1 Introduction: The Social Imaginary

Central to social life is the construction of a “social imaginary,” a set of interpretive images, figures, and forms that project an implicit social ontology, sanctioning everyday understandings and making sense of them in deeply institutional terms. In a passage that recalls Sapir’s (1929: 162) observation that grammatical categories project a compulsive reality for speakers of a language, Cornelius Castoriadis (1975: 293) argues that the social imaginary is radically compulsive, such that “society could not recognize itself as making itself, as institution of itself, as self-institution.” It is in analogy with Sapir’s view that what there is – social and otherwise – is built up out of the compulsory categories with which everyday interactions are structured that I find Castoriadis compelling; analogously, the roots of the social ontology are to be found in everyday practices, some apparently inconsequential from a material standpoint, such that even the most inconsequential are imbued politically (Canessa 2012). Where I find Castoriadis less than compelling is the sense I have that the social imaginary is, for him, a substitute for what North American anthropologists traditionally called “culture,” and that, for all that, he is simply proposing another arch-cultural view of social life decades after we anthropologists gave them up. I am unsettled by the claim that – according to Castoriadis – the social imaginary functions beyond any semiotic means, much as I sympathize with his observation that the language of 1960s French sémiologie was incapable of encompassing it. Finally, the social imaginary seems to me to be much more fragile than Castoriadis imagined it to be, much more susceptible to conjunctural events, and much more contested. Consider the following: seven years into a bloody and seemingly unshakeable military dictatorship, designed to “reorganize” Argentine society and remake the Argentine person (Feierstein 2014), when the military abruptly returned to barracks after losing the war over the Malvinas (Falkland) Islands; the cry of “saqueo popular”
(“people’s looting” – in contrast to the looting carried out by elites) as residents of the marginal slums of Caracas descended on the shops of central Caracas in February 1989 (Coronil and Skurski 1991: 316–22); and two seven-year-olds in Lima, Peru in the 1980s talking about a nearby car-bomb with the same matter-of-factness that two seven-year-olds in San Francisco would talk about – what, a temblor? – to get a sense of the fragility of the social worlds that we take for granted.

This chapter explores the construction of the social imaginary in Southern Peruvian Quechua myths and songs as both a tacit folk sociology of everyday life and a powerful critique of forms of domination in modern Peruvian society, in which Southern Peruvian Quechua speakers are oppressed linguistically, culturally, and economically. Although these myths and songs often deal in explicit fantasy, including supernatural beings, anthropomorphic animals, fantastic events, and exaggerated sorrow and loss, the social imaginary is constructed tacitly, in the background of these verbal forms. The social imaginary is multiplex, responding not only to the basic forms of social relations and agropastoral production among Quechua-speaking peasants and herders, but also to the ways in which interactions with state institutions and with non-Quechua impinge on their everyday lives (see Huayhua, this volume), the imagery of one fading seamlessly into the imagery of the other. A Quechua-speaking peasant once explained to me that one needed to render cult to a Saint not only to make certain that the crops would continue to grow and the herds continue to increase, but also so that the Saint could act as your attorney after death. She envisioned the hereafter as a massive state bureaucracy, requiring an attorney to guide you through the maze of legal petitions and other paperwork. “Don’t you know the prayer?” she asked, “‘The Lord is my advocate’” (Lamentations 3: 58). It is in its multiplex nature that the social imaginary is distinctive.

When I say that the social imaginary is multiplex, I also mean to evoke W. E. B. DuBois notion of “double consciousness, the sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of always measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (1903: 45).2 Like African Americans in DuBois time and today, Southern Peruvian Quechuas are forced – not requested, not encouraged, not strategically drawn, but forced – to engage a social world that, through linguistic and other forms of institutional discrimination, and through physical and sexually mediated violence, they experience as cruel and arbitrary. One result is that the contexts of their domination are taken for granted, much as the moral evaluation of Latin Peru filters through the ways in which the events that take place within these myths and songs are understood. That they are open to multiple resonances has perhaps more to do with the moral ambiguity and fragmentation of the social ontology than with ambiguity inherent in the discourses themselves (but see Mannheim 1998).

In this chapter I discuss three linguistic and literary mechanisms by which the social imaginary is shaped: (1) presupposition, in which tacit assumptions can be calculated from what is said; (2) implicature, in which the social imaginary is calculated from the way it is said; and (3) and pragmatic lamination, in which the imaginary is constructed through ambiguities in the way in which one speech event is embedded within another. All the texts that I discuss date to the late 1970s, a period in which Peru was ruled by a nationalist military government that poured forth a public rhetoric of the power of a state in which the people were united behind the armed forces. It is important that I emphasize this because the social imaginary contained within some of the texts projects a powerful state and potent civil institutions. In the years following the return of the military to the barracks, the relative power of the state was squandered by a succession of corrupt civilian governments, by utter collapse of the economy, and by a debilitating civil war. In contemporary Peru, the state might operate in ways that are just as arbitrary and bureaucratic, but which have far less potency, since over the years the state has
successively yielded effective control over national territory to two insurrectionist movements, to banditry, and to concessions in favour of foreign extractive industries. In line with my argument that the social imaginary is eminently conjunctural, I would expect that work with similar verbal performances today would reveal quite a different social ontology. The texts that I discuss also represent moments of social dissonance, revealing tears in the social fabric, rather than – as Malinowski (1922: 338, 1926: 39) famously suggested – “giving dignity and importance to an institution.” Verbal art has a capacity for social reflexivity; at the same time as it entertains, it stealthily unveils the tacit assumptions and moral evaluations of social fissures (Scott 1990), always partial, and always tied into the specific instances of talk and interaction, drawing on complex and subtle mechanisms of linguistic and interactional structure (Gal 1995).

2 Main Research Methods

My approach is to use texts or discourses as a sedimented archive, “because,” as Sherzer (1987: 296) suggests, “discourse is the nexus, the actual and concrete expression of the language–culture–society relationship,” standing in the same habitus–like relationship to the culture’s ontology as grammatical categories (Hill and Mannheim 1992: 398–9). As with grammatical categories, it is not the abstract form of the texts but their existence as concrete, historically, and socially situated performances that allows them to play this role (Bauman 1975, Bauman and Briggs 1990: esp. 78–80, Hill 1995, Tedlock 1983, and Urban 1991). As I hope to show here, the pragmatics of performance plays a crucial role in reproducing the social imaginary. Thus any historical reconstruction of the Quechua textual archive must interpret the texts through an ethnographically oriented hermeneutic, “over the shoulders” of the people who perform them (see Tedlock 1983: ch.4; 1987).

Since the evidence I use comes entirely from language, there is a key point of method that needs to be discussed. It has been traditional in successive generations of anthropologists to reduce evidence from language to conscious ideas about social life. A particularly influential formulation of this point of view was the philosopher Susanne Langer’s (1941: 76–89) distinction between discursive and presentational forms: discursive forms explicit propositions apprehended sequentially; presentational forms tacit and apprehended simultaneously. Langer, a philosopher of art, argued that presentational forms were as available to rigorous analysis as the discursive forms that were grist for the mill for philosophers. Liberating as her analysis was for philosophers of art, her view of language was reductionist: conscious, propositional, and denotational. With the growth of linguistic anthropology since the 1980s, we have learned that these are just small parts of the complex, socially embedded, material practice – central to formulating and reproducing social relations and institutions. The problem is that Langer’s formulation was absorbed into the scholarly zeitgeist and was especially influential in the formulation and growth of interpretative anthropology. It has burrowed into the methodology of social and cultural anthropologists so deeply that it has been echoed over the years – right up to the present time—in works as prominent as R. Rappaport (1974), Moore and Meyerhoff (1977), Kapferer (1991: 287–8), Tambiah (1990: 95–7), Gell (1999: 6ff.), and Descola (2013: 121–6).

In this chapter, I will show that language plays an essential role in constructing a social imaginary in Southern Peruvian Quechua narratives and songs, though one that makes hash of the distinction between discursive and presentational forms. The social imaginary is constructed directly through talk, and propositionally – in song and narrative – but below the threshold of consciousness. Although I am considering them in special circumstances – song and narrative – there is nothing special about them. They draw on pragmatic mechanisms that are fully routine – that is to say, they pervade all talk, under all circumstances.
2.1 Presupposition

The first linguistic mechanism that I discuss is formal presupposition, in which the tacit assumptions of an utterance are embedded in (and possibly tangential to) the overt assertions being made in the utterance. There is a long tradition of analysis of presupposition in philosophy and in linguistic semantics, so that its formal properties are well understood. There is a much shallower tradition among anthropologists of examining the social and cultural uses of presupposition, and here the work of Gumperz (1981) on the role of presupposition clashes in cross-cultural misunderstanding and that of McClendon (1977) on the place of cultural presupposition in the interpretation of narrative stand out. As an informal characterization of presupposition, Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet (1990: 280) describe the relationship between an utterance S and its associated presupposition p as follows:

[an utterance of] a sentence S presupposes a proposition p if (the utterance of) S implies p and further implies that p is somehow already part of the background against which S is considered, that considering S at all involves taking p for granted.

Thus, for any utterance that has not been framed conversationally (or through specific literary devices) as contrary-to-fact, for a listener to attend seriously to the content of the utterance would be to acquiesce in its presuppositions. Here we have a conversational device that is like grammatical categories in projecting an ontology in several respects. First, the projection takes place in everyday speech, outside of the conscious awareness of the speaker. Second, under ordinary circumstances, the listener acquiesces in the ontological projection of the presupposition in a routine, automatized fashion. The major difference between grammatical categories and formal presuppositions is that grammatical categories are habitual, used over and over in countless situations, and achieve a degree of automatization that presuppositions lack. Philosophers are fond of presenting “trick sentences” like “When did you stop drinking?” as examples, but the fact of the matter is that for even the most routine utterances to be intelligible, they must be rife with presuppositions of all kinds, and in the business of everyday life we are continually buying into other people’s presuppositions and other people’s assumptions about what the world is like. Presuppositions are a crucial vector of contagion in the epidemiology of knowledge (Sperber 1991, Enfield 2007, Kockleman 2013).

There is a straightforward test for determining whether the implication of an utterance is a presupposition. An implication is a presupposition if it is taken for granted in an assertion, its denial when it is questioned, and when it is offered as the hypothetical assumption. Thus, not only does the question “When did you stop drinking?” presuppose that you (at the very least) used to drink, but so does the assertion, “You stopped drinking,” its denial “You didn’t stop drinking,” and its use as a hypothetical assumption, “Were you to stop drinking, you’d face up to the misery that your life really is.” Some presuppositions, such as the “drinking” one, are easier to challenge than others, but the default is to acquiesce in them.

As an example of the role of presupposition in reproducing the social imaginary, consider a Quechua popular song that could be heard frequently on the radio during the late 1970s in Southern Peru. It opens with the image of a thrush that is being held in the capital city, Lima, as a prisoner, captured for gathering and spilling the flowers of the broad bean plant. The inscribed speaker then says that he too is in Lima, for “stealing” one Masiya’s daughter; as he addresses himself to her he sings,

‘Cause of you, I’m a soldier
‘Cause of you, I’m a grunt (cachaco)
For a young man from rural Peru, the army is anything but a career. Only those young men who are too poor (or too out of sorts) to buy their way out of a “universal” draft actually serve; the young man’s fate is closer to the thrush’s than might appear at first. Here I do not want to discuss the complexities of the framing of the story line that I just told you. Rather, I want to focus on the opening quatrain.

Chuchiku Lima–pi–ña–s prisu
thrush Lima–in–already–reportive prisoner
It is said that the thrush is already imprisoned in Lima

Chuchiku Lima–pi–ña–s prisu
thrush Lima–in–already–reportive prisoner
It is said that the thrush is already imprisoned in Lima

Hawas–pa t’ika–cha–n palla–ri–sqα–n–manta, chuchiku
Favas–of flower–diminutive–it’s gather–begin–past participle–it’s–about thrush
For gathering fava flowers, thrush

Hawas–pa t’ika–cha–n wisî–ru–sqα–n–manta, chuchiku
Favas–of flower–diminutive–it’s spill–purposefully–past participle–it’s–about thrush
For spilling fava flowers, thrush

To the peasant listener of the song these lines work on the presupposition that the Peruvian government can arrest birds for doing what comes naturally, for gathering and spilling bean flowers. The presupposition remains invariant even when the assertion is denied: “Chuchiku mana Limapiraqsi prisu/hawaspa t’ikachan pallarisqanmanta,” “It is said that the thrush isn’t yet imprisoned in Lima for gathering bean flowers” has exactly the same presupposition. In turn, the presupposition hooks the interpretation of the last couplet, in which – though not by presupposition – the arrest of birds for gathering flowers is analogized to the recruitment of peasant men into military service through a draft that equally reflects the arbitrary and unfair power of the government. I want to call your attention to the innocuousness of the figure through which a politically charged presupposition is conveyed to its listeners, below their thresholds of awareness, a point that is quite tangential to the overt content of the figure.

2.2 Implicature

The second mechanism I discuss by which the social imaginary is shaped is implicature, in which the social imaginary is calculated from the way an utterance is said. Closely related to presupposition, implicature was identified by the philosopher Paul Grice, who observed that as a socially concerted action, conversation must follow certain principles of cooperation, which when violated trigger an interpretative uptake on the part of the addressee.5 According to Grice (1975: 45), conversation is regulated by a general principle of cooperation:

Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

For example, Grice defines a conversational maxim of quantity:
1. Make your contribution as informative as required (for the current purposes of the exchange).

2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Though these look like explicit social norms, they are not. Rather, they are violated repeatedly in the course of ordinary interaction, and serve as a ground for other participants in an interaction to interpret the speaker’s talk. While the speaker might deliberately manipulate their speech to trigger implicatures in the other participants, ordinarily they slip beneath the threshold of awareness of all concerned. Here is an example that lies on the borderline between routine use of implicatures and conscious manipulation.

When I bought my first banjo, a friend told me to watch out if one of the features listed for a model was that it had five pegs, since it meant they were not mechanical pegs. In offering that insight, he was applying the principle of quantity, and from the absence of additional information concluded something about the quality of the banjo. Notice that like presupposition, implicatures are normally processed tacitly as part of the process of interpreting the utterance. Even though Grice’s conversational maxims are flouted more often than followed, the implicatures that result from either following or flouting the maxims are inescapable if the utterance is to be attended to at all. For example, Susan Harding (1987) interviewed an evangelical minister, who testified about how his life—auto repairs and fast cars—was transformed when he was called to ministry. After the interview, she drove off in her car and skidded, prompting her to ask herself, “What is God trying to tell me?” In order for her to attend to the minister’s narrative of salvation, laden with automotive imagery, she was forced—through implicature—to buy into many of its assumptions.

From an ethnographic viewpoint, the status of implicature is much more in question than that of presupposition. Grice himself regarded the cooperative principle and the maxims to be at the basis of all conversation, but as Elinor Ochs (1977) has observed, the principles and their application vary considerably across cultures and, within cultures, across contexts. From a universalist vantage, Sperber and Wilson (1986) have reformulated the Gricean mechanisms into a global model of conversational inference based on the principle of relevance. Both Ochs’s and Sperber and Wilson’s critiques of Grice concern his specific formulations of the maxims, though not the basic phenomenon.

My example is from a story, recorded by Alejandro Ortíz (1973: 176–83) that frames the relationship of linguistic domination of Quechua speakers by Spanish speakers as a conflict between two moral regimes with distinct ontological grounds. Quechua speakers regard their language as consubstantial with the world, and an integral part of ordinary relationships that Quechua-speaking smallholders have with each other and with their lands. Spanish, on the other hand is a language of predatory mercantilism—as we shall see, even the language is bought and sold, and control of a larger vocabulary in Spanish is a direct index of wealth. Moreover, the Spanish language itself is an instrument of coercive power. (I have discussed this story and its implications in greater detail in Mannheim 1991.)

A community in Huanta, in highland Peru, is threatened with judicial confiscation of their very livelihood, the land, by a local landowner. The landowner is able to grab the lands because he speaks Spanish and is therefore capable of mobilizing judicial power on his behalf. The peasants, who don’t speak Spanish, have no means with which to defend themselves. They recognize their disadvantage and select some members of their community to go to the capital, Lima, to buy some Spanish talk. But Spanish proves to be costly. When the peasants arrive in Lima, they stay with someone from their village, who cheats them by speaking Spanish. When they finally do manage to buy Spanish talk, they discover that they have only
enough money to buy three phrases. They head toward Huanta with their three phrases when they come upon a freshly killed corpse. When the police arrive to investigate, they, being Native Andeans on the scene of the crime, are immediately implicated. But the three peasants know what they must do to defend themselves from the accusations – they use the phrases of Spanish that they bought, thinking that they’ll be rewarded for it. One police officer asks them who committed the crime, and one peasant answers, “We did.” Another asks why they did it, and another peasant answers, “Because we wanted to.” The third officer tells them that they are under arrest, and they answer, “That’s what we deserve.” The entire scene repeats itself when they are brought before a judge, and they are sentenced to prison. And what of the other villagers, who were unable to use Spanish to defend themselves?

On a superficial reading, this story is about three country rubes that go to the big city, are cheated by their countryman, and get in over their heads because they pretend to be something they are not: Spanish speakers. But there is more going on than that, as much in what the story assumes about the social world as in what it states explicitly. Spanish is associated with state and judicial power, a power that is experienced as arbitrary by the Runa. The landowner is able to pursue his ambition of seizing the lands of the community by speaking Spanish and is thereby able to mobilize judicial power on his behalf. The person in Lima from their village is able to raise the price of Spanish arbitrarily and to cheat his countrymen by switching from Quechua to Spanish. The Civil Guards speak to the Quechua speakers in Spanish, “causing us to spill out our insides,” they say. They try to respond in Spanish, but are taken off by the Civil Guards anyway. The judge speaks to them in Spanish and sentences them to prison, during a court procedure that they can’t understand. The Quechua speakers regard their own possession of a word and two phrases of Spanish as equally magical talismans that they can use to defend themselves from the arbitrary power of Spanish words and from Latin Peru. They assume that the power is invested in the words themselves.

Moreover, Spanish is not learned the way Quechua is. Rather, it is bought and sold. Here is where the implicature example comes in. In planning to go to Lima to buy Spanish the peasants say that they also will buy Spanish, a piece of information that is conveyed by a single suffix, pis.

Castellano rimayqa ancha caron kasqa/ It was too expensive to buy Spanish (Ortiz 1973: 176–80)

Wawqi-cha, Brother-diminutive
huq hacendado-m one landlord-assertion
común allpa-nchik-ta small-dir-to us-make-middle voice– 3rd– plural-already
common lands-our-accusative person
huchu-yku-wa -cha-ka -n -chik-ña common lands-our-accusative person
–n
chay-mi
speak-gerund -3rd person that-assertion
castellanota rima- spa –n
Spanish-accusative say-gerund -3rd person
nuqayku -pas hamu-rqa-ni castellano rantiq
we –also come-past-1st Spanish buy-agentive
(person)
(defends addressee)
defende-ku -na –y –paq.
defend-middle-nominal-1st person-purpose

“Little brother, this landlord has already made us shrink our common lands by speaking Spanish, so we also have come to buy Spanish.”
According to Grice’s maxim of quantity:

Do not make your information more informative than required;

the listener can infer what the speaker has “implicated,” namely that the landlord also learned Spanish by buying it, but in enormous quantities.

In this story, told to amuse rather than horrify, Quechua speakers have developed an entire social ontology, communicated tacitly, as the listeners unpack the presuppositions and implicatures lying just beneath the narrative line. Spanish is pure artifice, associated with state power, especially with the concentration of power and wealth in the capital city, Lima. Spanish can be bought and sold there so, in order to win their court case, the Huanta peasants go to the Peruvian capital Lima, not to appeal to the national political authorities, but to buy Spanish.

It is important to point out that both forms of inference that I have discussed here interpenetrate. The implicature that the landowner bought Spanish can only be understood through the associated presupposition that Spanish is indeed bought and sold, among other things making possession of Spanish a direct index of wealth and power. Similarly, in the song that I used as an example of presupposition, the analogy between the soldier and the thrush is made on the basis of the conversational maxim of relevance, triggering the analogy as a form of implicature. In both cases, the inferential processes triggered by normal semantic and pragmatic processes of interpretation play powerful roles in shaping the social imaginary of the speakers.

2.3 Interactional Lamination

Presupposition and implicature are two forms of tacit inference that are primarily propositional, although in aggregate they can have far-reaching effects in establishing the social ontology that forms a ground for the rest of social life. When we look at real time interaction, both these forms of inference operate at the same time, interlocking with each other and with tacit inferences promoted by the structure of the social interaction itself. Social interaction is layered or laminated, and in this section I consider the ways in which interactional lamination promotes tacit inferences in ways that are similar to presupposition and implicature, and so reproduces the social landscape in which the interaction takes place. Because the text I discuss was produced between two particular individuals, we are fully woven into the social ontology that unfolds through the narrative, in both the telling and the way it is taken up.

A traditional way of looking at talk is as “communication” between two autonomous individuals who “exchange words” (e.g. Saussure 1915: 27). In the traditional framework, talk appears to be linear and flat. In fact, even the simplest conversation is complexly organized and stratified; the participants in the conversation move through the strata in real time, calibrating – and recalibrating – their relationships to each other as they do so. Talk moves through stratified layers (Ahearn 1999, Kockelman 2013: 148ff.). Each layer has what the sociologist Erving Goffman called a “participation framework,” in which the traditional “speaker” and “hearer” are decomposed into multiple roles (e.g. Goffman 1979, Levinson 1988, Hanks 1990, Irvine 1996). Goffman (1974: 517ff.), for example, advocated dividing the traditional notion of “speaker” into four:

- **author**, the person who scripts the words;
- **principal**, the party “committed to the position attested to by the content of the utterance” (Irvine 1996: 132);
- **animator**, the party who physically speaks the utterance;
- **figure**, “the character, persona, or entity projected into the audience’s imagination” by the utterance (Irvine 1996: 132).
These roles are often inhabited by different individuals, though they may also be inhabited by the same individual, with different interpretations assigned to the utterance by hearers, depending on the set of roles that they identify with the animator. A politician’s self-confession, for example, can be interpreted as revealing of the politician’s true persona or as a cynical ploy, depending on whether hearers have projected the politician into the combined roles of *author* and *principal* or into the single role of *animator*.

Similarly, Goffman divided the traditional position of the *hearer* into several distinct sociologically framed roles:

- *addressee*, the person specifically inscribed in the discourse as a recipient;
- *bystander*, a person who is not inscribed but whose participation is ratified by other participants in the interaction;
- *overhearer*, a person who is neither inscribed nor ratified, but is acknowledged by the other;
- *eavesdropper*, a person who is neither inscribed, nor ratified, nor acknowledged in any way.

The entire configuration of roles in any given instant is called the *production format* of the utterance. Where things become complex is when one utterance is embedded in another, for example; by using quotation marks. In such situations, an entire production format is also being embedded into another, the same physical participants potentially filling distinct roles at different levels of embedding. The meaning of an utterance is an emergent property of the entire cluster of production formats and their respective configurations of roles. That is, the meaning of an utterance is produced jointly *between* roles within each production format and among roles that are distinctly assigned to the same social incumbent *among* production frames.

To see how this works, consider the following story, told to me in Quechua in the city of Cusco. The story takes place in a city that was an exact duplicate of Cusco. An elegant wedding party was taking place, and an old, hungry, ragged man came uninvited. He was dressed in rags, filthy, “qhuñasapa” ‘encrusted in snot.’ The invited guests were disgusted by the old man and physically ejected him from the party. He walked away, crying. One of the guests at the party, a woman, took pity on him and followed him, carrying food. The man was too fast for her, and though she followed him uphill and down, she could not reach him. She called to him, but he did not answer. Finally the old man warned her to keep walking and not to look back. She looked back, and saw that duplicate-Cusco had been flooded, forming a lake. Her husband and children were there – as were all the people who meant something to her. At that instant, she turned into rock, which can still be seen to this very day.

This story, first recorded in two seventeenth-century sources, is told widely in the Andean region. The story is always adaptable to the local landscape, which supplies both the spatial and moral orientation toward the events narrated in the story. When this story was told to me the lake was Lake Piwiray, in the district of Chinchero, 28 kilometers from the city of Cusco, and a major source of water for the city. The storyteller, whom I’ll call “Ms Quispe” was born in Cusco, but grew up in one of the communities adjacent to Lake Piwiray. She was speaking to me. Normally, when a story is told in Quechua, the addressee and any other ratified participants join in telling it – agreeing, asking questions, and adding details (see Howard 1989, Mannheim and van Vleet 1998, Allen 2011). When Ms Quispe told me the story of Lake Piwiray, I had not yet learned how to take an active role as a listener, but she persevered in telling me the story anyway.
She began:

1. Manas quchachu kasqan ñawpaqqa, ñawpaq tiempupiqa
   [riki]
   Llaqtas kasqa,
5. “llaqtan karan” ninku.
Qusqu llaqtas kasqa chaypi
   [an]
1. It wasn’t a lake in the old days,
in the old times.
   [right]
   It was a city,
5. “It was a city” they said.
   It was the city of Cuzco there.
   [an]

We had already established that Ms Quispe was talking about Lake Piwiray. She opened the story by telling us that it was not yet a lake, and to do so opened two participation frameworks, one layered on the other. In the primary participation framework (PFI), in which she is speaking to me, she is the animator (producing the actual sounds), the principal (her point of view is expressed in the story), and the author (these are her words, even though she undoubtedly heard the story from someone else); the “figure” role is empty. I was the addressee, there was a bystander present, and we responded with the most minimal acknowledgement of those roles, marked in square brackets. (When we actually spoke, of course, the participation framework shifted – one or the other of us became the animator and Ms Quispe became the addressee. Our responses showed her that we acknowledged what she was saying, so that she could continue.)

But, in line 5, Ms Quispe opens a second participation framework (PF2), embedded in the first (Figure 4.1).

Ms Quispe is the animator in both frames, but in PF2, she is no longer the principal nor the author, roles that she assigned to unspecified others. This is marked grammatically in two ways: first, by shifting the tense marker from the past, stative –sqa (which is used in Quechua storytelling to narrate background information) to the simple past –ra (which is usually used in Quechua storytelling to describe events and to make things more immediate); and second, by shifting from the reportive evidential –si or –s to the evidential of direct assertion –mi or –n. PF2 takes the point of view of someone else (actually someone else’s) – we don’t know who – who can vouch for the lake having been a city once. All of this is done with a shift of two grammatical markers and a quotative.
As she moved through the story, Ms Quispe opened new participation frames, with new configurations of participant roles, layered deftly into her narration. For example, when she describes the guests’ reactions to the old man, she took on their point of view, and they moved from being figures in the narrated participation framework, to being authors and principals. Again, Ms Quispe continued in the role of animator:

44 Millakusqaku machulacha disprisiyasqaku
“Ima machulan, kay qhilli machula hamun.
Chay machulata qarquychis.
Chayna millay p’achayuq,
millay qarquychis chay machuta,” ñispa.
Millakusqaku chaysi qarquqsaku machulataqa, hinaspa
machulata qarquqtinku
nasqa, pasapusqa
waqayuspa
llakispa.

44 Disgusted, they insulted the little old man
“What an old man, this dirty old man came.
Throw that old man out.
He’s disgusting dressed like that,
so throw the old man out disgustingly,” they said.
They were disgusted, so they threw out the little old man, so
when they threw out the old man
uhh . . . he went away
criing bitterly
sadly.

In the primary participation framework, Ms Quispe repeated the insults and described the old man walking off, “crying bitterly, sadly.” When she moved into the embedded framework, she embodied the point of view of the partygoers, quoting them: “He’s disgusting dressed like that, so throw him out disgustingly.”

I’ve chosen two relatively straightforward instances of layering participation framework on participation framework to illustrate the general phenomenon. Both of these are clearcut – one participation framework embedded in the other, using quotation to achieve the layering, but layering can be much more complex (framework can be embedded within framework within framework, and so on) and much less determinate. Participants in a conversation usually have little problem following shifts in participation frameworks over the course of a narrative event, and do so in real time, almost instantaneously and unconsciously, just as they track all other aspects of the interaction. But they are rarely as simple as the two examples included here. Judith Irvine (1996) points out that the problem of mapping participation frameworks onto each other and, consequently, tracing participant roles occurs not only when there are too many individuals to fit them neatly onto the traditional roles of “speaker,” “addressee,” and “other,” but also when there are too few individuals, as when someone is talking to herself – or, as here, when Ms Quispe is moving among participant roles in different participation frameworks, both describing and embodying the several figures in the narrative. The narrative event, to quote Irvine (1996: 135), “has a relation to other [events], including the past, the future, the hypothetical, the conspicuously avoided, and so on, and these relations – intersecting frames, if you will – inform
the participation structure of the moment.” Within the complex web of participation frameworks that make up the narrative event there are both ambiguities and bleed-throughs between frameworks. These are calculated as deftly – as habitually and unconsciously – as the presuppositions and implicatures I discussed earlier, and similarly project assumptions about what there is in the world, and how the world works – a social ontology. The sunken city narrative very straightforwardly establishes normative claims as to appropriate relationships of hospitality – by their violation and the cruelty of their judgment (in much the way that the biblical narrative of Sodom and Gomorrah does – the similarity due to similarity of the social norms of hospitality in the two societies, the differences notwithstanding). But the narrative addressee also attends to the ambiguities among the participation frameworks and their bleed-throughs, and these play as important a role in establishing a social ontology as the more normative dimensions.

A visitor, a person who, like Ms Quispe, was an outsider to the city of Cusco, happened upon a wedding party, and was forcibly ejected by the partygoers. Among these, just one woman understood the norms of sociability and tried to feed the visitor, chasing him across the hills just outside of Lake Piwiray. Ms Quispe then broke from the primary narrative framework and, instead, for the first time, embedding a new participation framework within the old one commented on the figure of the caring woman: Chaypi visitachus kasqa chay warmi, “She must have been a visitor, that woman” (line 59), a jump she marked by discarding the reportive evidential that she used in the main narrative line, which she replaced with –chus, an affix that marks personal conjecture.

54 Chaysi pasapushaqtinyá
huq warmi
huq warmilla
khuyapayasqa
huq [inaudible]
(Chaypi visitachus kasqa chay warmi.)

60 Anchay warmi khuyapayasapa,
“Akhakalláw! Chay machulachata qarqrapunku (u) yarqaysharanpaschá riki,
qhilli kaqtinchá mana chaskita munankuchu.
“Risaq ñuqa,
kay mihunata pakallankupi aparusaq,” nispa.
“Khuyaramusaq” nispa.
ayyy!
“kay ahatawan” nispachusuna.
Tarpasqa qhipanta.
riki!

54 So, it’s said, as he was going away
one woman
just one woman
felt sorry for him
one [inaudible]
(Shemust have been a visitorthere, that woman.)

60 That woman felt sorry for him,
“Akhakalláw! They’re throwing out that old man without feeding him, right.
Since he’s dirty, they don’t want to offer him anything.
“I’ll go myself,
I'll bring him this food that I hid from them,” she said.
“I'll go and care for him” she said.
ayyy!
“with this chicha also” she must have said.
She followed behind him to catch up to him.
riki!

Everything that the woman says is marked by direct quotation, and everything the visitor says by quotation plus a conjectural marker – “he must have said.” And while the quoted speech formed an embedded participation framework, once Ms Quispe jumped up a level to comment on the woman being – like her – an outsider, the figure of the woman – as figure – became entangled with Ms Quispe’s role as principal in the primary narrative participation framework and the woman’s role as principal in the quoted, embedded participation framework. With the bleed-through of these three participant roles across two participation frameworks, the normative claims established in the narrative arc as a whole were interpolated into Ms Quispe’s personal experience and her personal point of view. But the bleed-through between participant roles didn’t stop there. Ms Quispe couldn’t be sure that I had followed the pragmatic intricacies of the narrative, in which she folded participation framework into participation framework, in particular that I had not understood that the old man was God, and had come in disguise to test the partygoers. And so she recapitulated the story – establishing another framework like the one in which she asserted that the pitying woman was (like her) an outsider. This time she concentrated on the physical evidence of the truthfulness of the narrative – the stone pillar in the form of a woman on one of the hills near Lake Piwiray and that the old man was God.

113
Chaymi qaqapi?
Qaqamanta warmis kashan,
rumimanta.
Kashansis, ciertus.
Chaysi machulachaqa kasqa Dios.
[Ari.]
Risqa, prueba ruwaq.
Wak thantaña risqa, a proposito.
Wak thanta risqa.
“Ima nillawanqachá khayna haykuqti chay fiestakuqkuna.” a a a a a
Manas qarquallasqaqakuchu
chhaynallatachus thuqa–thuqayusqakuchushina
chaymantapis waqtasqakuchushina.
[huh!]
Ahá. (Chaynata millayta atisqanchá.)
Khaynaman tukurachipusqa chayqa
Dios kasqa
chay machula.

113
In rock?
There’s a woman made of rock,
of stone.
There is, they say, for certain they say.
That little old man was God, they say.
Yes.
He went there to test them.
He went in rags in disguise, on purpose.
He went in rags in disguise.
“What would they say to me if I went to their party like this.” a . . .
They might not have thrown him out,
they might not have spat at him like that
and they might not have beaten him up like that.
[huh!]
Aha. (His power must have been fearsome.)
He was able to transform them, like this, so
He was God,
that old man.

Who is Ms Quispe? She is the animator of the narrative, to be sure, and the principal in the primary participation framework, and the author (the story is widespread, but she has scripted this particular version), but is she also the figure of the woman – who like her is an outsider – or even the fearful God who metes out a terrible judgment on the city that refused him the most minimal hospitality? These are the points at which the distinct participation frameworks bleed through each other, and in which it is no longer clear that when she is taking on a new role within a new participation framework that it isn’t in fact her own. She is simultaneously the aggrieved party (as the old man), the caring-woman-who-turns-to-stone, and the old-man-as-God; at the same time she is reproducing the social world in which the infraction took place (the exact double of Cusco) and her moral stance toward it, sliding them in below the listener’s threshold of awareness. As she moves through the participation frames she literally inhabits these roles, and in doing so enters the social worlds associated with each of them; both she (as animator) and I (as active listener) acquiesce in the embedded, or laminated social worlds and their associated moral evaluations. Hill and Zepeda (1993: 212) explain, “to make an argumentative point within the ‘story world’ of a subnarrative probably makes the truth of such a point relatively inaccessible to challenge, compared to assertions in the interactional world.” At the same time, the normative order established by the narrative line in the primary participation framework becomes so specific to the storyteller and the ethnographer in the here-and-now that both take it for granted as the way the social world works.

3 Conclusions and Future Directions

In this chapter, I discussed three linguistic and literary mechanisms by which the social imaginary is shaped: (1) presupposition, in which tacit assumptions can be calculated from what is said; (2) implicature, in which the social imaginary is calculated from the way it is said; and (3) pragmatic lamination, in which the imaginary is constructed interactionally, through ambiguities in the way in which one speech event is embedded within another. All of these are nuanced and minute aspects of linguistic interaction – the sorts of things that are often unnoted and unnoticed in ordinary interaction and in ethnography alike. But it is the very fact that they are unnoted and unnoticed – and at the same time must be taken into account for a verbal interaction to be understood in the first place – that makes them so powerful as replicators of social ontologies. Any future exploration of the social world that we take for granted must be prepared to engage the linguistic mechanisms by which that world is constituted.
Acknowledgments
An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the workshop, The Same Old Story? – Retelling and Reinventing New Traditions in South America, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, April 9, 2013 and to the Linguistic Anthropology Laboratory at the University of Michigan. I am grateful to Judith T. Irvine, Alaina Lemon, Michael Lempert, Barbra Meek, Perry Sherouse, and other members of the Linguistic Anthropology Laboratory for their criticisms and suggestions.

Related Topics
7 Language Ideologies (Kroskrity); 8 Social Subordination and Language (Huayhua); 11 Language Socialization and Marginalization (García-Sánchez); 14 Discursive Practices, Linguistic Repertoire, and Racial Identities (Baugh); 19 Language and Political Economy (McElhinny); 24 Discrimination via Discourse (Wodak).

Notes
1 See Hill and Mannheim (1992: 385–90) for a discussion of the claim that “grammatical categories, to the extent that they are obligatory or habitual, and relatively inaccessible to the average speaker’s consciousness … form a privileged location for transmitting and reproducing cultural and social categories … by constraining the ontology that is taken for granted by speakers” (1992: 387). For a useful overview of Castoriadis’s work, see Thompson 1984: 1–41. Key passages from Castoriadis’s book, L’institution imaginaire de la société are excerpted in Castoriadis (1984), together with an introduction by Singer (1984).
2 There is a substantial interpretive literature on DuBois’ idea of “double consciousness” (see, for example, E. Allen 1992). While I have argued elsewhere that there are moments in which strategic concealment, ambiguity, and doubling of form play a critical role in the discourses through which Southern Peruvian Quechus position themselves (also see C. Allen 2011), I believe that the scope of these figures has been overstated, at least for Native South Americans.
3 Parallel to current research on the discourse grounding of grammatical categories (rather than their instantiation in discourse) is Bauman and Briggs’s argument that the processes of entextualization are critical issues in their own right, and provide better framing of the problems of textuality in oral tradition than does the traditional view that texts are instantiated in performance. My consciousness on this point has also been raised by Ellen Basso’s (1985: 11) insistence that what scholars have traditionally called “texts” are in fact the end-point of an elaborate process of editing, from the ethnographers’ circumscription of the narrative event to the editor’s framing within the conventions of academic expository prose (see Mannheim and van Vleet 1998 for development of this point).
4 Chuchiku appears in the anthologies of Southern Andean waynus collected by Josefat Roel Pineda (1957: 228) as “Pichiwchas,” and by Gloria and Gabriel Escobar (1981: 95–97). The version transcribed here is from a recording by the Conjunto Kqempor de Cusipata, a local band from Cusipata (Province of Quispicanchi, Department of Cusco). It was recorded on Decibel LP–1148 in 1971 or 1972, and continued to be popular on Quechua-language radio broadcasts throughout the 1970s. The version published by Escobar and Escobar is more elaborate textually than the present version.
5 Virtually from the moment in which it was first proposed, anthropologists, linguists, and philosophers have developed extensions to Grice’s formulation (e.g. Karttunen and Peters 1979); critiques (e.g. Davis 1998; Petrus 2010); and alternatives (Sperber and Wilson 1986; Levinson 2000). Since they do not materially change the analysis that I am proposing here, I use Grice’s original proposal.

References


Further Reading

On language as the location of social reproduction:


On formal analysis of narrative:


On presupposition, implicature and other forms of inference:


**On pragmatic lamination:**


