel and those articulated through everyday representations, whether these be the folkloristic chronotopes presupposed (by Rabelais and his readers) in the historical period of novelistic writing, or the cultural chronotopes made available by the novel and subsequently assimilated as forms of common sense (into non-hierarchical, non-transcendent, post-religious outlooks) in later European history. It is this contrast between everyday and novelistic chronotopes to which Bakhtin alludes in the opening sentence of his essay—where he speaks of literature as 'assimilating real historical time and space' and also of articulating 'actual historical persons in such a time and space' (p. 85)—and to which he returns towards the end of the essay in passages like the following: 'Out of the actual chronotopes of our world (which serve as the source of representation) emerge the reflected and created chronotopes of the world represented in the work (in the text)' (p. 253); and the latter, we might add, once created, inform the 'chronotopic situations' of those exposed to the text, as frames of reference for subsequent—often ideologically saturated—forms of life. This point can, of course, be generalized beyond the novel to *any* form of entextualized representation.

Chronotopic depictions are formulated by a vast variety of text-patterns and genres in events of discursive interaction. Although such depictions draw on ideas of place, time and personhood that are *presupposed* by current participants, they contrast with them as depictions, frequently transforming and re-ordering the presuppositions with which they contrast. The difference is most frequently experienced by language users as figure-ground

¹ That is, the level of lexemic deixis, while analytically necessary, is by no means analytically sufficient for uncovering and explicating chronotopic formulations in text. For instance, an obvious reason that chronotopic formulations link time to place and personhood is that temporal deictics routinely co-occur in utterances with place and person deictics. Bakhtin himself focuses extensively on place, time and person deixis in his discussion of the novelistic chronotope. However, more elaborate and coherent patterns of chronotopic formulation emerge through other levels of textual organization, such as patterns of textuality through which event-episodes are metrically configured into 'plot' and 'story' structures having distinctive types of recipient-design, and through forms of ideological reanalysis (Bakhtin speaks of different novelistic genres as having distinct 'ideologies') whereby metrically configured text patterns are linked to normative participation frameworks and given unified generic meanings. In the case of cultural chronotopes more broadly (i.e., leaving the novel aside as a special case), forms of deixis are re-configured into chronotopic formulations by both text-patterns and cultural ideologies, as I show in my discussion of the articles by Davidson and Lempert below.

² By appeal to this frame of contrast, Bakhtin distinguishes a number of major novelistic chronotopes, contrasting them with each other by contrasting their temporal aspects (adventure time, everyday time, biographic time), their spatialized landscapes (the alien world, the exotic), the principal sites and settings where characters encounter each other (the road, the salon, the castle), and the forms of subjectivity with which they are endowed (a changeless public persona, an inner private life, a biographically developmental self, etc.).

contrasts between sketches of place-time-and-personhood formulated by co-occurring text-segments, as in the contrast between the sketch that a focal text-segment semiotically formulates and that which it presupposes as already ‘in play’ from accompanying co(n)text, and which, when ratified, it effectively transforms or replaces. Although such contrastive variation may unfold with limitless complexity in a moment-to-moment sense, chronotopic contrasts can also become metrically configured—like contrasts among ‘voices’ (Agha, 2005)—into cumulatively coherent entextualized forms, and, through modes of participatory access to textual forms, can become widely known. Some widely known chronotopes even acquire widely known standard names, and even become grounded in large-scale cultural ideologies and sociopolitical formations in ways exemplified to varying degrees in the accompanying articles, as in cases of chronotopic figures of tradition (Lempert), colonialism (Glick), religion (Wirtz), politics (Riskedahl), and periodized forms of national history, such as West German vs. East German ‘times’ (Davidson), all of which I discuss below.

Ideological formulations can also obscure the way a chronotope works. For instance, a common ideological step is to suppose that a chronotopic representation is reducible to one of its fragments—such as a fragment topically prominent in the representation—as, for instance, when one says that history is about ‘time’. But historical representations are not merely about time; they also depict places populated by people (inhabiting specific social formations). They are chronotopic representations of events modeled in terms of time, place, and personhood (though time is topically prominent when the representation is called ‘history’). Moreover, historical accounts themselves occur as events in particular times and places, and, as events, belong to certain chronotopes just as they model others. The outlines of the chronotope to which a representation *belongs* may appear far less clear to the historian than the one which it explicitly *denotes*—until revisionist history appears on the scene and corrects ‘the historical record’ (the second chronotope) by locating prior views of it as the mistakes of ‘an earlier age’ (the first chronotope). History always turns out to be a relationship between chronotopes, though this is denied by the ahistorical gaze.

The concept of chronotope allows us to see that representations of time contribute to social history—inform the social lives of those who perceive them—because they are sociologically inflected in two essential ways. They cannot be isolated from representations of locale and personhood (and hence from *aspects* of personhood, such as models of subjectivity and social relations). And their interpersonal relevance derives from the participation frameworks in which they are experienced, and through which they are maintained or transformed—with corresponding differences of *scales of relevance* in small scale (face-to-face) versus large scale (mass mediated) modes of semiosis.

3. Recombinant selves

Chronotopic representations enlarge the ‘historical present’ of their audiences by creating chronotopic displacements and cross-chronotope alignments between persons here-and-now and persons altogether elsewhere, transposing selves across discrete zones of cultural spacetime through communicative practices that have immediate consequences for how social actors in the public sphere are mobilized to think, feel and act.

This process is not without its ideological tensions and paradoxes. Communicative practices in the public sphere can equip people with a common sense of belonging (to a purpose, a group, a course of conduct) but also with a common sense of their autonomy and freedom from the process that forges this sense of belonging. For instance, the felt legitimacy of the

idea of democracy lies not merely in the fact that democracy is the rule of the general will, but in the presumption that the individual wills who form that general will are, individually and severally, autonomous of each other; that they are capable of having opinions and making choices that are both ‘autonomous’ and ‘free,’ that is, are independent of each other and not themselves already formed by the invisible hand of some voice or institution tugging and chipping away at their capacity to make choices and form opinions on their own.

What this view ignores permeates it with unrecognized ironies. It ignores the fact that in any form of social organization—of whatever degree of complexity—the sense of belonging to a community can only be acquired by individual selves through interpersonal communicative practices. A sense of belonging to the order of *Gemeinschaft* is as little conceivable without participation in the local communicative zones of town, church, and bazaar, as the sense of belonging to *Gesellschaft* is without trans-local communicative technologies such as the printing press and the newspaper. The deeper irony is that the sense of self that gets incorporated through these forms of participation may well be a sense of the self as autonomous of such acts of communication, so that everyone exposed to common representations can end up with the same view of his or her radical uniqueness, and this ideological stance can obscure the ways in which one’s sense of self is aligned to those of others.

At the other end lie views that reduce the diversity of forms of alignment to spectral forms of mass mediated uniformity. For instance, many scholarly efforts to explore mass mediated social processes—including Benedict Anderson’s (1983) often brilliant account of the role of novels and newspapers in forging common points of reference for, and forms of belonging within, large scale national communities—tend to *isolate* mass mediated social encounters from the rest of social history in ways that privilege ‘top down’ moments of mass communication and reception within social history, sometimes implying that such moments automatically configure forms of social uniformity through common exposure to the same message (Spitulnik, 1997).

We can sidestep this difficulty by seeing that mass mediated social processes are only *episodically* mass mediated, that they unfold through semiotic encounters of diverse kinds, only some of which are mass mediated.

4. Mass mediated moments and processes

A semiotic encounter is an encounter with signs. An *interpersonal* semiotic encounter is one in which persons encounter each other by encountering signs (utterances, gestures, text-artifacts) that connect them to each other (or *mediate* their connection with each other) in some type of participation framework. Semiotic encounters are *mass mediated* when the signs that connect persons to each other connect *many* persons to each other within unified participation frameworks (through a common orientation to those signs)—though frequently at varying degrees of separation from each other by *other* criteria, such as criteria of physical co-presence, mutual awareness, and the like (Agha, 2007, pp. 9–13).³

³ It is worth noting that ‘mass mediation’ is a feature of semiotic encounters of a wider class than those involving what we nowadays call ‘the mass media’. It is a feature of any semiotic encounter that involves a mass participation framework, and thereby connects many persons to relatively invariant sign forms, a class that includes rituals organized as mass ceremonies (Agha, 2007, pp. 68–69). Rituals may be organized by the use of electronic or print technologies (Payne, 1989) or not involve any at all (Turner, 1967). This definition also allows us to re-think the social significance of so-called ‘media rituals’ (Couldry, 2003) in a more revealing way, though I cannot pursue that issue here.

A mass mediated *social process* is ‘mass mediated’ in only some of its moments. It is mass mediated if one or more of the participation frameworks through which it unfolds are organized as mass mediated semiotic encounters. For their participants, such moments are invariably *preceded* and *followed* by encounters of other kinds. Both preceded *and* followed. That is: On the one hand mass mediated encounters presuppose prior acquaintance with cultural forms (e.g., having a spouse, being an employee) to which persons become oriented in everyday encounters with each other through segments and trajectories of their biographic lives in which mass media play no role. On the other hand, mass mediated representations of such cultural forms (e.g., depictions of spousal relations, of office life) are recycled and recontextualized in the course of such biographic lives in various non-mass-mediated participation frameworks (e.g., conversations about or with spouses, conversations about or in places of work), and also in various semiotic practices that involve extended trajectories of co-participation (e.g., staying married, keeping a job) in at least some segments of which mass media play no role.

The study of mass mediated social processes is therefore not the study of mass mediated semiotic encounters alone. It is *necessarily* a study of inter-linkages among semiotic encounters of diverse kinds, some of which may be mass mediated, others merely invoke mass mediated forms by presupposition, others which do neither, and others, which, while they do neither, are later depicted in mass mediated forms.

Several of the accompanying articles explore mass mediated representations of social phenomena that circulate within the societies of which they are representations. These representations include figurements of social persons of many different kinds—historical actors, abstract agents of colonial history, fictional characters, sketches of political subjectivity—that become available to persons in semiotic encounters with mass mediated representations, and play a critical role in encounters with others oriented to the same representations. Mass media representations make the same representations available to many persons by virtue of their ‘mass’ circulation. Insofar as they contain representations of personhood they make sociohistorically distributed but semiotically analogous images of self commonly available to many persons. Yet persons orient to these images through different frames of participatory engagement, and align their own selves to them to different degrees in semiotic behaviors (Agha, 2005, pp. 50–57). In these behaviors, such selves may be drawn to each other by the usual ‘Laws of Attraction’ (to use the title of a recent Hollywood film as an eponym for a mass-mediated social fact), but are also drawn apart by Batesonian forms of schismogenesis. Such recombinant selves pervade the mass-mediated public sphere. Indeed, the fact that many persons are oriented to common views of personhood on a large sociohistorical scale, including commonplace views of the uniqueness of those who hold those views, is perhaps the central paradox of individuality in mass-mediated dialogic spacetime.

5. Cross-frame alignments

Dianne Riskedahl’s paper illustrates forms of invited cross-frame alignment in Lebanese political rhetoric and their uptake by the general public. In a common view of political power, to control the past is effectively to control the present and the future. Controlling the past is of course *only* possible through representations of the past. And when representations of the past are representations of persons, the question of how they

influence the present depends on cross-frame interpersonal alignments between characters and participants across represented and representing speech frames.

The political leaflet discussed by Diane Riskedahl formulates a set of explicit cross-frame alignments accompanied by forms of chronotopic displacement. The first part of the leaflet (lines 1–11) vocatively addresses its readers—through a stacked series of deictically configured definite descriptions—as chronotopically configured social types, whether by emphasizing their placement in historical events (*To those who resisted the 1982 Zionist invasion, To those whose sons were kidnapped . . . during the Lebanese war, etc.*) or in regions of demographic and social-categorical space (*To the citizens of Beirut, To all Islamic societies, organizations and forces, etc.*). These invocations formulate readers as belonging to a dialogic chronotope—a narratological order of spatiotemporal depictions—which, insofar as a reader can locate him- or herself in it (in one or more of these chronotopes), constitutes him or her as addressee. The next segment (lines 13–21) formulates the event of reading—and the entire ‘current’ historical moment that spreads radially out from it—as just like the period of the war. The past has become the historical present: Then is Now. This is followed (lines 23–47) by a stacked series of reported speech and action constructions that describe the horrors of the war. The next segment (lines 49–65) reiterates the proposition that Then is Now; these horrors have returned. The final segment (lines 67–73) is an exhortation to its reader—now constituted as a fully elaborated chronotopic figure, one who identifies with the past, and whose present is also just like the past—to participate *in the duty of confronting this Sharonist . . . band* by participating in *this massive mass protest*. The reader is now a chronotopically displaced person. And such persons are pliable.

In the context of war and long-term trauma in Beirut, these chronotopic figurements are not merely restricted to political pamphlets. They walk across the land. The individual respondents whom Riskedahl surveys define their own chronotopic self-placements in relation to these figures. The response that Riskedahl calls ‘Rejection’ is any discursive stance that reactively maintains that Then is *not* Now; what she calls ‘Retaliation’ is the response that Then is *indeed* Now, and that this fact itself requires further retaliation, perhaps militant retaliation. The third—and most common—stance, ‘Resignation’, is the view that Then is *alas* Now. The one committed to this stance is wholly fatalistic about the present, a fatalism expressed by physical reactions like shuddering, getting flustered, staring vacantly and paralytically off into space. People in the present are chronotopically displaced into a representation of the past that paralyzes them in the here-and-now. The grip of these figurements on the public imagination is intense. People who descriptively invoke particular ‘flashpoints’ of the war (back there and then) are willy-nilly felt to inhabit the persona of ‘someone seeking to inflame the discussion’ (here-and-now). And politicians and pamphleteers who invoke these alignments formulate themselves as powerful through the very act by presenting themselves as persons ‘capable of averting the horror and maintaining peace’. Such a climate of fear, which depends on chronotopic analogies, displacements and alignments, creates an environment of paralysis, which—at the specifically political level—is, in effect, an ‘environment of self-imposed censorship’. People fear to speak of these things because they fear for their chronotopically displaced selves. The strategies that underlie this form of political control, particularly forms of fear, paralysis and self-censorship, are familiar to all of us—in this post-9/11 world—from the analogous forms of chronotopic displacement used by the Bush administration, from whose paralyzing grip we (collectively, as a nation) are only now, and only very slowly, beginning to awake.

Deanna Davidson discusses a rather different type of cross-chronotope alignment, a case where former East Germans deictically locate themselves with respect to a national boundary (East vs. West Germany) that no longer exists, and a historical transition that marks its erasure (post- vs. pre-unification) in order to challenge contemporary mass media discourses about East and West. Davidson notes that, in Germany today, the former West and East German states are typically contrasted as ‘paradigms of good and evil government’ by a mass media dominated by Western values. This moral economy is challenged by Easterners in a classic ‘counter-discourse’ of the type described by Hill et al., 1998; where the formulations of a dominant discourse are challenged by groups that view themselves as disadvantaged by it. Easterners regard themselves as now subject to the regime of a new chronotope, ‘these so-called West times’, which they themselves reactively (and negatively) characterize as a time of financial insecurity, superficiality, and alienation, and which they contrast with a pre-unification chronotope, with which they positively align, namely ‘GDR times’, a period of security, solidarity, ‘quality’ and political engagement. These chronotopes are, at once, ways of talking about sociopolitical arrangements and of forging forms of political alignment with them: for Easterners in these new ‘West times’ democracy may open up freedoms to the citizen, but capitalism takes away workers’ rights to criticize employers, which Easterners enjoyed in former ‘GDR times’; whereas ‘now’ is a time of alienation, ‘then’ was a time of political engagement; whereas ‘now’ consumer goods are plentiful, if cheaply made, ‘then’ was a time of higher quality in cultural activities, amenities for children, and interpersonal solidarity.

Although deictic contrasts play a role in the formulation of these contrastive positions, the positions in question are not formulated by contrasts among deictic *forms* (which are invariant across the East/West boundary), but by *registers of deixis* (Agha, 2007, Chapter 6), namely contrastive patterns of deictic *reference* linked to specific conditions of appropriate use and normative participation frameworks.⁴ Davidson notes that this discourse is ‘not found in mainstream (that is, non-Eastern) public media’ and is ‘unlikely to be used by a non-Easterner’. It is normatively appropriate to non-public settings, where it formulates a chronotope of post-unification ‘social decline’ and of ‘colonization of the East by the West’. It is a discourse of nostalgia that is ‘taboo’ in mainstream culture; the breach of this taboo is considered ‘subversive in public spaces and national politics’. To participate in this discourse is hence to locate oneself within a chronotopic boundary—a temporality of decline, a non-public space, and membership in an oppositional minority—that differentiates its speaker from the voice of the mainstream. In contrast, in order to participate in the national public sphere, *all* Germans—including Easterners—normatively use the same pattern of deictic reference to nation and history (which, in private settings, Easterners may well call ‘Western’), one which formulates explicit deictic reference to a unified German state and implicit moral alignment to the table of values (the superiority of West/cap-

⁴ Unlike registers of *deferential* deixis, where a single pronoun alternates between plural and singular reference—across settings that are intimate/status-symmetric vs. formal/status-marked—to index contrasts of deference (to interlocutor) and demeanor (of speaker), the cases Davidson discusses involve registers of *sociopolitical* deixis where a single spatial or temporal deictic alternates between partitive and non-partitive reference to chronotopic national and historical boundaries—across settings that are private/role-symmetric (interlocutors both Easterners) versus public/role-asymmetric—to index contrasts of sociopolitical alignment (with interlocutor) and forms of allegiance (of speaker) to political stances and positions within the order of the nation-state.

italism over East/socialism) formulated by its dominant mass-mediated discourses. To participate in such a mainstream public discourse is, as Warner, 1993 notes, to *distance* oneself from the ‘residue of unrecuperated particularity’ (1993, p. 241) characteristic of the private, minoritized self, and to align oneself to membership in a ‘national public’, here the public sphere of the unified German state. We can now also see that belonging to a public sphere requires performing a figure of ‘public subjectivity’ whose felicity conditions include fluency in a set of chronotopic conventions.

The above cases involve ‘political’ formations in the sense that the text patterns which formulate the chronotopes are ideologically construed and captioned—indeed officially ‘topicalized’ (cf. the discussion of ‘history’ above)—by dominant metasemiotic discourses as indexing facts of alignment to state-level political formations. Other forms of grouping can, of course, also be configured through forms of cross-chronotope alignment, and captioned differently in the awareness of a public.

In the case discussed by Michael Lempert (this volume), text-patterns of reported speech deixis differentiate two very different chronotopes of tradition in the discourses of a diasporic community. Both involve distinct text-patterns of reported speech, and distinct ideological readings of them. Both cases involve uses of a single quotative clitic (a marker of reported speech deixis) in Lhasa Tibetan. But how can ‘tradition’ get associated with a quotative deictic?

As a segmental morpheme, the quotative form, *-s*, merely differentiates a represented speech utterance, *X*, from a representing utterance, *Y*, by marking the right-most boundary of *X*—i.e., by forming the configuration $[[X]-s Y]$. It thereby distinguishes the chronotopic frames of represented and representing speech. But it marks no further distinctions—involving other aspects of this chronotopic boundary, or anything concerning tradition—at least by itself. For instance, all other reported speech distinctions—whether the quote is direct/indirect speech, whether quoted speaker is known/unknown, whether same/different from current animator—are inferred from co-textual semiotic cues.

The same holds for voicings of tradition. Thus, if the represented speech segment is known to be a quote from a canonical religious text (and this is typically the case in the speech genre of Geluk dialectical debate) then the participants in the debate frame (challenger and defendant) are understood as re-animating the voice of religious tradition. Here, it is the recognizability of the quoted segment, *X*, as a fragment of a religious text that semiotically cues the placement of animator in a chronotope of tradition. In the dispute between challenger and defendant, this chronotopic formulation of self can be used to gain advantage over interlocutor if the representing speech frame, *Y*, is zeroed out entirely, and the voice of the animator thereby seen to *merge* with the voice of tradition. The cumulative effect of all these cues is to align the animator with the principal, understood as the religious text (or author, or textual tradition), and to formulate animator as knowledgeable about it. Since this chronotopic figure depends on multiple cues, its elements are independently defeasible: If the representing speech frame is not zeroed out the merger of animator with principal does not occur; if the quoted speech, *X*, is not a fragment of a religious text, the principal is not the voice of religious tradition; if the quoted speech segment is uttered with imperfect command, the animator is not formulated as knowledgeable.

The northern monks of Namgyal in Dharamsala exhibit precisely these demeanors—which, when contrasted with the Geluk practices of the southern monasteries—are manifest as positionally contrastive personae. Relative to the southern monks, northerners

exhibit apparently disfluent patterns of ‘overuse’ (where the quotative clitic frames speech *not* from a religious text) and ‘flagging competence’ (where the usage suggests an imperfect command of scripture). Lempert finds that the northern discursive practices, occurring as they do in Dharamsala, a site of touristic activity, are linked to a frame of cultural objectification; they tend to increase under the gaze of tourists and videocameras; and this increase in relative disfluency appears to mark an ‘antiquing’ of the debate practice (through an overuse of the voice of tradition), particularly given stereotypes of the monastic field, where northern monks are more closely associated with the preservation of culture and heritage, and southerners with excellence in debate. Lempert notes that this is a change-in-progress whose precise social domain and cultural meanings are as yet unclear. What seems clear, however, is that northern and southern variants of the chronotope of tradition appear contrastively to index the different participation frameworks in which they are deployed. The chronotopic ‘voice of tradition’ manifests itself in the public sphere of the monastic field in ways that reflect—and sharpen—the contrastive social positions of those who deploy it.

6. Voice and chronotope

For Bakhtin, the concepts of ‘voice’ (persona, characterological figure) and ‘chronotope’ are intimately linked, not just because chronotopic depictions include depictions of personhood, as noted above, but also for other reasons: Both link a frame of representation to a frame of performance; both are ‘dialogically’ configured, i.e., are diagrammed by metrical contrasts among chunks of text; and both permit metasemiotic readings that differentiate biographic-individual from social-collective realities (Agha, 2005). The remaining papers focus on this relationship, namely the capacity of chronotopic contrasts to delineate and foreground figures of personhood (self, subjectivity) of varying degrees of particularity and abstraction through placement within spatiotemporal frames.

As Sabina Perrino (this volume) shows, the interpersonal trope that Wolof storytellers call *démarche participative* (the act of transposing speech participants into the story frame) enacts not merely the transposition of biographic individuals but also of social types of persons across narrated and narrating frames. In her first example, it is Perrino as a biographical individual who is transposed to the story frame to ‘bear witness’ to the personal experiences of Ndome, the storyteller—experiences that involve a harrowing ailment (diarrhea) recounted in intimate detail. But in the second example it is Perrino as an instance of the stereotypic Italian smoker (a mass mediated social type of which she, as an Italian, is a handy, co-present metonym; the fact that she *personally* doesn’t smoke is irrelevant) that is transported into the narrative frame and, through a second transposition to ‘type’, is sequentially assimilated to an even more generic figure, that of a ‘morally undisciplined and depraved guest’. So it comes as no surprise that, in this second storytelling frame, the narrated chronotope correspondingly illuminates not the realm of Ndome’s *personal* experiences but the way in which traditional Wolof wisdom (with which Ndome is doubly aligned, as both pedagogue-explicator *and* current animator) handles the always delicate task of managing guest-host relations. Universal truths are—chronotopically—the affairs of generic social types from whom facts of individuality must be effaced, even when—perhaps especially when—they are fashioned from the raw materials of a current participation framework. Personal truths become vivid through the opposite technique, the intensifica-

tion of the self's biographic individuality (even its most intimate experiences), as illustrated by Perrino's first example.

Encounters with chronotopes are encounters with characterological figures (or 'voices') embedded within spatiotemporalized (if not always determinately 'sociohistorical') locales, whether real or imagined, with which speech participants establish forms of alignment, and thus acquire (or lose) delegated forms of positionality (particular or generic) in the spatiotemporal world they inhabit.

For religious practitioners in Cuba (Kristina Wirtz, this volume), two speech registers, Lucumi and Bozal, provide tightly contrastive and widely recognized chronotopic formulations of persons in place and history, whether by contrasting the voices of *orichas* (African deities) with those of *muertos* (spirits of the human dead); or the Yoruba traditions of Africa with the experience of slavery in Cuba; or, as metonyms of two distinct religious practices, the transcendent and esoteric sphere of Santería religion with the subaltern and syncretic practices of Muerteria spiritism.

The interpersonal effectiveness of these chronotopic invocations depends on the current participation framework in which they are deployed. Such register-mediated contrasts differentially inform 'the everyday interactional chronotope of the ritual event', infusing the encounter between religious practitioners and their audiences with otherworldly figures—voices of deceased bozal slaves, African deities, or laminated variants of the two—that make remote experiences manifest in the here-and-now, locating participants contingently present in the current encounter in determinate social relations with mythic/transcendent or ancestral/historical persons. These cases mobilize and transform social relations in the here-and-now through what Wirtz calls 'enregistered memory', i.e., by invoking register-mediated voices that are memorable because they are stereotypically indexed by relatively localizable speech forms.

Figurements of chronotopic forms of personhood can also be much more implicit, involve much more extended chunks of text, where neither the denotation nor the stereotypic indexicality of localizable text-segments establishes their presence. The cases discussed by Douglas Glick and Peter Haney involve figurements of voice and chronotope that work entirely through implicit metrical contrasts between extended stretches of discourse. Both involve mass-mediated frames, the performance of comedic or quasi-comedic routines, and in both, the merger and displacement of historical and biographical selves does much of the interpersonal work.

Eddie Izzard's comedic routines (Glick, this volume) cover dangerous ground. A British comedian who pokes fun at American colonialism before American audiences engages in a task fraught with danger, not only because he is a foreigner, but also because his accent marks him as audibly British, and therefore potentially aligns the current chronotope of performer speaking to audience with that of (former) colonizer speaking to (formerly) colonized.

Izzard therefore introduces the frame of colonial misdemeanor by first poking fun at British colonialism in India, thus effectively distancing himself from having any stakes in his British persona. He formulates British colonizers as irrational spoilt children who speak in upper-class accents, and colonized Indians as justifiably angered adults who speak in working-class (British) accents, thus aligning himself, in the performance frame, against colonialism and with subaltern subjects and voices. This frame of fictionalized dialogue is then metrically filled with Puritan and Native American voices in the next skit, where pilgrims arrive in America and, through a comparable chronotope of

colonialism—pre-democratic times, alien lands, encounters humorously filled with cross-cultural ignorance, self-serving caprice, and immorality—amiably proceed ‘to rob the Native Americans of their lands’. As Glick shows, the production of this chronotope depends on metrical contrasts both within and across the two skits that Izzard performs.⁵

By guiding the audience through a metrically structured series of chronotopic displacements, Eddy Izzard’s performance replaces the initial role configuration with which it begins (British comedian performing for an American audience) by aligning himself with, and inviting the audience also to align with, a rather distinct performed figure, one to which disdain for the colonial injustices *of the past* (and, by presupposition from the performance frame, the upholding of *present-day* democratic values like liberty and freedom) is more important than role alignment with mere, current, categories of national identity like Briton or American. As Glick shows in some detail, this new role category (one who upholds liberty and freedom, disdains colonialism) is orchestrated and sustained through a series of skits in which Izzard artfully inhabits this role, and through which he ensures, equally artfully, that the audience’s laughter depends on inhabiting it too. And this is as it should be because audiences are also consumers, who must, before the evening ends, get their money’s worth.

In contrast, Haney (this volume) shows that Rodolfo Garcia’s karaoke-like *relajo* performances of Agustín Lara’s musical hits are the culmination of a communicative chain of processes through which performed figures change and grow through time, and take composite forms that end up, like a cabinet of curiosities, in the living room of the blissful consumer, tampering with that bliss. Garcia uses three famous public sphere figures—Jorge Negrete, the film star; Agustín Lara, the singer; and María Félix, another film star (she was married to both Lara and Negrete, in turn)—to produce composite sketches of romantic subjectivity, whose various multi-dimensional individualities have an ironic relationship to each other. In the *relajo* performance,⁶ these characters replay an incident in Garcia’s own personal life, a biographic encounter with his ex-wife in which she intro-

⁵ For instance, in clip 2 (where the abstract dialogic partners are a Puritan and a Native American in Colonial America), the joke’s text completely lacks any referential coherence whatsoever (it is, in fact, a jumbled scatter of sentences)—*unless* a second interlocutor is supplied in clip 2 (on metrical analogy with clip 1), an interlocutor who is allocated zero speaking turns, but whose stereotypic characteristics (as a Native American) are evident from the utterances of the one who does speak (the Puritan) in clip 2; and whose relationship to the Puritan is metrically configured as identical to that between the Indian and the Briton in clip 1 (namely, colonized to colonizer).

⁶ The *relajo* indexes a distinctive space of social relations in the chronotope of performance. As a category of ethnopoetics, the term *relajo* has several related uses. It names (1) a speech register (‘a kind of jocular, insulting and often obscene speech’) that contrasts with *respeto* (‘respect’-ful) speech; (2) a framework for distinguishing social-characterological types (*relajante* ‘practitioner of *relajo*’ vs. *apretado* ‘tense, tight person’); (3) a communicative act linked to a distinctive participation framework (an act which ‘takes place in groups of three or more people and mockingly negates some absolute value or moral imperative’); and (4) a discourse of autonomy (‘the *relajo* gestures toward a freedom understood as a subject’s relation of authorship to his or her actions’). It should be clear that to perform the *relajo* is to inhabit a specific framework of social relations to referents and audiences. In Garcia’s rendition, this framework constitutes the *performance frame* through which a depicted chronotope (of social relations among quasi-fictive characters) unfolds as humor for its audience. In this regard, the chronotopic formulation is the very opposite of the case described by Wirtz, where the performance frame employs registers of religious practice, and the performed chronotope is populated with beings that are otherworldly yet real (deities and spirits) with whom animators and audiences are drawn into direct contact, despite the fact that these beings inhabit transcendent or ancestral worlds.

duced him to her companion by calling him her ‘husband’, causing offence to his masculine dignity. All the characters of the *relajo* are doubled as composites, so that Maria Felix is a stand-in for Garcia’s own ex-wife, Negrete for her companion, and Lara for himself.⁷

These figures have now moved up the scale of chronotopic abstraction into social types. They start out first as concrete individuals in Garcia’s own private life; then become glitzy film stars and entertainers, already at a remove from the facts of concrete, mundane existence; and are made over, finally, into social-characterological types. Such recombinant types pervade mass media figurements of romantic love—the figure of the cuckold, the overly possessive lover, the woman who inspires jealousy, and so on—that are familiar to audiences not only from the chronotope of biography (as analogues of personal experiences) but also in the chronotope of common culture (in shared participant orientations to them, as in conversations about movies). Haney’s article reveals something of the method by which the individual talent forges figures of subjectivity—from the raw materials of biographic and mass mediated experience—that, in turn, have mass appeal in the sphere of modern artistic consumption. It also suggests that among the many reasons *why* they have mass appeal for individual consumers is the fact that both the artist and the consumer engage in common practices—of recycling and recontextualization of experiences—across biographic and mass mediated spacetime. If mass media representations provide their customers with a particular technology of living—a stock set of figures, stances and emotions through which real lives are re-figured and lived—the *relajo* performance is both an instance of that type of representation and an ironic metacommentary upon it.

7. Mass mediated spacetime among the chronotopes

If chronotopic boundaries are relevant to discourse participants they are also relevant to those discourse participants who are social theorists. Different classes of social theory define their object sphere (the space of social phenomena they seek to describe) by opening up a chronotopic frame and drawing boundaries around it. What each enables us to do in its sphere can easily disable us in others.⁸

As we begin to enter mass mediated spacetime (or, rather, orient ourselves to its existence; we—i.e., you and I—are already in it, as you read these lines), and consider the varied forms of our living participation in it, certain sources of worry briskly begin to become

⁷ Their differential identities are established, maintained, and further specified through metrically structured voicing effects: the first character, Joe/Jorge speaks in higher pitch than the second, Lara/Garcia; and the third character, who has the highest pitched vocal timbre in Garcia’s rendition, is formulated as a woman; the woman (the transposed double of an ex-wife and a film star) now plays the generic figure of female vanity who ‘enjoys provoking two men to fight over her’; the first male is a pliant fool, the other is the aggressive *apretado*, the uptight person, who upbraids the others on their failings.

⁸ The ‘speech event’ (of Jakobson and Hymes) is a chronotopic frame peopled by role categories like sender and receiver (can you not see them, there, on that famous diagram?), whose boundary is a speaking turn. Goffman’s ‘interaction order’ overcomes this boundary by incorporating many speaking turns of sender and receiver but is itself bounded as the period of their physical co-presence. The ‘speech community’ (Gumperz) is bounded by members’ common orientation to norms of speech. The ‘commonwealth’ (of Hobbes) binds its citizens by social contract, and by common orientation to law and convention, in a zone of relative safety against a counter-chronotope, the ‘war of all against all,’ which threatens otherwise to well up within its walls. Similarly, many other types of social theory draw chronotopic boundaries—class struggle vs. classless society (Marx), synchrony vs. diachrony (Saussure)—that delimit classes of sociological phenomena in ways that draw the practical or theoretical interests of readers into one or the other of these chronotopes.

apparent. The accompanying articles make plain that we—even as we align most avidly to idea(l)s of autonomy and uniqueness—come to be ‘made up’ as persons, as a matter of course, of role-fractions that are sedimented within us by semiotic encounters. Beneath the surface of this glassy essence lie—as yet untheorized—forms of communicative process through which messages flow back and forth, near and far, folding over the spacetime of discrete individuality, making selves who have never met partial analogues of each other.

I have tried to show that mass mediated spacetime is not a place or a period but a form of chronotopic organization of semiotic practices, distinctive in the ways in which it links frames of representation to frames of participation.

That it involves frames of representation is obvious to our intuitions. No one denies that mass mediated semiotic processes bring before us motley representations of times and places and the characters who inhabit them, in both fictionalized and realistic genres of depiction.

But the outlines of the frame of participation are not obvious to our intuitions. I have argued that this is so for (at least) two reasons. First, because contemporary ideologies of the self (such as ideals of autonomy and freedom) prevent a clear grasp of the ways in which recombinant selves emerge through semiotic encounters, including mass mediated ones, just as they obscure the forms of social relevance we can assign to their (putative) emergence within contemporary institutional chronotopes (such as democracy and free markets), which sponsor these intuitions. And, second, because the frame of participation itself is not extractable from a contextualized social process in which semiotic encounters of diverse kinds—encounters with signs, encounters with persons that are mediated by signs, individual encounters with mass mediated representations (and their ‘civic’ implications), and (the semiotically special, though, nowadays, demographically widespread and temporally ubiquitous case of) mass mediated encounters (where forms of mediation themselves create ‘mass’ participation)—are all linked to each other through routine everyday activities of diverse kinds on many different scales of personal, interpersonal and sociological relevance.

Getting clearer about these issues is, I propose, the surest method of grasping the forms of our participation in the contemporarily dominant chronotope of mass mediated spacetime.

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